

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **CLYST VALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Broadclyst, Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113501

Headteacher: Dr Kevin Bawn

Reporting inspector: Mr Martin Beale  
19385

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249568

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road  
Broadclyst  
Exeter  
Devon

Postcode: EX5 3AJ

Telephone number: 01392 461407

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Ball

Date of previous inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22513	John Morey	Team inspector	English	
12607	Simon Relf	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7871	Jean Mackie	Team inspector	Science 11-16; Biology 16-18; Physics 16-18	
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art	
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Geography; Educational inclusion	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History	
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
27665	Alrene Lees	Team inspector	Music; Citizenship	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Economics 11-18; Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11720	Philip Winch	Team inspector	The work of the hearing impairment unit	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

This is an average sized, mixed secondary college with 1052 pupils on roll including 154 students in the sixth form. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are nine traveller children. An average proportion of the pupils is identified as having special educational needs; the proportion with statements is above average. The main reasons for higher levels of need are emotional and behavioural, autism, physical and specific learning difficulties. There is also a 16-place unit for pupils with hearing impairment, which is currently full. The attainment of pupils on entry to the college is rising and is now above average for Years 7 to 10.

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

The college is improving under the astute leadership and very effective management of the principal, ably supported by senior staff and governors. It provides a good education and good value for money. Standards are average and rising, and pupils are generally making good progress. This is largely because of good teaching and the successful focus by staff on ensuring that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities that the college provides. Individual pupils are supported well. Staff work effectively to develop good attitudes and behaviour so that the college is harmonious and the pupils feel happy and secure.

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

- The good teaching of English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 is enabling the pupils to make good progress and achieve above average standards.
- There is a considerable proportion of very good teaching throughout the college.
- The principal provides a clear direction for the work of the college and is supported well by senior staff in the introduction and implementation of thorough and rigorous management systems.
- The broad curriculum supports well the college's aim of providing relevant programmes for all pupils, and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good provision is made to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs including those in the hearing impairment unit.
- Staff strive with considerable success to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- There is very good drama provision and standards are well above average.

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

- Standards are below average in compulsory religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the pupils' spiritual development is given insufficient attention throughout the college.
- Challenge, particularly for the more able, is not consistently evident in all subjects.
- Insufficient attention is paid to promoting speaking, listening, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects.
- Homework is not set consistently so that pupils' learning is extended and parents are able to support their children.
- Assessment information is not always used to influence planning and guide teachers as they plot the next steps in the pupils' learning.

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

### **HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Limited progress was made for the three years immediately after the last inspection in 1997, and the college trod water during the long-term illness and subsequent retirement of the previous principal. Standards declined and the key issues for action received little attention. The vigorous action taken since then by the new principal and senior staff has served to halt this decline and significant progress has been made in the last two years. There is a much higher proportion of very good teaching and standards are now rising, although they are still below the 1996 level at GCSE (the college's highest ever results). The support for the increased number of pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably. The provision for ICT has improved considerably but other matters have received

less attention. The rigour with which the work of staff and departments is now monitored and the steps taken to improve teaching, place the college in a strong position to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average points scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	D
A Levels/AS Levels	N/A	D	N/A	

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

\* National comparison data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available

Overall National Curriculum test results rose in 2002 following a fluctuating but declining trend since the last inspection. There has been considerable variation between subjects but the trend in mathematics has been improving. Results in 2002 were well above average in mathematics and were above average in English and science. Although girls have regularly achieved better results than boys, the gap in performance has been smaller than nationally.

GCSE results fell steadily to a low point in 2000 before rising sharply in 2001 but falling again in 2002. Boys' results have regularly been lower than girls' but the difference has not always been as marked as nationally. The college met its target in 2002 for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades but not for the average points score. Results in both double and single science have been above average and amongst the best results for individual pupils. By contrast, results in English (language and literature) and business studies have not only been below average but have been the pupils' lowest results on average.

A Level results have fluctuated in recent years, reaching a high point in 2000 before falling in 2001 and recovering in 2002. These results are better than might have been expected from the students' earlier GCSE results. The number of students taking individual subjects has varied and has often been too small to make valid comparisons; however, results in geography and sports studies have been above average for the past few years whereas results in art and psychology have been below average.

The evidence from the inspection is that the pupils are generally achieving well and making good overall progress throughout the college. The exceptions to this are the higher-attaining pupils who do not consistently make the same good progress as others. By contrast, pupils with special educational needs, including pupils in the hearing impaired unit, make very good progress at times towards their individual targets. Standards are rising particularly as more able groups of pupils enter in Year 7. Hence, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by Year 9, and average in all others. Standards are above average by Year 11 in science, art, history, languages and physical education. Standards are below average in ICT because the current Year 11 are the last group for which this has not been a compulsory subject, and below average in compulsory religious education because only half the recommended teaching time is allocated in Years 10 and 11.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Pupils mostly work with interest and are keen to participate in the wide range of activities that are provided by the college.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good in lessons and at other times, although some pupils - often but not exclusively boys - can be badly behaved on occasion.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils form strong relationships with staff and with each other, which support their learning well. They take responsibilities seriously but do not always develop the ability to work independently.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are punctual to college and lessons start on time.

The efforts of the staff to make the pupils feel secure and cared for help to ensure that the college provides a harmonious atmosphere in which learning can take place and the pupils can work free from distractions.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

There is a substantial proportion of very good teaching throughout the college. Most teachers have a good command of their subject, make their lessons interesting and challenging and have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and how they should behave. As a result, the pupils in these classes try hard, are keen to succeed and learn new skills and ideas at a rapid pace. Where there are any shortcomings in teaching, this is because teachers do not extend the higher-attaining pupils; they provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to participate actively. The consequence of this is that the pupils can lose interest and become somewhat passive in their learning and over-dependent on the teacher. Many teachers question their classes carefully and expect detailed answers, promoting well the pupils' speaking and listening skills, while other staff are willing to accept single word answers and do not engage the pupils sufficiently in discussions. Mathematics and science teaching are good throughout the college. English teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The national strategies for the promotion of literacy and numeracy are benefiting teaching in English and mathematics; however, aspects of literacy are not being developed consistently in other subjects. The teaching of ICT skills is good. Although there has been much improvement in a short period, all subjects are not consistently giving pupils the opportunity to apply their ICT skills. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The college provides a broad and balanced curriculum, supported by a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very extensive and effective support is provided that meets well the needs of pupils, including the particular needs of pupils in the hearing impairment unit.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Staff promote the pupils' social development very well. The provision is good for moral development and satisfactory for cultural development. Although improved, more attention needs to be paid to the pupils'

development	spiritual development and to teaching an understanding of the nature of a modern multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pupils are supported well by a network of committed, caring staff who know them closely and ensure their health, safety and wellbeing.

All National Curriculum requirements are met. The college takes educational inclusion very seriously. Opportunities have been taken to extend the courses offered from Year 10 upwards to provide relevant and appropriate courses for as wide a range of pupils as possible. These include well-developed links with other local colleges. The partnership between home and the college is satisfactory, although the inconsistent setting of homework is not enabling parents to support their children's learning. Procedures to assess the achievement of pupils are thorough but the information is not being used consistently to guide planning for the pupils' learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The principal has brought clarity and a renewed sense of purpose to the college. Effective senior managers ably support him in establishing the future direction of the college.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have introduced effective procedures by which they can gain an overview of the work of the college and the standards that are achieved. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and the action needed to secure improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Thorough and rigorous procedures have been introduced to monitor the work of staff and to take steps to secure improvement. Greater use is being made of data to evaluate the impact on standards of the action taken.
The strategic use of resources	Funding is being used well to tackle the college's main priorities such as increasing ICT resources and increasing the level of support and administrative staff.

Strong staff teamwork and a shared commitment to improving teaching and standards are features of the work of the college. Developments are planned well and the action taken to meet the college's targets is effective. Staff strive successfully to meet the needs of the pupils and to include them in the life of the college. Staffing is good, and learning resources are satisfactory. While the number of rooms available is satisfactory overall, the temporary nature of the majority of the buildings makes for uninspiring facilities in many subjects. Satisfactory use is made of the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like college</li> <li>• Teaching is good and their children are making good progress</li> <li>• Staff expect their children to work hard</li> <li>• The support, care and guidance that their children are given helps them to grow up and take responsibility</li> <li>• They feel that staff are approachable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality, quantity and consistency of homework</li> <li>• The information that they are given about their children's progress</li> <li>• The college does not always work closely with them</li> <li>• The more able are not always sufficiently challenged in mixed-ability classes</li> </ul>

The inspection team supports the parents' favourable views of the college and confirms their views of aspects that need attention. The college has identified some of these and is taking action to improve reports so that they give a clearer indication of how well the pupils are doing in each subject and the steps that they need to take to raise the standard of their work.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

## CLYST VALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 154 students in the sixth form, a figure that has risen in the last two years. There are roughly equal numbers of male and female students. Nearly half of the pupils from Year 11 continue into the sixth form, mostly following two-year programmes leading to A Level but with a small number studying vocational courses. There is considerable competition from other local providers of post-16 education and many of the more successful GCSE pupils do not remain at Clyst Vale. As a consequence, the overall attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students in the sixth form receive a good and cost-effective education. They make good progress and achieve well in relation to their attainment at GCSE in most courses, as a result of the good teaching and their very positive approach to learning. Leadership and management are good. Standards are rising and are now closer to the national average, although the most recent results were below average. The needs of students are met well. The provision and standards have seen satisfactory improvement overall, following a decline in numbers staying on in recent years and a lack of attention to some aspects of provision.

#### Strengths

- Standards and A Level results are above average in geography and sports studies.
- There is much very good teaching from knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff.
- Leadership and management are much improved and the sixth form is being given a higher profile under the new head of sixth form.
- Attendance is very good, the students are keen to succeed and strong relationships support well both their learning and personal development.
- Students appreciate the very good support that they receive from staff and the guidance and information to help them choose their sixth form courses.

#### What could be improved

- Provision for the development of the key skills of the application of literacy, numeracy and ICT is not consistent and systematic.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for the promotion of enquiry, discussion and debate in some lessons.
- Assessment data is not used consistently to set short-term learning goals for the students.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Small groups of students have achieved successful examination results in recent years. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better, with some teaching being very good.

Biology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average and the students are making good progress as a result of effective teaching from a strong team of teachers.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching underpinned by clear leadership and direction is enabling students to achieve well and make good progress. Whilst standards are average, they are higher than those predicted by GCSE performance.
Economics	<b>Good.</b> Whilst results are generally at or just below average, the students achieve better than their predictions from GCSE. This is as a result of good teaching and very good relations between staff and students.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards were below average for the first group of students taking AS Level. Results were better in the theory AS Level papers than in coursework. Standards are improving this year; students are making good progress as a result of good teaching.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Results are above average. Students are achieving well as a result of very good teaching and good access to a wide range of resources, including the Exeter University library.
Art	<b>Good.</b> Examination results are below average but have risen steadily over the past three years. Teaching is good and the numbers opting for A Level are increasing.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards at A Level have been consistently well above the national average, especially in coursework produced in 2002. Teaching is good, with a good selection of reference and textbooks available.
English	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Although the 2002 results declined, this was against a background of satisfactory progress for the students. Teaching is generally good and is based on sound subject knowledge.

Lessons were observed in most other sixth form subjects. Standards were generally average but were above average in French, German and leisure and recreation and below average in psychology.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Pastoral staff and those teaching sixth form subjects know the students well. They provide a good level of care, support and guidance particularly to ensure that the students have clear information and help when choosing courses of study. Careers advice is also good. Greater use is being made of assessment data but this information is not used consistently to set short-term goals for the students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The new head of sixth form has quickly established a clear direction for the work of staff. He has taken steps to improve provision and the thoroughness with which the effectiveness of teaching and the progress of the students can be evaluated. The needs of students are being met well. As with other areas of the college, it is only in the recent past that sufficient attention has been paid to sixth form provision, and plans for

	improvement are just now taking shape.
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## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel that teachers are accessible and help them if they have difficulties with their work</li> <li>• They report that teaching is challenging</li> <li>• They received good information about sixth form courses</li> <li>• They were given good support to help them to settle into the sixth form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about their progress</li> <li>• The assessment of their work does not give them a clear picture of how to improve</li> <li>• Not all feel that the college would give them support to deal with a personal problem</li> </ul>

The inspection team judges that the students' positive views are generally justified. There was no evidence to support their critical opinions other than that there are some inconsistencies in assessment resulting in students not being given clear short-term targets for improvement.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the college, as measured by national tests in English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 6 in their primary schools, has been rising in recent years and is now above average for pupils in Years 7 to 10. Other standardised tests taken on entry to the college also indicate that pupils in these year groups have a greater potential than earlier year groups. Test and examination results in Years 9 and 11 had fallen since the last inspection. This was due in part to the disruption resulting from the uncertainties caused by the illness of the previous headteacher. This decline has been reversed under the leadership of the new principal, although higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged in all subjects and no co-ordinated provision is made for the gifted and talented. The latter is a matter currently being pursued by the college. The higher attainment of pupils on entry to the college, their greater potential and the good teaching are all contributing to the rising standards seen during the inspection.
2. The overall trend in national test results for Year 9 pupils in English, mathematics and science was below the improving national trend from 1997 to 2001. Within this period there were quite considerable fluctuations in the results for each subject as well as variations between the subjects. The 2002 results improved considerably in English and mathematics, and to a lesser extent in science. They represented well above average progress for most pupils from their earlier Year 6 tests. Results were well above average in mathematics and were above average in English and science. More pupils achieved higher levels in mathematics. This good rate of progress was also evident in lessons and work seen during the inspection in each of these three subjects. Pupils are achieving well. As a consequence, standards are above average in each subject by Year 9.
3. The focus in primary schools on English, mathematics and science, and in one local primary school on information and communication technology (ICT), means that the attainment of many pupils when they enter the college is not at nationally expected levels in other subjects. The standards being achieved in Years 7 to 9 are improving partly as more able groups of pupils move through the college and also because teaching is good. Some subjects, such as design and technology, are devising their own baseline assessment to help them not only to identify the skills of individual pupils but also to develop a more secure measure of the progress that they make in Years 7 to 9. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 is leading to most pupils achieving well. Progress is good in art, design and technology, history, ICT, music, physical education and religious education and is satisfactory in all other subjects. Overall attainment in all subjects other than English, mathematics and science is consequently broadly average by Year 9.
4. GCSE results fell steadily from 1997 to 2000 before rising sharply in 2001 and then falling again in 2002. Overall results were below average in 2002 and below the average of similar schools, although the number of pupils achieving at least five grades at A\*-C was average. This target was exceeded, but the target for overall results was missed. The college's targets have been raised to reflect the stronger year groups that are moving through, and are set at a realistically achievable level for 2003. Although the 2001 results were the best in recent years, they represented below average progress for the pupils from their earlier Year 9 results in 1999, which were far and away the best results since the last inspection. By contrast, the 2002 results represented well above average progress for the higher-attaining pupils who gained at least five grades A\*-C, but well below average progress for the lower-attaining pupils, several of whom did not achieve a single GCSE pass. Girls made greater progress in Years 10 and 11 than boys. There were some unusual and exceptional reasons why the number of pupils failing to achieve a single pass grade was higher than normal, and this was the main reason why the college's overall GCSE target was missed. This year group had more disaffected pupils than in other year groups, some of whom

had poor attendance. Results fell in most subjects in 2002 in terms of A\*-C grades, although they remained largely unchanged in English literature and improved in single science and German.

5. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and standards are now rising. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in most subjects, but they are making good progress in art, drama, history, modern languages, music and physical education. The current Year 11 is slightly weaker than Year 10 but in spite of this, standards by Year 11 are above average in science, art, history, modern foreign languages and physical education and average in all other subjects except for music, ICT and religious education. There are some particular factors influencing standards in these last three subjects. Standards are weaker in ICT at Year 11 because this is the one year group that has not benefited from core teaching of ICT. Religious education is taught for only half of the time recommended by the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11 hence the pupils do not achieve the expected standards. Finally, the pupils studying music in Year 11 started the GCSE course with low prior attainment, unlike the pupils in the current Year 10.
6. Overall, standards of speaking and listening throughout the college are weak. Few pupils are ready to make extended oral responses in lessons. Older pupils are more confident at volunteering responses to questions but often confine themselves to brief replies. More needs to be done via structured teaching to help pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning through more extended oral contributions in lessons. Pupils are keen readers in both key stages but many found it hard to draw inferences from texts when asked to read between the lines. There is a very wide range of attainment in writing across the college. Some pupils showed themselves to be accurate and confident writers but the writing of a considerable number of pupils showed numerous weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
7. The development and use of numeracy is promoted throughout the college by encouraging all teachers to utilise and reinforce mathematical processes in their subject areas. The pupils' successful use of numeracy was noted in several lessons during the inspection; the subjects included geography, history, German, ICT, and physical education. In both science and design and technology, whilst pupils' basic numeracy was adequate, some shortcomings were noted in their dealing with scale drawing and the relative sizes of decimal numbers. In both these cases, the teachers' collective responsibility to promote numeracy was recognised, and the lessons were modified to cover the required skill development.
8. The individual progress of pupils with special educational needs is measured and shows good achievement in a wide range of general learning and personal skills; however, this analysis has not been extended to assessing the progress of pupils compared with their peers and within and across subjects. Information to subject staff on pupils with special educational needs is good, but is not always used for designing differentiated activities in lessons. Nonetheless, the college is now adding subject-specific targets for pupils and this is to be welcomed. In addition, pupils would benefit further from having at least one subject-specific target where they show an aptitude, in order to build their self-esteem and confidence.

## **Sixth form**

9. Students largely follow AS and A Level courses in the sixth form. Almost half of the last Year 11 have stayed into the sixth form, an improvement on previous years. The requirement that they have achieved at least four GCSE passes at grades A\*-C and the actual results that those staying on have achieved means that their attainment on entry to these courses is below average overall. An analysis of examination data shows that many students make good progress during their time in the sixth form, and many do better than was predicted from their GCSE results. This is particularly the case for some students who enter with quite low GCSE results who achieve well.
10. A Level results have been below average for the last three years, with female students generally achieving better results than their male counterparts. The pass rate improved in 2002 as did the average points score. The performance of students in individual subjects has fluctuated from year



to year, and numbers taking courses have often been too small to make valid comparisons. Results in geography and physical education have regularly been above the national average while art has been regularly below average, but rising over the last three years. There was a pass rate of just over 80% for AS Level examinations taken by Year 12 students in 2002. The weakest AS Level results were in psychology, government and politics, communication studies and economics while 100% pass rates were achieved in biology, geography, German, history, mathematics, performance studies and physics.

11. Small numbers of students also follow GNVQ courses and some retake GCSE. The small numbers make valid comparisons with national figures impossible.
12. The evidence from the inspection is that most students are making good progress as a result of good teaching and the positive approach that most students have to their work. The development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are not receiving sufficient attention. Speaking skills are not developed sufficiently, one consequence of this being that the students do not readily enter into discussion during lessons. Parents of students who have chosen to stay on and those who have come from other schools speak highly of the standards that are achieved, recognising that these are often higher than might have been expected when they started at the college.
13. As in the main college, the small number of students in the sixth form with special educational needs are known to teachers and information on their particular learning needs are readily accessible. Support is available from the special needs department, although teachers are expected to provide a range of differentiated activities and support within their own subject areas. This they do well and as a consequence sixth form students with special educational needs achieve as well as expected.

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

14. Parents and carers agree that attitudes to college are generally good and pupils show enthusiasm for learning. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Many pupils say how much they like college and an increasing number are staying on after Year 11. Extra-curricular activities such as inter-form competitions, science club and football mostly take place at lunchtimes and are popular and well attended.
15. Behaviour in and around the college is also good, with few lapses. Behaviour in lessons is often very good: for example, in a Year 9 drama lesson the pupils worked very hard on their pieces and showed genuine amusement and excitement at each other's work. Pupils in a Year 10 history lesson looking at Hitler's rise to power were keen, interested and focused on their task. In corridors, pupils hold doors open for each other and for visitors, move sensibly between lessons despite overcrowding and remain good-humoured. In a few cases, classroom behaviour is less satisfactory: small groups of pupils, especially boys, can be noisy and ignore instructions. A small number of pupils feel that the behaviour of others prevents them from learning properly. Such behaviour is often linked to lacklustre teaching or insufficient stimulation for higher-attaining pupils. A few pupils report petty theft of possessions and some instances of bullying, but these are largely dealt with quickly by pastoral staff. The level of exclusions has risen lately as sanctions have been applied more rigorously, but it is average for this size of college.
16. Very caring and supportive relationships are a strength of the college, and a major factor in attracting and keeping pupils. Those with special needs and the very few ethnic minority pupils are well integrated into the life of the college. Pupils, parents and carers report that staff are friendly and approachable. Pupils learn increasingly to reflect on how their actions affect others, for example through working in groups to evaluate each other's performance. In general they show respect for their peers and teachers. For example, a meeting of the college council was courteous, sensible and mature in questioning the kitchen manager. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and show initiative, for example in the peer mentoring programmes, in campaigns for

charity and on the numerous residential trips run by the college. There is not much opportunity, however, for independent study or personal research and many pupils remain too dependent on the teacher.

17. Attendance is satisfactory. It is now slightly better than the national average which reflects the efforts made by the college. Pupils are largely punctual to college and to lessons, and there is almost no internal truancy because of a stringent system of registration in each lesson.

### **Sixth form**

18. Attitudes in the sixth form are very good – students say they greatly enjoy sixth form life. They are enthusiastic and comment very favourably on the help and encouragement that they receive from staff. Their induction into the sixth form is particularly thorough, ensuring that the vast majority feel they are on the right courses. In most lessons attitudes are positive, for example Year 12 girls in a health and social care class worked very well together and had clearly learned a great deal in a new subject since the beginning of the year. On occasion they are able to work well independently; one girl used part of the same lesson to complete some graphs in the computer room.
19. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good and sometimes excellent; students are keen and have made a positive choice to come here. As they say 'All the bad ones have left!' For example, students in Year 13 French looking at personal qualities were thoroughly involved and spoke French for the whole lesson, often with humour. Year 12 students in ICT key skills were very diligent and keen to learn. The common room is now kept in a better condition than at the time of the last inspection, due to the efforts of the students themselves.
20. Opportunities for personal development are very good. Students themselves feel there is a good range of enrichment activities such as the chance, after training, to work as mentors with Year 9 pupils on the sex education programme, or to run paired reading with younger pupils. Sixth-formers also act as a 'listening ear' and assistant for new Year 7 pupils by going into tutorial sessions. Relationships are very good at sixth form level, both between students and with the staff; many cite this as one of the reasons that they enjoy coming to the college. There is not always a strong drive to work independently, as several students socialise in the common room instead of studying.
21. Attendance in the sixth form is very good at 98.7%; students are trusted to sign themselves in and out and the great majority respect this privilege.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

22. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teaching in two-thirds of lessons was good or better and in a quarter of lessons the teaching was very good. In English, the teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Mathematics and science teaching are good throughout the college. The good teaching overall in Years 7 to 9 enables pupils to achieve well and make good progress.
23. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, ensuring that new activities systematically build on work that has been previously covered. As a result, pupils are able to make progressive steps in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding. In a Year 10 lesson in art, for example, the teacher challenged the pupils to create a mini environment using leaves, sand and pebbles as part of a longer-term project on environmental forms. This session effectively built on a visit to the Eden Project and a detailed study of the work of relevant artists so that the pupils were able to apply what they had learnt to their own creation. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise, which they use effectively to underpin lively and confident presentations. The pupils respond positively, listening attentively and with interest so that they quickly engage with the key objectives of the lesson. In a Year 8 dance lesson, the teacher used her expertise to demonstrate

effectively ideas for stretching and moving. She then used a stimulating selection of music to inspire the pupils to develop their own routines, which they did with enthusiasm.

24. Many of the lessons provide a good range of activities which enables the pupils to consolidate their learning of new ideas through the different approaches adopted. In many instances these activities provide the basis for well-focused questioning from the teacher which both probes and challenges the understanding of the pupils. In a Year 9 science lesson on chemical reactions, the teacher used practical work to reinforce ideas covered in the introductory session. He questioned each group whilst they performed their experiments, challenging the pupils to explain their observations using the correct technical vocabulary. The class made very good progress as a result. In the most successful lessons, the teachers expect the pupils to respond in detail so that they are required to use their knowledge to explain their reasoning. On some occasions questioning is such that only limited responses are required from pupils, so that teachers do not have a clear picture of their level of understanding, and opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are missed.
25. Overall, the teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. The very good relationships evident in most classrooms help to promote the very positive attitudes that the pupils have to their studies. This is reflected in their enthusiasm and hard work, their prompt arrival at the beginning of lessons and the fact that the majority are fully equipped with writing materials and exercise books. There are a few examples where classroom management is not as good as it could be, leading to disruption in the classroom and unsatisfactory learning as a result.
26. In many instances the pace set by the teachers ensures that the pupils are challenged throughout their lessons. There are examples in all subjects where the teacher promotes and expects pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and work together collaboratively. In a mathematics lesson on algebraic calculations with a lower-attaining Year 7 group, the teacher moved briskly through the introductory activity into a range of tasks designed to support the pupils in their understanding of the key principles. The group activities and good pace enabled the pupils to consolidate their learning of important terms and solve the equations successfully. In some lessons, the pace of learning is modest. On a small number of occasions the teacher dominates with the result that there are insufficient interactions with the pupils, who tend to disengage from their work, become passive and over-dependent on the teacher.
27. In the vast majority of cases teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of all of the pupils in the class. The pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, are well catered for by both teachers and support staff and they progress well as a result. This is an improvement on the position identified in the last inspection. A small group of Year 7 pupils, for example, received very good teaching as part of the literacy support programme and were able to make good progress in their ability to construct complex sentences. On some occasions, often, but not exclusively in mixed-ability groupings, higher-attainers are not sufficiently challenged and they do not achieve as well as they could.
28. The national strategies for the promotion of literacy and numeracy are having a beneficial effect on teaching in English and mathematics; however, the systematic development of these skills across other areas of the curriculum is more inconsistent. In modern foreign languages, opportunities to use the target language are not fully exploited to support the development of speaking and listening. The teaching of ICT skills in the discrete lessons is good and there is some effective use of ICT to support learning in physical education. This good practice is not yet embedded sufficiently in other subject areas.
29. Support in the classroom is particularly impressive, especially for hearing impaired pupils, and learning support assistants (LSAs) make a positive contribution to pupils' learning across the full range of disabilities and behavioural problems. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson the LSA had a clear focus for her work enabling the pupil to behave and work well; this included involving other members of the class in group work with her. A hearing impaired student in a Year 9 drama

class was fully involved in the discussion and presentation. In a Year 8 art lesson a pupil with limited concentration was given sensitive support and as a consequence produced very good work.

30. Pupils have a general idea of how well they are doing. The marking of pupils' work has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory overall, although more use could be made of assessment data to inform pupils of their progress, help teachers to plan the next steps of learning for the class and modify the curriculum if necessary. As at the last inspection, there are shortcomings in the use of homework to support learning. There is considerable confusion among pupils concerning the setting, length and frequency of homework which could be remedied by the use of a formal, agreed homework timetable. Parents also expressed some concerns about this issue.
31. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly with the proportion of lessons that are very well taught. The focus since the appointment of the new principal on improving teaching and learning is bearing fruit and places the college in a strong position to improve the quality of teaching further.

### **Sixth form**

32. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, leading to good progress for students in many of the subjects offered. The teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the post-16 courses and ensure that the students have access to the full syllabus requirements. The teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to plan interesting and challenging lessons. The students respond with enthusiasm and engage with the tasks set. They are keen to do well.
33. Teachers have high expectations of their students and use a wide range of activities to support learning, such as teacher demonstrations, individual investigative work, group discussions, visits, outside speakers and research projects. The students appreciate the variety of approaches which helps them to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of important principles and ideas.
34. As in the main college, the majority of the teachers develop ideas systematically and the lessons progress at a good pace. In most lessons the teachers use questioning to good effect to challenge understanding and encourage debate. Where this happens the students mostly respond positively but in some instances, notably in Year 12, some students are reluctant to volunteer opinions. This could be because some lessons are too teacher-directed and opportunities to develop enquiry skills or promote debate are not fully exploited. The marking of students' work is thorough and includes relevant feedback. The teachers have established very good relationships with the students, which help to generate effective interactions, particularly on a one-to-one basis. Teachers are able to give individual support and guidance, particularly in smaller groups, which helps the students to improve. Increasing numbers in the sixth form mean that assessment data will need to be used more systematically to set short-term learning targets for students if they are to continue to make good progress.
35. The key skills lessons are effectively taught and there are some good examples where subject teachers give specific guidance on note-taking to support students in their study skills. ICT is used to good effect to promote learning in physical education but overall, the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT is not systematic in all subjects.

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

36. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils at the college are good overall, with very good provision in Years 10 and 11 where the college provides a range of additional vocational and off-site courses for pupils for whom GCSE courses are not always the most appropriate. The accredited course in Skills for Working Life has given further opportunities for these pupils to

succeed at the college. These changes were initiated following a thorough review of the curriculum in September 2001. The college has established very good vocational pathways at Years 10 and 11, providing good progression opportunities for pupils into the sixth form. Whilst the college meets its statutory requirements, its provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is barely adequate and pupils are unable to meet the design and technology requirements of the National Curriculum since they have no access to computer-aided design and manufacture. These reservations apart, the curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the college and the increased timetable time has been effectively deployed to allow more time for music and personal and social development (PSD). The provision for PSD is good, with appropriate attention paid to sex education and drugs awareness.

37. Pupils are able to study an additional modern foreign language for GCSE although some parents have expressed concerns about the effectiveness of mixed-ability classes in these subjects. The strategies to develop literacy and numeracy throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 have been incorporated into the curriculum and enable the pupils to make good progress. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, with teachers using a range of appropriate activities, resources and support staff to ensure that these pupils make good progress in lessons. All pupils have access to computers, but whilst all pupils are taught in discrete lessons, the use of ICT for teaching in other subjects is under-developed. Pupils are also able to study drama in discrete lessons and make significant progress through stimulating and well-planned activities.
38. The staff are striving to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and fulfils the college's aim of being an educationally inclusive institution. The specific requirements of pupils with special educational needs both in the main college and for the pupils in the hearing impairment unit are being met well. Much thought has gone into finding courses that will keep disaffected pupils in education until the age of 16 and providing them with clear pathways beyond. One area that has received less attention is providing for gifted and talented pupils. Some departments make provision, but this is not co-ordinated across the college. A member of staff is currently working on proposals to tackle this shortcoming.
39. The college has established good links with partner institutions such as East Devon College, to provide additional courses for pupils, including having a visiting lecturer for the health and social care GNVQ. The careers guidance for Years 10 and 11 and the annual work experience for Year 11 provide pupils with good preparation for the world of work. The college works closely with the local careers service to ensure that informative advice is made available to all pupils. The college provides a wide range of activities beyond those in lessons and they are particularly strong and appreciated in physical education, drama and music. These activities also include several subject-specific clubs, for example in science. The girls-only ICT club represents a positive initiative to promote the use of computers among girls at the college. There are good pastoral and curriculum links with the local primary schools where teachers regularly exchange information and spend time co-ordinating curriculum provision. The college also provides opportunities for pupils to travel abroad.
40. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is an integral part of the college's commitment to access and equality of opportunity for all pupils. The college is fully aware of its revised responsibilities under the new Code of Practice including the need to ensure that pupils and parents are always involved in the setting of learning targets for pupils. In addition, the college has responded very effectively to the increased number and range of pupils who require learning support. The college has an extensive, dedicated system for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and makes good use of the large number of the learning support assistants (LSAs) employed. There is a clear and effective system for gathering and communicating information to subject staff; this is held centrally and distributed on a regular basis to faculty heads. Liaison with the college's feeder primary schools ensures that information about the pupils who need learning support is accurate and comprehensive. There is very good provision for traveller children; the college is flexible and accommodating and provides a caring and inclusive environment for these pupils.

41. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, mainly as a result of the college's inclusive environment both in and out of lessons. The PSD programme makes a significant contribution to the pupils' social and moral development. Whilst social and moral themes are clearly evident and integrated into lesson planning, spiritual and cultural themes are under-developed. The very good social development of pupils gives the college a strong sense of community where pupils feel integrated, safe and appreciated. The college actively promotes equality of access and opportunity through its provision for pupils with special educational needs and traveller children. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills through the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education, art, design and technology, music and ICT. Pupils work co-operatively in groups and show respect for each other's contributions.
42. The good moral provision is enhanced by giving the pupils opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example through the college council. Pupils adhere to a clear moral code and are able to distinguish right from wrong and what is and is not acceptable behaviour. The physical education teachers provide good role models, emphasising the importance of sportsmanship and exploring key issues like race and disability in sport. Moral responsibility was tackled effectively in lessons, such as when considering the coffee market in the economics and business studies course. Art and science explore moral themes to good effect; however, cultural influences on society hardly feature as important aspects of the modern world and growing up in the United Kingdom. The exceptions to this are in dance, drama, and music where multi-cultural themes are a feature of many lessons.
43. Although improved since the last inspection, the provision for the pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is a particular lack of spiritual awareness or spiritual themes explored in assemblies and lessons generally, with few opportunities to consider religious beliefs and to understand human feelings. Pupils do respect the integrity of their peers, and lessons are usually conducted in an inclusive and open climate, although some teachers do not always value the pupils' questions or responses. There is a need for all departments to integrate the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into their lesson planning, particularly with respect to spiritual and cultural themes.

## **Sixth form**

44. The college provides a broad and balanced curriculum that matches the needs of students who stay on to the sixth form, and as a consequence they often gain better results than their GCSE results predict. The college has responded well to the large increase in student numbers this year and has been able to offer a full range of A Level courses as well as several leading to vocational qualifications, although the take-up of the latter is not large. Whilst many Year 11 students opt to study courses at other colleges, those who do opt to stay on have stated that they can follow courses that meet their future career intentions. The timetable arrangements for courses provide sufficient time and flexibility to meet the needs of all subjects.
45. The statutory requirements of the sixth form curriculum are met, with the satisfactory provision of religious education through tutorials, assemblies and religious education conferences. The college is considering expanding the range of qualifications further and is working with partner colleges to establish the most effective way of delivering these, including the innovative use of video-conferencing. It has already expanded the sixth form provision by establishing AS courses in general studies and critical thinking. Furthermore, all students are offered opportunities to study ICT at AS Level, as part of the AS Level technology course or through the key skills programme. Unfortunately, the majority of students do not take up the offer. There are opportunities for students to resit GCSEs in mathematics and English. The physical education department runs a very successful A Level programme but there are no compulsory games lessons for non-examination students or other courses offered to develop the students' sporting and leadership skills.
46. There is an extensive range of activities which students take responsibility for and this provides good opportunities for them to develop their personal skills, for example through the college

council and the mentoring of pupils in the main college. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good, with a high take-up by students particularly in physical education, music and drama. Students are able to develop their personal skills further by the provision of residential trips and a work experience programme in Year 12. As in the main college, good provision is made for the students' personal development. Informative careers and higher education advice is provided through the local careers service and through the college's tutorial system. The weekly tutorial lesson is also used effectively to deliver personal, social and development activities as well as a course in industrial awareness for Year 12 students. The college is developing links with the local community and businesses and these should be developed further, particularly in business studies and the vocational courses.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

47. The college has a good pastoral system in which the support and welfare of pupils are taken seriously. Child protection procedures are good. One of the deputy principals is the designated officer and all staff work closely together through the pastoral system. Their close knowledge of the pupils means that concerns are quickly picked up and dealt with. The relationships within the college are such that all feel certain there is someone to talk to.
48. Due attention is paid to matters of health and safety, with the exception of some daily routines. The college recognises the need for better facilities for pupils. The canteen is overcrowded, there are few places to sit outside and little protection from the weather. Large groups of pupils were observed sitting outside on the playground to eat their packed lunches, even in November.
49. The management of behaviour is generally good, although with some inconsistencies in practice. For good behaviour and achievement there are commendations and letters home from heads of year. A graduated system of reports is used to track the behaviour of those causing concern. Classroom expectations vary. Detention time is used for a variety of activities from finishing homework to picking up litter. The recent consultation across the college on its aims and ethos will be a useful vehicle for the development of a new behaviour policy.
50. The procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The college has begun to use a computerised system which can identify patterns of absence for individual pupils, though it is not yet being used to compare the performance of different tutor or year groups.
51. The college collects a large amount of relevant data on pupils' attainment and progress and has put in place good procedures for using this information to guide curriculum planning and support pupils' learning. Although some departments have good procedures in place, this is not consistent across all subjects. The monitoring of the pupils' subject performance is particularly good in design and technology, art, ICT and physical education. In these subjects the procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are used effectively, and assessment information is used to guide curriculum planning. The art department also collects a range of data on pupils based on their own subject-specific analysis. Overall, however, unsatisfactory use is made of the assessment information that is now available to guide planning and to set subject-specific targets for students. The evaluation and monitoring of the individual progress of pupils with special educational needs is very thorough.
52. The recent analysis of the attainment of pupils on entry to the college, which has shown significant increases in the pupils' attainment, is being used to inform the planning of the college curriculum and in catering for the most able. The college is also using assessment information to set annual departmental targets as part of the very effective faculty reviews. The college calculates target grades for all pupils based on relevant statistical data which is enhanced by the professional judgement of subject teachers who know the particular strengths, weaknesses and potential of individual pupils; however, not all departments have fully embraced the use of data as a tool for supporting pupils' progress and aspirations. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are thorough and list an appropriate range of targets in literacy, numeracy, behaviour and personal and social skills.

53. There are particular strengths in the very good personal relationships and the teachers' knowledge of each pupil, which parents and carers appreciate very much. A thorough induction programme for Year 7 pupils smoothes the path into secondary education, and all pupils are treated with respect and consideration. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and the unit for hearing impaired pupils is particularly effective. A proper range of help is offered to pupils who experience difficulties, though there are not yet suitably challenging activities for the more able pupils. Pupils are well guided and supported through option choices for GCSE and the sixth form, and parents and carers are consulted. Good and continuing guidance is given on careers in a format appropriate to the age group. Tutorial time is also used to deal with pastoral matters, although this is variable in practice. In the best examples tutors discuss work or current affairs with pupils and monitor their progress, but at the other extreme pupils simply chat and waste time.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

54. The procedures for assessing student attainment and progress are good; however, there is not a consistent approach across the college to the use of assessment information to guide future planning by having assessment procedures embedded into all departments' subject development plans. The recent introduction of the use of national data to predict performance based on the students' GCSE results has given teachers the opportunity to measure their achievements more effectively and the amount of progress that the students make and to provide target grades for individuals. Although some departments have good procedures in place and know precisely how well students are achieving, the use of assessment and value-added data to monitor progress and inform individual learning needs is not consistent across all subjects. The weekly tutorial period gives good opportunities for students to discuss their progress and target grades. Students generally know their target grades and what they need to do to achieve them. There are particularly effective assessment procedures used in the A Level sports studies course and in art and design and technology. Students in these subjects have a very clear idea of their current and expected attainment levels and what they need to do to improve.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

55. Educational support and guidance are good; a close personal interest is taken in the welfare and progress of each student. Students report a high degree of satisfaction with the advice and induction procedures for sixth form study, including some 'taster' sessions run in the summer term of Year 11. The vast majority are confident they are in the right place and on the right course; however, they are not altogether happy about the information that they are given about their own progress and feel they have not been offered good advice on future options. The inspection found no evidence to support this, although the college accepts there has been rapid improvement in this area with the recent appointment of a new head of sixth form. The careers advice available to students is good, and some tutorial time is earmarked for career planning. About a quarter do not think the college helps them adequately with personal problems or treats them as mature adults; again no evidence was found for this view. Sixth form lessons were characterised by friendly but respectful interaction, noticeably where an adult learner has joined the Year 13 ICT A Level course. Tutors and staff are available for help and advice; the head of sixth form has his office within the common room and students are required to attend regular tutorial sessions and assemblies.
56. The college is particularly effective in guiding lower-attaining students into appropriate vocational and work-related courses, and in supporting their progress through frequent formal and informal reviews. Independent learning and research, however, need rather more emphasis from the college, as the sixth form common room is frequently occupied by students socialising instead of studying.

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



57. Parents and carers' views of the college are mostly positive. About a third of parents returned questionnaires and 34 came to the pre-inspection parents' meeting. Nearly all felt that their children are happy at college and are making good progress because of the good teaching they receive. Some who are parents and carers of children with special educational needs indicated that they greatly value the help given to their children. Although most parents said the staff were approachable, some felt the college did not work closely with them and they were not well informed about progress: for example, the contact book was not always well used. A number also complained about homework, saying that it was inconsistently set and marked and not always tailored to different abilities. The inspection found some evidence to support these views, in particular that homework is not used consistently to support learning. A small number of parents and carers felt that poor behaviour hindered learning on occasions and that putting pupils into sets by ability was desirable. Again, the inspection found some corroborating evidence in that isolated instances of disruptive behaviour were often linked to a lack of challenge in lessons.
58. The college provides a satisfactory range of information for its parents and carers, with informative brochures for GCSE courses and for sixth form entry. The prospectus and sixth form brochure are both full and detailed - the former professionally produced but lacking national comparisons for GCSE results. The governors' annual report to parents lacks a minor statutory item: information on the next election of parent governors, but is otherwise informative. Annual reports to parents are only just satisfactory, because they do not always contain enough information about what pupils know, understand and can do which is clearly linked to National Curriculum levels. Most subject teachers tell pupils how they can improve, but some do not give clear guidance.
59. In general, the partnership with parents and carers and their involvement with the college is satisfactory. The senior management team recognises that reports and homework need a sharper focus.

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

60. The college has been through a difficult period since the last inspection. The long-term illness and subsequent retirement of the previous principal meant that many important developments were put on hold and limited progress was made for three years. During this period, the senior management team was small and the individuals concerned carried heavy teaching commitments and major administrative roles. This considerably reduced their capacity to provide the college with the strategic direction that it needed. Systems and procedures were successfully maintained and although few improvements were introduced during this time, much was done to prepare staff for the changes that were recognised as urgently needed.
61. The new principal, who has been in post for just under two years, has brought clarity, focus and a renewed sense of purpose to the work of staff and the college. Leadership and management are now good. He is ably supported in establishing the direction for the college by the two experienced deputies, other senior staff and governors. Staff work well as a team and share the principal's commitment to improving teaching and raising standards. The features of the college that existed previously, such as care for the pupils, have been maintained and built upon. There is a strong commitment to educational inclusion by providing all pupils with opportunities to achieve and succeed.
62. The arrangements to manage, monitor and improve the performance of staff and departments have been much strengthened in the past two years and are now good. These arrangements have helped to improve the quality of teaching in the college and to increase the proportion of lessons that are now very well taught. The line management procedures whereby heads of faculty and others with management responsibilities are held to account for the work of their staff, have been considerably strengthened since the principal's appointment. This has resulted in consistency in the implementation of college policies and has helped to focus staff on improving standards. The faculty review system is thorough and rigorous. This is enabling senior management to gain and

maintain a good oversight of the work of staff and to have a much sharper picture of where the college's strengths lie and what steps need to be taken to eliminate weaknesses and secure improvement. Assessment and other data are being used increasingly effectively throughout the college to evaluate effectiveness, to identify success and to inform future planning for the college's improvement.

63. Development planning has been used as an effective tool to manage the improvements to the college in the last two years. Priorities are clear and there is a close correlation between these and the action plans of faculties. The financial implications of any proposed developments are carefully calculated and criteria established by which the success of spending decisions can be evaluated. Funding has been used well to support the college's main educational priorities. ICT facilities have been significantly extended, work has been undertaken to improve design and technology facilities and the level of administrative staff has been increased to release senior staff to perform their strategic management roles more effectively. A conscious decision has been taken to reduce the annual budget carry-forward figure to a low level and then to monitor spending very carefully so that costs can be tightly controlled. Initial evidence is that this is being successfully managed and is enabling the maximum funding to be released to support the education of those currently at the college. Funding provided for pupils with special educational needs is allocated appropriately. Satisfactory use is made of the principles of best value when planning the annual budget, and the college successfully gains value for money from its spending decisions. Longer-term budget projections indicate that this can be maintained assuming retention rates into the sixth form remain at least at the most recent level.
64. The governing body fulfils its roles and responsibilities well. Governors have established secure and effective procedures by which they can gain an overview of the work of the college and the standards achieved. Several governors have a good level of expertise and experience which they use to the benefit of the college. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and what steps need to be taken to secure improvements.
65. The enthusiasm, commitment and leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator have been major factors in the improvements since the last inspection. In addition, the support of the principal and governing body ensures that the college continues to provide a high and appropriate level of additional learning support for those pupils who require it. There is now an urgent need for all teachers to take on board the requirements of the new Code of Practice to provide activities and learning outcomes which cater for the needs of all pupils in class, including those with special educational needs. In addition, with the increased number and responsibilities of LSAs, the college should have a more formal monitoring and evaluation system which incorporates a programme for their continuing professional development.
66. There are enough trained and qualified staff to teach all the subjects appropriately, with particular strengths in art, geography, physical education, modern foreign languages and the special needs department; however, there is a shortage of technician support in design and technology, art and science which in some cases affects learning. The induction of newly qualified teachers is good and they report feeling well supported. The on-going professional development of staff is also well organised and has a significant bearing on improvements in teaching since the last inspection.
67. Accommodation is problematic in many ways because of the nature and limitations of the site, with its large number of temporary classrooms and little possibility of any major capital building projects in the near future. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs in the hearing impairment unit is good; however, accommodation is unsatisfactory in art, physical education and modern foreign languages. Resources for learning are good in physical education, business studies and special needs, but unsatisfactory in art, music and design and technology.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

68. The sixth form is being led by a newly appointed head of year. His position on the college's senior management team indicates the importance being placed on the post. It is from this position that a drive for improvement comes. Leadership and management are good and have already been instrumental in several significant improvements. Clear plans have been established for the future direction of the sixth form. Tutors work well as a team to promote high standards and a high level of support and guidance. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and to ensuring that courses are provided to meet the needs and aptitudes of the students who choose to stay on. The increasing take-up and the progress of students are indicators of the success that the college is having with its sixth form provision.
69. The work of subject staff is monitored as part of the process of departmental review, and this has been instrumental in the good teaching in most subjects. Procedures have been introduced to use the increasingly broad range of available data to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of staff, to monitor and track students and to set targets. These procedures are in their infancy and have not yet had the impact that the college believes they will.
70. Governors pay due attention to the sixth form in planning and monitoring. New funding arrangements are being carefully monitored to ensure that provision is cost-effective, self-financing and not draining resources away from other areas of the college. Although this has not been completely achieved, plans are in place for this position to be achieved in the immediate future.

## **Resources**

71. Sixth form students benefit from well-qualified teaching staff, who have been supported well in their professional development to enable them to teach the courses effectively. Sixth form pastoral staff are also experienced and have a good understanding of the students' needs. The accommodation for sixth form teaching and for the students' private study is satisfactory. There are some exceptions to this. The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory and specialist accommodation is needed for the fitness aspect of A Level physical education. The recent addition of a small computer room, adjacent to the sixth form common room is a valuable and well-used addition in recent years. Resources for learning and for supporting the students in their study are generally satisfactory. Resources for physical education, particularly for the students' private study, are good. The availability of computers and appropriate software is good, with the exception of art where the digital-imaging aspect needs better resourcing.

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

72. In order to continue the good progress made in the last two years and to raise standards further, staff and governors should:
- 1) Increase the time allocated to teaching religious education during Years 10 and 11 and place a greater emphasis on promoting the pupils' spiritual development throughout the college (paragraphs 5, 36 and 43)
  - 2) Ensure that higher-attaining pupils are consistently challenged in lessons and through enrichment activities for those who are gifted and talented (paragraphs 27 and 38)
  - 3) Ensure that all subject teachers consistently promote the key skills of speaking, listening and the use of ICT (paragraphs 28 and 37)
  - 4) Introduce a consistent programme for homework that challenges and extends pupils, and monitor its implementation (paragraphs 30 and 57)
  - 5) Develop systems and procedures so that assessment information is used to set individual targets for all pupils, to plan carefully the next steps in learning for all and to review and adapt

the curriculum in response to changes in the skills and knowledge of pupils in different year groups. (paragraphs 51 and 52)

## **Sixth form**

73. To raise standards further, the college should:

- 1) Improve arrangements by which the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are developed for all students (paragraph 35)
- 2) Ensure that teachers plan opportunities within their programmes for the students to engage in enquiry, discussion and debate (paragraph 34)
- 3) Use assessment information to set short-term learning goals for all students in all subjects. (paragraph 54)

## **Other issues which should be considered by the college**

74. In addition to the items above, the governors may wish to consider the inclusion of the following points in their action plan:

- Ensure better use by sixth form students of their study time in college. (paragraph 56)
- Continue to pursue vigorously opportunities to improve the overall quality of the accommodation. (paragraph 67)

## **THE WORK OF THE HEARING IMPAIRMENT UNIT**

75. The provision for the 15 pupils attached to the hearing impairment unit is very good. The attainment of these students varies widely – from above to far below average. Most pupils, however, have well below average skills in literacy and numeracy. Over half of them have reading ages five years below their real ages and this is a severe barrier to learning. Spelling is a significant weakness too, and many pupils need close support with their writing.
76. Because the provision is very good, pupils achieve well. They find it difficult to retain what has been taught, but they quickly improve literacy and numeracy skills and learn to think for themselves. They take responsibility for their own learning, as in a one-to-one session where the teacher allowed a Year 11 pupil to decide in which order the skills of looking, listening, reading and writing would be covered in preparation for a piece of English work on the effects of litter on the environment. By the age of 16, pupils take GCSE, attaining grades at least in line with expectations. Data indicates that achievement since entry to the college is good, and for a significant minority of pupils, very good.
77. Teaching and learning by specialist staff are very good. Teachers and support assistants have very good knowledge and understanding of how hearing impaired pupils learn best. They plan an interesting variety of activities and break down learning into small steps so that pupils sustain concentration. For example, in a one-to-one lesson for a Year 10 student on word-processing, the student practised not only computer skills but also speaking, listening, reading and writing. Emphasis on key words such as 'menu', 'insert' and 'delete' helped the student to understand the computer process and learning was very rapid. Such attention to literacy is a characteristic of most lessons. Teachers build very good relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils co-operate, are highly motivated and learn very well. For example, in a Year 10 art lesson, the support assistant encouraged and advised two pupils in their art work. Her interest in the pupils' achievement and her respect for their opinions led to very good progress in creating a natural image out of leaves and berries. Staff liaise closely with most subject teachers so that they know the content of the lesson and can plan resources to match the pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, the support teacher had helped to plan the lesson on preparing a persuasive leaflet. She gave very good support to two hearing impaired pupils, who were then able

to benefit fully from the planned work. Teachers use resources very well as an integral part of the lesson. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the support teacher used plastic cubes to help a pupil understand that a cube has a back surface, although this is not visible on paper. In a Year 11 lesson on the environment, the teacher skilfully referred to an excellent wall display of how litter affects the countryside and this visual check promoted very good learning.

78. The work of the unit plays a significant role in enabling pupils to benefit from the National Curriculum. In-class support is of a high quality, with very good teamwork between subject and support teachers. Hearing support teachers and assistants have considerable expertise and make a substantial contribution to pupils' very good learning in lessons, as seen in a Year 7 physical education lesson and a Year 8 lesson on personal and social development. They advise on different resources needed to aid learning and prepare materials for use in lessons. They give pupils opportunities to pursue their own interests. For example, two Year 11 pupils wanted to write a playscript based on a story that interested them and the outcome, displayed in the unit, is impressive. Pupils spend much of their time in mainstream classes but benefit from very good individual support in one-to-one sessions with the two support teachers and the speech therapist. The curriculum is enriched by visits – for example, to a local supermarket – and by one day a week spent at a local college where older pupils prepare for a certificate in working skills accredited by a major examination board.
79. Assessment procedures are very good. Pupils are assessed regularly during lessons and data amassed is effectively employed in subsequent learning. For example, a support teacher introduced a Bingo resource sheet to diagnose a Year 9 student's numeracy weaknesses, which he addressed in a later mathematics lesson. The head of the unit uses data well to analyse progress from entry in Year 7 to the national tests at age 14 and then to GCSE. He is planning to establish a baseline assessment in literacy soon, and this will enable progress to be monitored more closely. Individual education plans are in place and annual reviews, to which parents give good support, are well organised. The importance placed on assessment is having a major impact on pupils' good achievements because they know what they need to do to improve.
80. Leadership and management of the unit are very good. The head of unit deploys support assistants well so that the statutory requirements of the statements, which all hearing impaired pupils have, are met. There is a very good team spirit within the unit and a shared commitment to enabling pupils to work in mainstream classes and to benefit from specialist subject teaching. The head of unit monitors the work of the unit closely through regular meetings and classroom visits. He has built up a good bank of resources, for example reading books in simple language, but with material to interest older pupils. Accommodation is good in the unit and considerably enhanced by very good wall displays of pupils' work, of materials to be used in teaching and of photographs depicting the work of pupils on their day release at a local college. The acoustics in the hall, however, and in the huts make learning for the hearing impaired more difficult.
81. It is not possible to judge improvement since the last inspection as the unit was not in existence then.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	157
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		49

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	0	43	66	39	9	0	0
Percentage	0	27	42	25	6	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	1	11	24	14	0	0	0
Percentage	2	22	48	28	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form here as each lesson represents two percentage points.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	898	154
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	65	4

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	114	3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	88	89	177

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	62	70	73
	Girls	72	63	63
	Total	134	133	136
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	74 (55)	74 (69)	76 (70)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	40 (25)	54 (43)	39 (34)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	64	70	63
	Girls	69	70	58
	Total	133	140	121
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	74 (69)	79 (71)	67 (63)
	National	67 (65)	71 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	39 (27)	49 (41)	31 (23)
	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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	97	87	184

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	41	86	90
	Girls	42	73	77
	Total	83	159	167
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (55)	89 (92)	93 (97)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.5 (40.2)
	National	39.0 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	3	100
	National		n/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	17	16	33
	Average point score per candidate	221	235	228
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	17	16	33	1	2	3
	Average point score per candidate	218	225	222	40	80	66.7
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*



*\* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.*

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	100
	National		76

**Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1043	64	2
5		
2		
1		
1		

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.21

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	693

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.2
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.25
Key Stage 4	22.89

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2,929,772
Total expenditure	2,928,363
Expenditure per pupil	2,958
Balance brought forward from previous year	111,177
Balance carried forward to next year	112,586

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23.45
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	24.75

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1052
Number of questionnaires returned	382

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	54	5	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	58	11	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	54	18	5	2
The teaching is good.	24	64	4	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	47	22	6	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	49	6	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	46	7	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	47	25	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	31	51	3	3	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	53	7	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	49	12	3	14

### **Other issues raised by parents**

A small number of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed their concerns about the progress made by pupils in mixed-ability classes.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is good.
- Range and quality of the curriculum provided is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Work should be matched to the needs of higher-attaining pupils to ensure that they are appropriately challenged, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Better use should be made of assessment information to set short-term targets.
- More explicit teaching of speaking and listening is required.

82. Results in the 2002 tests for Year 9 (end of Key Stage 3 SATs) improved considerably and were above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. Following the national trend, girls achieved better results than boys. These results were similar to science but below mathematics. GCSE results were close to the national average in 2002 in both English and English literature, although this represented a slight fall from the previous year. Girls again outperformed boys; this follows the national trend, but boys do less well in English literature than nationally.
83. Inspection evidence is that the pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 where the teaching is good. Standards by Year 9 are above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 where the teaching is satisfactory. Standards are average by Year 11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good; they are well provided for by the use of special materials and by the dedicated work of support teachers. Year 7 pupils working on Literacy Progress Units are very well provided for and are making good progress.
84. Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory in Key Stage 3, although opportunities for pupils to explain their opinions and justify their views were limited in the lessons observed. Pupils engage wholeheartedly in paired and group discussion and were happy to make brief contributions to lessons in question and answer sessions. Pupils are weaker at Key Stage 4, with few being ready to make more extended oral responses in lessons. Pupils are keen readers in both key stages but many find it hard to draw inferences from texts when asked to read between the lines. Pupils often show good knowledge of the texts being studied at Key Stage 4. In both Key Stages 3 and 4 there are examples of able and confident extended writing. There is a very wide range of attainment in writing, however. The writing of a considerable number of pupils shows numerous weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
85. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers manage the pupils well and are diligent in marking pupils' books which contain many helpful and encouraging comments. Pupils throughout the college enjoy their studies in English, although this is less pronounced at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.
86. The department has embraced the national Key Stage 3 strategy energetically. Most English teaching rooms have overhead projectors but these are currently under-exploited as a tool for learning. Few examples were observed of teachers making objectives for learning sufficiently clear to pupils at the outset of lessons and returning to these objectives in end-of-lesson review sessions. An exception to this was observed in a very effective Year 9 lesson on poetry where the teacher provided explicit guidance to the pupils via clear written objectives, the use of teacher modelling and demonstration and supported independent study, leading to a strong impact on pupils' learning. Similarly, a Year 8 lesson on writing a persuasive letter offered pupils a clear view of what it was they were required to learn and a helpful structure to support them as they did so.

87. Lessons are taught in mixed-ability groupings in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. While lower-attaining pupils are well catered for, arrangements for challenging higher-attaining pupils are inadequate and too many pupils are marking time. Better use should be made of assessment information to set short-term learning goals for average-attaining and higher-attaining pupils. There needs to be more explicit teaching of speaking and listening, particularly in Years 10 and 11, helping pupils to take more responsibility for their learning through more extended oral contributions in lessons.
88. The English department is well led and managed, and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards are now rising, but more needs to be done to ensure that speaking and listening skills are developed by all departments. Staff have shown a willingness to embrace change in order to improve the provision for pupils. For example, the recent revision of schemes of work in Key Stage 3 has been achieved well. The range and quality of the English curriculum provided is good. More needs to be done to ensure that ICT figures as part of the work of the whole department and that the analysis of pupil performance data provides a basis for setting appropriate learning targets for pupils.

### **Drama**

89. Standards in drama are very good. Drawing on the 2002 data at GCSE, attainment in drama is average overall, but skewed towards the higher grades. In the most recent GCSE examinations a large percentage of pupils gained higher grades in drama. Pupils make good progress from entry to the college, developing their skills and confidence well. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers are knowledgeable, manage the pupils very well and give clear and helpful guidance to them. Pupils enjoy the opportunities provided for them in drama to take increased responsibility for their learning within an atmosphere of high expectations and consistent challenge. In one Year 11 lesson, the pupils had been working on short scripted extracts and were given detailed guidance on how best to develop their interpretations, which led to all pupils making solid progress. Opportunities to reflect on their own learning were provided for all pupils. Better support for appropriate evaluative language would help to promote even higher standards.
90. Drama teaching is very well led by a confident and committed head of drama who has established a markedly positive ethos for learning which extends to all drama lessons and has secured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Most teaching is lively, enthusiastic, and draws on pupils' thinking well.
- All curricular areas are covered well, including the using and application of mathematics.
- The National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact upon teaching approaches.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There is insufficient use of ICT and practical equipment to support learning.
- Review sessions at the ends of lessons could be better used.
- Some younger higher-attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.

91. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs) in 2002, the pupils achieved results that were well above the national average, when compared both with all schools and with similar schools. These results are better than those in English and science. There has been an improving but fluctuating trend in recent years.

92. In GCSE examinations in 2001, the number of pupils who achieved grades in the range A\*-C was above the national average. The pupils' performance in mathematics was close to the average of all the other subjects that they studied, and there was no significant variation in results by gender. College figures for 2002 show that the number of pupils who achieved grades in the range A\*-C fell, and was close to the national average; however, there was an increase in the number of pupils achieving the highest grades, and many pupils did better than the predictions based on their Key Stage 3 results.
93. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9. The pupils make good progress and as a result standards are above average by Year 9. The pupils engage with a wide range of topics, and the use and application of mathematics is particularly well evidenced through investigational coursework, which teachers mark and level against the National Curriculum, and on which they write helpful suggestions for development. Higher-attaining pupils successfully calculate and use computer spreadsheets to generate solutions for equations. Much of this work challenges and extends all pupils well. There is progression within lessons, teachers communicate their own interest and enthusiasm in lively and interactive ways, and they attend carefully to individuals' uncertainties or misunderstandings. A few lessons are less demanding, and the work set is well within the existing capabilities of some of the pupils, who would benefit from greater challenge than others in the class. Average and lower-attaining pupils are usually taught well, and teachers provide well-structured activities to support learning. An example was a low-ability set in Year 7, in which the pupils with special educational needs were assisted well by support staff, and where the very effective use of resources resulted in good learning. There are a few instances where board work is untidy and lacks clarity, unsatisfactory behaviour goes unchecked, or a lack of effort by pupils inhibits their progress. Nevertheless most pupils display positive attitudes and behave well.
94. The pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11, and standards are above average in these year groups. There is a considerable contrast in the complexity of mathematics tackled by different attainment groups. Higher-attaining pupils' work is well above expected levels in all aspects of mathematics. Their folders contain good examples of extended investigational coursework focused on the use and application of mathematics and the use and interpretation of statistical measures. Average and lower-attaining pupils also undertake investigational coursework. Whilst pupils record all their work carefully, and teachers mark it accurately, its scope and significance are sometimes limited. Pupils are well taught in Years 10 and 11. Most lessons are brisk, interactive and effective, and the best of these draw upon pupils' own thinking and share this with classes, including through the constructive analysis of errors. The use of aids such as three-dimensional objects, prepared projector transparencies, and information technology for teaching do not feature strongly. The utilisation of concluding sessions to rehearse and emphasise recent learning gains is underdeveloped.
95. The faculty contributes to the promotion of literacy in mathematics lessons through an emphasis on key words and the use of written language to record investigational work. The faculty also promotes numeracy satisfactorily throughout the college curriculum through the shared awareness of mathematical approaches and by encouraging other teachers to use and reinforce mathematical processes in their own subject areas.
96. Leadership and management of the faculty are both good. Particular strengths include the close linkage between the faculty development plan and the college improvement plan, the careful analysis of all available examination data to provide retrospective insights and predictive indicators, the rolling programme of policy reviews and the well-developed team spirit which is evident in discussions with teachers. The recent faculty review was a substantial exercise which identified accurately a number of pertinent strengths and development needs. Some of these developments, including liaison with primary schools and the deployment of support personnel, have already received noticeable attention. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. Several other developments have yet to demonstrate significant impact on the work of the faculty, and three of these are confirmed as areas for improvement at the beginning of the mathematics section of this inspection report.





## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above national averages.
- The good teaching in science is enabling pupils to achieve well and make good progress.
- Very positive relationships result in good attitudes to learning.
- Clear leadership and management ensure that the faculty is well placed for the next stages of development.

### Areas for improvement

- Scientific enquiry skills are underdeveloped.
- Assessment information is not used consistently to inform pupils of their progress or to influence curriculum planning.
- The actions and criteria for success within the improvement plan require further refinement.

97. In the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the pupils achieved results that were above both the national average and the average for similar schools. The results, which were similar to those for English and slightly below those for mathematics, represent very good progress for the pupils given their attainment on entry to the college. Since the last inspection, science results have improved at a slightly faster rate than those nationally, with no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
98. GCSE results for 2001 were well above the national average. Pupils entered for the double award in science in 2001 did significantly better in this subject than in the average for all of their other subjects. In the single science award, pupils overall did slightly less well in the subject compared to the average for all of their other subjects. Boys actually did better in single science compared to their other subjects but the girls' comparative performance was not as good. The pupils' performance in science was better than that in both English and mathematics. In 2002 the results for the double science award dropped, although those for the single award improved.
99. The good teaching in both key stages enables pupils to achieve well in lessons and make good progress. As a result, standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are above average. Teachers plan their lessons well and, although lesson objectives are not always shared with the class at the beginning of the session, the logical development of activities ensures that pupils are clear about the purpose of the work that they are undertaking. Teachers' explanations are underpinned by good subject knowledge. Their lively presentations engage the interest of the pupils who listen attentively and undertake subsequent activities with enthusiasm. Teachers introduce and reinforce key technical vocabulary through careful questioning and recapping at the end of lessons. The very good relationships in the classroom and high expectations of the teachers result in the very positive responses of the pupils to their science work. As a result, by the end of Year 9, pupils have a good grasp of key scientific ideas and many are able to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar situations. Higher attainers, for example, are able to use their knowledge of atomic structure to explain the process of electrolysis to extract metals. Most pupils use technical vocabulary confidently to describe scientific processes such as the distinction between respiration and breathing.
100. Teachers ensure that the work at Key Stage 4 builds progressively from that undertaken at Key Stage 3 so that the pupils' knowledge and understanding of key scientific ideas are developed and strengthened. There are currently some overlaps in the curriculum provision in Years 9 and 10, which lead to some repetition of work, but this shortcoming has been recognised and plans are in place to remedy the matter. An active science club, which is attended by an impressive number of older pupils, enhances the curriculum.
101. In both key stages teachers use demonstrations and practical work effectively to underpin and consolidate scientific understanding. In a Year 10 lesson on sensory organs, the teacher

performed an accurate and carefully explained dissection of an eye, which enabled the pupils to undertake their own practical activity with confidence. As a result, the pupils gained a more secure knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of the eye. Good classroom management means that practical activities are undertaken efficiently and safely, with pupils working well in groups. For example, one teacher effectively managed a large Year 8 class working collaboratively in groups, ensuring that the pupils successfully completed a complex experiment and were able to start to describe the reactions that were taking place. The extensive practical work undertaken enables the pupils to make observations, take accurate readings and record their findings in tables. They can interpret the line and scatter graphs that they produce from their results to draw conclusions from their experiments. Higher-attainers are often able to underpin their conclusions with the appropriate scientific theory. In general, whilst practical skills are well developed, the broader skills of scientific enquiry such as making predictions and evaluating outcomes through the application of scientific knowledge are less well developed.

102. The setting arrangements support teachers in their efforts to ensure that work is matched to the needs of pupils. For these groups, good teaching enables all pupils to achieve well including the higher-attainers and those with special educational needs. In the mixed-ability groups in Years 7 and 8 some very good teaching ensures that all pupils in the class are achieving well. Activities such as starter sessions where pupils use coloured cards to respond to the teacher's prompts and the participation of pupils to model the rotation of the moon around the earth, ensure that all members of the class are fully engaged in learning. Additional adult support in the classroom is also usually effective in supporting the lower-attainers, although this is not consistently the case. In a few mixed-ability groups the lower-attainers are not fully included in the lesson. A lack of focused questioning or framework to support their writing which would help them to understand means that, whilst they complete practical tasks, they do not always achieve as well as their classmates. On balance, however, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. There is no significant variation in the achievements and progress of boys and girls.
103. Whilst teaching is good overall, with some very good practice, there are some shortcomings. These relate to pace, which is sometimes leisurely rather than challenging, and interactions with pupils. For example, there are some occasions when opportunities to probe and challenge understanding whilst pupils are undertaking practical work or answering questions in their books, are not fully exploited. More time should be given to pupils for discussion and presentation to enable them to develop their own understanding of scientific ideas. Procedures for the setting and marking of homework are satisfactory but assessment data should be used more systematically to give feedback to pupils, set learning targets for improvement and inform curricular planning. Language, number and ICT skills are developed satisfactorily but could be enhanced through more systematic planning.
104. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of direction and a strong team ethos within the faculty. Technical support is good, particularly given the limited number of hours provided each week. Data analysis has been undertaken and is beginning to inform teaching and learning. An extensive faculty review has provided a good basis for the next stages of development and has also served to strengthen the monitoring skills of senior faculty staff. The Key Stage 3 strategy for science is being adopted and is having a beneficial effect on learning. The faculty improvement plan should now be strengthened by using the monitoring information available to sharpen the focus of the next steps to be taken and the methods for judging success. Overall progress since the last inspection is satisfactory and the faculty is well placed to secure further improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Leadership of the art department is good and the shared commitment of the teaching team is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils' progress is tracked efficiently.
- Pupils display positive attitudes in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation and resources, including the provision and use of computers and appropriate software are limited.
- There is too great a performance gap between boys and girls.

105. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in the 2001 GCSE examination was above average. The proportion of girls achieving the higher grades was significantly above national averages, whilst boys' results were below. Results for 2002 show a slight fall; however, boys' achievements have risen, whilst those of girls have fallen, narrowing the very wide gap that was evident in the results from 2001. The very good teaching seen during the inspection, along with the commitment and determination shown by the newly appointed head of department and shared by the teaching team, are helping to raise standards. The re-written schemes of work are benefiting teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. The Key Stage 3 strategy is not yet secure in planning and teaching, but is already contributing to the development of literacy and critical thinking skills.

106. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9, so that attainment by Year 9 is consistent with national expectations and often above. Evidence from sketchbooks shows the systematic development of the basic art skills of line, tone, colour and texture, with tonal work to convey form becoming particularly strong in Year 9. Some very high individual standards of drawing are evident in sketchbooks. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 build up a good repertoire of mark making, experimenting with different grades of pencil, ink and paint. They then apply these to observational drawing very effectively. Pupils know the primary and secondary colours and can identify complementary or 'clashing' colour on the chart. In using the pointillist style, they do not yet blend colour to full effect. In Year 8, the higher-attainers know the facial proportions and draw accurate portraits, including good tonal effects. Lower-attaining pupils tend to resort to more child-like portraits, seemingly surprised when the teacher points out true proportions. Pupils with special educational needs make the same very good progress as others in the well-taught lessons. The critical thinking and evaluative skills of pupils are not developed with the same confidence as art skills and many pupils do not make clear links between their work and that of the artists they study.

107. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress in Years 10 and 11, and by Year 11 attainment is above expectations. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 are working confidently with their studies, including information gleaned from books and the Internet. They build their GCSE portfolios in individually interesting ways, a few pupils venturing into digital imaging and manipulation, using the very limited computer resources available. They explore the work of Warhol, Lichtenstein and Blake in a three-dimensional 'pop art' theme, but many do not think through the sculptural development of the imagery that they choose. Pupils in Year 10 make very good use of a visit to the Eden Project, utilising the work of Goldsworthy to develop colourful and interesting images from natural colours, shapes and forms. Girls tend to put more intellectual effort into their work and are generally neater in their presentation; however, boys are more imaginative in developing their ideas, although results are not so well presented and annotated.

108. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than good and often very good, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where it is mostly very good. Teachers have a very good and secure grasp of the subject, and they teach with confidence and enthusiasm. Although the introduction to lessons

does not always involve the pupils to full effect, some are started very effectively with a brisk question and answer session, followed by a very good practical demonstration of the teacher's skills. In these lessons the pupils get off to a brisk start and make very good progress. Lessons are generally well planned, enabling the pupils to build on their skills in a systematic way. In one very good lesson observed, the Key Stage 3 lesson structure was very effectively used to introduce the cubist work of Picasso and Braque, with well-modelled techniques demonstrated and a final session that allowed the pupils to evaluate critically the work they had done. In single lessons this is not easy to do and requires very good pacing and timing. Very good relationships and enthusiastic teaching lead to a pleasant, relaxed, but industrious environment for learning. The pupils enjoy art lessons and they are well behaved and respectful of one another's work. They work well together in the relaxed, purposeful environment and are very positive in their attitudes to learning.

109. The newly appointed head of department is clear about the way forward for the department and is seeking to raise the profile of art as the teaching team raises general standards. Schemes of work have been re-written and the progress of pupils is efficiently tracked, enabling realistic targets to be set and informed predictions to be made about GCSE examination performance. The department is currently piloting a baseline assessment framework, built on information gleaned from the well-planned introductory art session for Year 6 pupils. The accommodation and resources available for teaching and learning are scattered and unsatisfactory. For computer art to develop there is a need to improve significantly both hardware and software resources. The gender gap in public examinations is narrowing, but the gap remains wider than that nationally. The historical position of art within the design faculty is itself secure, but there is a need to raise the profile of the art department and ensure that the head of department has a clear and distinct management role within the faculty. The identification of talented pupils is not yet secure and there needs to be a more effective challenge to them.
110. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection, having raised the standards of teaching and accelerated the progress of pupils. Although much improved, the critical thinking skills of the pupils need further development.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average in Years 7 and 8 and the pupils are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9.
- The subject is high in the priorities of the college.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 should be brought to the standard of the best.
- Assessment needs to be shaped into a strategy that will benefit pupils and teachers.
- The subject needs to be rigorously monitored and the lines of responsibility clearly defined.

111. Standards are above average in Years 7 and 8. In Year 7, pupils are developing a good understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. In Year 8, pupils understand the issues involved in the age of criminal responsibility. Through discussion they understand the role and responsibilities of parents, although they find it much more difficult to identify their responsibilities as children. As citizenship is taught through personal and social development, there were no citizenship lessons in Year 9 during inspection week.
112. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make very good progress because the teaching is very good. Teaching is highly effective, stimulating and challenging, as a result of which the pupils learn quickly and productively with enthusiasm. Teachers are respected, and enjoy very good relationships with the pupils. Pupils trust their teachers with quite personal information in some discussions. Teachers

are keen to explore moral, social and cultural issues and are not afraid to consider challenging topics such as the age of criminal responsibility with particular reference to the James Bulger case. Teachers are positive when marking the pupils' work and they provide a balanced view by asking questions and provoking the pupils to think further about their opinions. Teachers in some instances choose groups carefully to enable the pupils to get the most out of their discussions. In a Year 8 lesson on the role of parents, for example, the teacher expected the pupils to take responsibility for their own group and in turn for their own behaviour. Pupils worked responsibly as a result with real commitment. The teachers monitor group work closely, offering advice and carefully guiding the pupils to make decisions as a result of which they feel in control. The pupils' attitudes to the subject at this level are very good indeed.

113. In Years 10 and 11, the pupils' knowledge and understanding are average overall. They know about consumers' rights and understand the necessity for making complaints and how to do it effectively. They understand the problems arising from credit card debt, although their knowledge of credit cards generally is very patchy.
114. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is very good, the pupils learn very well, and make very good progress. They work productively, vocally and at a very good pace, as in a lesson considering consumers' rights. In this Year 11 lesson, through progressive activities, including small dramatised scenarios, pupils were able to give very creditable answers to different consumer problems by the end of the lesson. They were also encouraged to think about the most effective ways of making a complaint. Where teaching is only satisfactory, as in the majority of the lessons observed at this level, there is insufficient stimulation and pace, and lessons are too dominated by the teacher. As a result, the pupils do not concentrate and are content to drift. Progress is only satisfactory. This is a pity because many pupils think that the subject is useful, and during a very good video on consumerism and credit card debt, the pupils engaged well with the subject. In another on the developing world, the pupils were able to empathise with young people in countries such as Bangladesh and the Sudan.
115. Other subjects provide good opportunities to include a study of citizenship, but the contribution from some is inconsistent. Opportunities are highlighted in the schemes of work for history, and the pupils evaluate and discuss evidence enabling them to make informed and responsible decisions. Design and technology provides identified opportunities for citizenship through studying how the economy works in Years 10 and 11 and through ethnic studies in Year 8. Raising money for charity and The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme among others offers opportunities to participate in activities that promote citizenship. The college council and the sixth form council are democratically elected bodies that make decisions about life in the college.
116. The college started its commitment to citizenship a year early, showing that the subject is high in its priorities. This is also shown in the setting up of the units of work for the whole college. As yet there is no assessment policy and this needs rectifying with some urgency in order to enable pupils to develop the skills of enquiry, communication, participation and responsibility. The co-ordination of the subject needs clarifying so that there is a direct line of responsibility. As yet there is no clear-cut policy or procedure for monitoring the subject's performance.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Above average standards are reached by girls by the end of Year 11.
- Procedures for assessment are effective.
- There is a strong department team spirit and a determination to improve further.

### Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys in resistant materials in Years 10 to 11 needs to be raised.
- There is a lack of ICT resources for computer aided design and manufacture.
- Classroom assessment strategies to improve learning, particularly for the higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils need to be considered.
- There needs to be greater awareness of pupils' literacy needs.

117. Pupils enter the college with below average knowledge, understanding and skill development in designing, making and evaluating. This is confirmed by the department's baseline assessment. The subject is not currently taught in all feeder primary schools. The majority of pupils reach the nationally expected Level 5 by the end of Year 9. In GCSE in 2001 the pupils' overall results were above average. Girls achieved considerably better than boys. Whilst girls entered for this subject did better than in the average of all their other subjects, boys achieved significantly below. Attainment in GCSE improved as a result of the good performance of girls in 2001 but declined in 2002. Numbers taking the subject at this level have risen, with fewer pupils failing to complete the course.
118. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well as a result of the teachers' good subject knowledge and effective planning. This ensures that they all gain general knowledge, understanding and skill development in all technology areas. The average standards, observed during the inspection in lessons and pupils' folders, confirm teacher assessments; however, progression in practical work in wood and plastics was limited, because two workshops were being refurbished. Pupils have equal access but currently the provision is better for pupils with special educational needs or hearing impairment than for potentially higher-attainers and gifted and talented pupils. Whilst teachers have all had literacy training, this is not firmly embedded in thinking or practice. The final parts of lessons are often rushed and no time is allowed for pupils to reflect on and report back to their teacher what they think they have learned. As a result, whilst assessment at the end of projects is good, assessment for informing the pupils' next step in learning is not considered. Good skill development was evident in food lessons as Year 7 pupils prepared Mexican vegetable salads and learned to work efficiently within a given time span. Progress in learning about the distinct characteristics of fruit and vegetables was limited for lower-attainers by the worksheet provided. Pupils had to infer information from the text rather than it being provided for them. These pupils did not possess the higher order reading skills required. Year 7 pupils were given no advice over what makes a quality poster and as a result achievement was low. In textiles, Year 8 pupils learn to understand the specific characteristics of tie-dye and stencil cutting and how they can be used to enhance surface decoration, but too little consideration is given to the importance of design. Year 9 pupils gained a basic understanding of E-numbers and food additives from watching a video; however, they were prevented by the teacher from making notes and as a result did not engage at a deeper level with the serious issues being tackled. Higher-attainers in this same group achieved more in a graphics lesson because they were supported in their thinking by good visual models as well as being offered an interesting and challenging task where they could use their imagination. The pupils knew what they were aiming for and this gave them the motivation to put in that extra bit of effort in developing their drawing skills in order to communicate their ideas effectively.
119. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are achieving well overall and standards are average. The achievement of all-girl groups in Years 10 and 11 is better than groups composed mainly of boys. The learning of higher-attaining boys, in Year 10 graphics for example, is adversely affected by the poor behaviour of a few boys. Whilst the other boys work very hard in spite of the disruptions, the current situation limits achievement and progress. Pupils do not always have sufficient skills in numeracy to be able to carry out their tasks. This was evident to both the pupils and the teacher as lower-attaining boys measured the social area in readiness for making models. Boys in this group are motivated and make every effort to explain orally what they are doing. Extended speaking of this sort was not a usual feature of the lessons seen. ICT is used well for preparing questionnaires, research, analysing data and presenting findings as graphs. Higher-attaining boys in Year 11 model effectively, given the resources available, but further development of products is limited by the lack of suitable equipment or software. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and as a consequence are making good progress.

120. The standards achieved by Years 9 and 11 are consistent with those reported at the previous inspection. The department has made good progress in responding to the issues raised. Lack of suitable accommodation, inadequate resources and insufficient technical help have limited the department's ability to move forward further. Now that some of the accommodation problems are being resolved the subject manager and department need to consider strategies for assessment to improve learning and raising standards of literacy as well as offering better provision for boys and more challenge for the higher-attainers and gifted and talented. The college needs to seek ways to provide equipment for computer-aided design and manufacture as well as more technical support.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, with many strengths.
- Numeracy standards are good; graphical and map skills are taught and used well.
- The attitude and interest of most pupils are good, as are relationships with teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Learning needs greater focus and to develop more varied learning activities, including fieldwork or other first-hand, practical experience.
- Matching work to the pupils' prior attainment and aptitude is insufficient, particularly to stretch and challenge the potentially higher-attaining pupils.
- Assessment within Key Stage 3 needs development in line with the National Curriculum.

121. Standards as shown by the 2001 GCSE results are close to the national average for the proportion of pupils with A\*-C grades. Although this was lower than at the time of the previous inspection, it was higher than the intervening years. Boys attained higher standards than girls, a similar pattern to 2000. The proportion of A\*-C grades in 2002 was well below the national average, and below the department's target, although most pupils attained close to the prediction based on earlier end-of-Year 9 assessments.

122. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment by Year 9 is close to that expected nationally. Pupils in Year 7 enter the college with little knowledge and understanding of geographical concepts, and the first term concentrates on developing skills and an appropriate vocabulary. Map skills are rightly a focus. A good lesson was seen where the pupils learnt how to use four-figure grid references by moving their fingers along grid lines. The pupils became quite excited about using an Ordnance Survey map of the local area. This was handled well by the teacher, who made learning into a game and tested knowledge in a quiz. Teachers stress the use and meaning of key words, often in a verbal recap starter to a lesson, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on rivers recalling terms learnt in Year 7. Knowledge and understanding of geographical terms were developed with an examination of the River Tees from source to mouth, using one of the many attractive textbooks available. Pupils demonstrated good awareness of number, and their graphical skills were developed through drawing the long profile of a river, following stepped instructions. Research skills are developed well through finding information from the large range of textbooks in each room. Homework set for one Year 9 class included research on Italy using the Internet or books in the library or at home. Many interesting facts emerged and were used as a stimulus by the teacher to develop further knowledge about the regions of Italy. Another Year 9 class was investigating the truth or otherwise of statements about houses in different economically developed countries, testing their own pre-conceived views with real-life photographs. Comparing, contrasting and testing hypotheses are geographical skills which are important to develop, but which had limited success when taught theoretically rather than by practical learning activities.

123. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 10 and 11 in response to good teaching. Standards are close to the national average by Year 11. Geography classes are mixed-ability, and in practice the needs of the higher-attaining pupils are not always met. There is insufficient extension work to develop knowledge, understanding and skills at a higher level for the more able, or to develop extended writing skills. Work is aimed at the middle of each class, although simpler worksheets and writing frames are provided for the lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, who make satisfactory to good progress overall. The language skills of middle and lower-attaining pupils are promoted through key words displayed clearly, through pupils reading aloud round the class and through structured writing frames for taking notes. Extracts from local newspaper articles on traffic problems in Exeter were read aloud by Year 11 pupils, followed by textbook research on similar problems in cities around the world using atlases and other texts.
124. Many teachers plan and attempt group work. Lively discussion resulted from the resources provided by the teacher in a Year 10 lesson. The pupils had to decide which items were essential or a luxury for teenagers living in countries of differing economic development, to develop understanding of the concept of resources and sustainability. Even in this good lesson several girls chatted and this was a feature of many Year 9, 10 and 11 lessons, holding back their own and others' progress. Overall, girls do not to achieve as well as boys. Although behaviour and attitudes are generally good, with interest in geography shown by most boys and girls, the number choosing to study GCSE geography is declining.
125. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features including lesson planning with objectives clearly stated. The best lessons have followed the guidance in the Key Stage 3 strategy to structure lessons with a warm-up starter, a variety of activities to involve and challenge pupils and a review session where pupils summarise their learning. Teachers circulate around their classes well, helping individuals, discussing their work and attempting to keep everyone concentrating. Graphical skills are particularly well taught, and pupils can produce good graphs and diagrams. Most teachers have effective classroom management skills; however where the teacher talks too much or is too theoretical, the pupils lose interest and attention wanes, slowing the pace and quality of learning.
126. The marking of pupils' work is good on the whole, often with constructive comments and grades for effort and attainment. In Key Stage 3 the National Curriculum levels and descriptors of attainment are not used to assess work or inform pupils or parents. Grade targets are set for pupils, but formative targets to help pupils know what to do to improve are infrequent. Assessment is better and more valid as pupils approach GCSE. Analyses of GCSE results and pupils' attainment in Years 10 and 11 last year have led to a change to a more practical syllabus. Schemes of work are under constant review and indicate opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT, but do not make explicit the spiritual and cultural dimension of geography.
127. Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory, with clear aims and developing schemes of work, but with insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. Textbook resources are good, although GCSE pupils would benefit from their own copy of the most relevant book to improve independent learning skills. Practical equipment and models are rarely seen, although the weather station recommended in the last report is now established. There is insufficient access to and use of ICT, although the position is better than at the time of the last inspection. Standards at GCSE have declined, but so also has the prior attainment levels of pupils. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are good at Key Stage 4.



- The department is well managed.
- Teaching overall is good and very good in Key Stage 4.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to promoting literacy and to the development of moral, social and cultural awareness.

Areas for improvement

- There are no ICT facilities in the history rooms.
- Timetabling anomalies mean that some pupils do not have history lessons in every week.
- Some lessons do not provide appropriate challenge for the highest-attaining pupils.
- Assessment procedures and use of information require development in Key Stage 3.

128. GCSE results in 2001 were above average. More girls took the course and although they did better than boys, they under-performed when their results are compared with other subjects. Relatively few achieved the highest grades. In 2002, results were a little lower, and again below in comparison with other subjects; however, both boys and girls achieved results close to their target grades. The trend is one of a noticeable improvement in standards since the last inspection. Standards are good because of the quality of teaching within the department and because the vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their work in class.
129. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations as a result of good teaching and learning at Key Stage 3. Pupils have a good understanding of how to use sources of evidence, and written work shows that many can write about history well and at length when required. Those who find written work more difficult show their knowledge in discussion and other oral work. Pupils achieve well. Pupils can write about and understand the major events of previous centuries, and their knowledge of key developments is often good. Written work is sound for the majority of pupils and oral work is often good. Higher-attaining pupils are able to express their ideas well. They can demonstrate how events link together and thus show that they understand the principles of cause and effect. Average-attaining pupils understand the environmental issues related to industrial and transport change. The most able can use a variety of information to make deductions about possible risks in investing in railway building. Teachers use a variety of strategies to help the pupils to understand economic change including demonstrations of spinning techniques and canal and railway-based games. In most classes there is a clear focus on promoting skills in English because problems, particularly in written work, have been identified. The teachers promote effective learning by using key vocabulary and writing frames. It is clear that statistics are also used to help pupils understand change but more use could be made of numerical data overall. Not all lessons have a review of learning at the end and therefore opportunities to consolidate new knowledge are sometimes lost.
130. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 show that they understand how to use a variety of sources of evidence because this skill is taught well from Year 7 onward. Study of the Roman period is well taught with a clear focus on how to study history. A lesson held in the library used a variety of resources to promote research-based skills. The library and computer rooms are well used for this type of work but there are no computers in the classrooms so ICT is not yet an integral part of learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of support; however, in some classes where there are many pupils with special educational needs, insufficient challenge is provided for the highest-attaining pupils. In a lesson in Year 8 on Elizabethan portraits, the pupils were not made aware of important but more difficult issues, particularly the symbolism which is a vital feature of the learning. Teachers encourage discussion of many issues and this contributes well to the pupils' understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. Particularly apt use is made of homework tasks, such as the production of birthday cards in Latin.
131. Pupils are making good progress in acquiring the skills required at GCSE because teaching is very good. Most pupils in Year 11 have a very good knowledge of the topics that they have studied. For example, individuals can compare the dilemmas facing the victors in 1918 with those that had to be resolved in 1945. They have completed coursework that they have planned very carefully with the help of their teachers. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 understand why the collectivization of agriculture in the USSR caused famine but also strengthened the economy. Lower-attaining pupils do not organise their work when writing detailed analytical answers but they

are supported and advised well. Most pupils in both year groups understand how propaganda can influence public opinion, how to identify bias, the link between cause and effect and how to use varied sources of evidence, showing that they have the level of skills, knowledge and understanding to reach the higher grades at GCSE.

132. Pupils work hard and contribute very well in lessons. They enjoy activities in class and find the work interesting and challenging. Boys often contribute particularly well, for example in discussions on the causes of the Cold War; however, in some lessons pupils are passive and they are not always good at taking responsibility for their own learning in group work. The contribution and response from pupils with special educational needs is often very good.
133. The management of the subject is good. A focus on the skills used by the historian provides a good link between work in primary and secondary school. Targets are set and pupils are assessed effectively; marking is usually thorough and helpful but there is still some inconsistency. The management of assessment information requires further development to ensure that progress is carefully monitored. Work in Key Stage 3 does not always challenge the higher-attaining pupils; this issue was also identified in the last report. There are some timetable anomalies that affect the learning of some classes. Overall improvement is clearly good, especially in the improvement at GCSE where standards are now above rather than below the national average.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good in ICT lessons.
- Thorough assessment procedures have been introduced.
- Extra-curricular access to computers is available to pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- More use needs to be made of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in many subjects.
- The use of ICT to control and automate events needs improvement.

134. There are no ICT examination results to report. Provision for ICT is improving in Years 7 to 11 with the introduction of discrete ICT lessons, but the use of ICT in some subjects is underdeveloped.
135. Standards in lessons and in work seen in Years 7 to 9 match the overall expectations for this age group, although the attainment of boys is better than that of girls, which is contrary to the national trend. The college has made a significant commitment to improving the ICT curriculum recently and all pupils now have the equivalent of one lesson per week in all three years. As a result of increased opportunities and good teaching, pupils make good progress and standards are improving. Pupils in a Year 8 lesson were adept at producing effective multi-slide electronic presentations. These included appropriate text and headings, together with pupils' own spreadsheet tables and graphs. In addition, the more able pupils used the Internet to provide a range of appropriate pictures and animated graphics to illustrate their presentations. The scheme of work provides appropriate challenge for a wide range of abilities. There are opportunities for the more able to move on, and those with special needs are well supported. More thorough assessment procedures which were introduced last year provide a more accurate indication of National Curriculum levels. Work is marked regularly and pupils know the level that they are attaining.
136. GCSE ICT is now an option in Year 10 and pupils on this course are making good progress. The majority of pupils are producing work which is consistent with expectations. In a Year 10 GCSE lesson, pupils were creating a spreadsheet to enable mobile phone users to decide upon the most appropriate tariff to suit their needs. Pupils constructed and then linked at least four different formulae to provide an appropriate answer. The Internet was used to provide up-to-date information

and images to make the work look more professional. All other pupils in Year 10 follow a skills course in ICT leading to key skills tests at an appropriate level. There is much less time available for this course and the progress of those pupils is not as rapid as that of the GCSE group, but it is appropriate. Standards have shown a good improvement during the term and they are moving closer to, but do not yet match, expectations. ICT lessons will continue into Year 11 from next September as additional resources become available.

137. Almost all pupils have a very positive attitude towards their work in ICT. They are keen to learn new skills and to demonstrate their use. Attendance at extra-curricular sessions is good and there is a great deal of autonomous use for homework and coursework. Some "girls only" ICT sessions have significantly increased the number of girls attending lunchtime ICT.
138. Staff teaching ICT lessons are well co-ordinated and supported by the ICT department. Good schemes of work are in place. Lessons are well planned and resources support a wide range of abilities. Good use is made of the Internet. Classroom management is effective and lessons have appropriate pace. Some teachers need to be more proactive in ensuring that pupils who take the GCSE ICT course work at an appropriate level and pace when they are in key skills lessons.
139. Opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills across the curriculum vary between subjects. In several departments the absence of appropriate subject specific hardware and software has an adverse impact on the curriculum as a whole. The use of ICT in subjects needs to be more systematic to complement the timetabled ICT lessons. This is particularly important for those pupils who do not take the GCSE course.
140. There has been a significant improvement in the ICT curriculum in the last two years. All pupils now have discrete ICT lessons up to the end of Year 10. This provision is planned to move into Year 11, and by the beginning of the next academic year, pupils throughout the college will have discrete ICT lessons on an accredited course ensuring that standards continue to improve.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- There is a very good departmental handbook, with a clear vision and comprehensive advice on teaching styles.
- A strong team of committed teachers have high expectations of the pupils.
- Attitudes amongst the pupils are positive.
- The quality of classroom display is good, mainly highlighting the pupils' work.

### Areas for improvement

- There should be consistent use of the target language.
- The use of ICT needs to be more consistent to ensure that all pupils gain access to the appropriate skills and experiences.
- Pupils need more information on their attainment levels in Years 7 to 9 and to develop independent learning skills.

## French and German

141. GCSE results in 2001 were above average in French and average in German. The pupils entered in both French and German achieved similar results in these subjects as they did in the average for all their other subjects. The percentage of boys who gained grades A\*-C was significantly higher than the percentage of boys who did so nationally, but even so, their results were not as high as those achieved by girls. German results improved in 2002, while French results fell slightly. An analysis of the 2002 GCSE examinations shows that whilst more able pupils achieved

grades above expectations, those of less able pupils fell below expectations in both French and German.

142. The achievement of pupils observed in lessons is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and attainment is close to national expectations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and hearing impairment, have the opportunity to take at least one language. Pupils with special educational needs do well, partly because they receive good support and partly because their teachers adapt learning activities so they are appropriate for different levels of ability. Able pupils are offered occasional opportunities to broaden their understanding and some take advantage of them. For example, one particularly capable pupil in Year 7 finished an exercise quickly and used her own initiative to read on in the textbook; however, talented pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently of their teacher, especially in Years 7 to 9, and to use extended library provision. The majority of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, with one example of a very good lesson in Year 7 where pupils were enthusiastic and German was used constantly as the primary means of communication. Opportunities for pupils to work creatively were not observed in lessons during the week, but they do arise. For example, a book of short poems has been produced by a Year 9 class and all the classroom walls are decorated with examples of colourful work, covering a variety of topics, such as ecology.
143. All pupils take tests at regular intervals and the outcomes are discussed so that they can improve their performance. Nevertheless, the extent to which assessment is used to raise pupils' awareness of their own learning is under-developed in Years 7 to 9. The department fails to link internal test results with national levels and waits until April of Year 9 before telling pupils their attainment levels. Consequently, pupils and parents do not have a view of how well they are progressing overall, how their performance compares with national expectations and how they can become more independent in their learning.
144. The achievement of pupils in lessons is good in Years 10 and 11 and standards are generally above average in both subjects. Most pupils take French or German at this stage and a small number continue with both. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, but in some lessons it is good or better. Literacy, especially knowledge about language, is well taught. A good feature of the department's work is that the handbook requires teachers to vary learning styles as often as possible. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace and the pupils have a variety of types of task to do. The handbook also contains guidance about using the target language as much as possible, but while some teachers put this into practice effectively, it is a weakness of the teaching that some do not. The quality of marking is better in French than German, better in Years 10 and 11 than in the earlier years and better with more able pupils than with less able. Where it is good, it provides encouragement and guidance, making it clear how pupils can improve performance; however, in some cases it is not done for long periods, and comments, where they are made, are negative and brief.
145. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress, with teaching improved, although as before the target language is not used sufficiently regularly and persistently. The very well written, comprehensive and highly developed departmental handbook provides clear direction and a very appropriate vision for languages in the college. There are good relationships between the teachers and support staff within the department and a strong, shared commitment to improvement. Support for newly qualified teachers is good. The match of staff to the curriculum is good and the support of classroom and foreign language assistants is well integrated into the department's work.
146. The department has its own collection of items for loan, including CD Roms, but the library is poorly stocked with resources in French and German and they are rarely borrowed. ICT resources are available within the college, but not used by all members of the department. The priorities for improvement set out in the development plan are insufficient to guarantee all of the improvement necessary and, in several cases, the criteria by which success is to be evaluated are not precise enough. The two priorities relating to the raising of attainment do not set specific and measurable targets. Neither does the target for ICT, nor does it deal with the need for staff development. The progress of less able pupils has been identified as a weakness in the department's value added

analysis, but is not included in the plan. The monitoring of marking carried out during the inspection exposed inconsistencies, which had not been identified within the college. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The language teaching rooms are located on different parts of the site and teachers sometimes have to teach in rooms other than their regular ones. Some of the rooms in huts are in an unsatisfactory condition. Despite these difficulties, good use is made of the available space, with classroom display a particularly strong feature.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The pupils' appraising skills are good.
- Standards in Year 10 are high.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- The pupils enjoy music.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment data is not used to plan for raising standards through teaching and learning.
- There are insufficient computers in the department for pupils to improve their composing in Years 7 to 9 and old resources need replacing.

147. In the GCSE examination results in 2002, all pupils achieved a grade A\*-G, but only two of the 13 pupils taking the examination achieved a grade A\*-C. Pupils achieved less well in music than in the average of their other subjects. There were too few pupils taking the examination to make reliable comparisons with national averages. Results differ from year to year and because of low numbers taking the examination there is no reliable trend.
148. Standards are average in Year 9. From a low starting point pupils are achieving well, particularly in listening and appraising. A few pupils compose well but generally they do not achieve as well in composition because there are insufficient computers in the department to use for this task. Use of ICT would help all pupils to try out and quickly amend what they have composed. Most can play instruments well on their own but some find it more difficult to play together, keeping a strong steady beat and listening carefully to each other. They listen to music perceptively and appraise the quality of each other's performances and compositions well. They use appropriate musical terms on most occasions.
149. Standards in Year 11 are below average. A sampled tape of the pupils' work shows that performing and composing skills are generally lower than expected at this stage. Some pupils do not learn to play an instrument and others are only at an elementary level. Because of this their listening and appraising skills also suffer; however, from a low starting point they are achieving well. Pupils in Year 10, on the other hand, are particularly musical. In this large class standards are above average and in some cases exceptional. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Many of these pupils have well-developed instrumental skills that are employed effectively when they compose and appraise music. Their experience and background in music support their listening. Levels of commitment are high here, but the class is too large for space and resources and for effective monitoring of progress by the teacher.
150. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some features of teaching are very good. There was one unsatisfactory lesson though, where the pupils failed to achieve the standards of which they were capable. Teachers are enthusiastic, and as a result the pupils enjoy music and behave very well. There is a good variety of activities in the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are given suitable support and make satisfactory progress. Lower-attaining pupils and those of average ability are challenged well by the differing practical tasks. Higher-attaining pupils, especially those who play instruments to a higher level, are not sufficiently challenged and find it too easy to drift. This was evident in a Year 11 appraising lesson where higher-attainers could have been challenged further by more appropriate work. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace to which the pupils respond well by working hard. Many pupils collaborate well in group work, although a few, especially some boys, find it quite difficult to organise themselves to get started on this kind of work. Faulty keyboards, headphones and amplifiers also delay the start of group work and occupy the teacher's valuable time in solving the problems. Pupils concentrate when the work is focused, and concentrate very well in performance tasks. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 lesson when the pupils improvised rhythms individually above a basic beat provided by the rest of the class. Appraisal of each other's performances and compositions is a strong feature and the pupils

use many musical terms to describe the standard of work. As a result they know what a good performance and composition is, against which they can match their own standards. This aspect of assessment is good, but so far pupils do not know what National Curriculum levels they are achieving. Teachers are not yet sufficiently confident with these to be able to use them accurately and this has led to an over-estimation in previous years.

151. Pupils now have an hour's lesson every week. The topics they study and the good range of activities outside lesson times provide good opportunities for pupils to take part in music. Music provides well for their personal development. In addition to traditional activities there are pop bands and a Samba Band that plays noisily and energetically.
152. Much information is provided by the college about standards but this is not used by teachers to plan their work to raise standards in music. The department has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection but there are still matters that need tackling. The management of the department is sound and the very good faculty review of music has identified appropriately its strengths and areas for improvement. The department is in a strong position to improve now.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of pupils to learn well.
- GCSE examination results are very good.
- The leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for pupils to extend their learning.
- ICT is used well to support teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Facilities for the teaching of dance, gymnastics and hockey need to be improved.
- There is a lack of a department teaching base for examination classes.
- Standards in rugby are below average.
- Curricular links with partner primary schools needs to be strengthened.

153. In both the 2001 sports studies and dance GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average. Results in the 2002 sports studies examination are above average. No pupils were entered in dance because of timetabling problems; these have now been rectified. Pupils achieve better results in physical education and dance than in most of their other examination subjects. High-attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve well in a range of sports, at area, county and sometimes regional levels. Pupils achieve particularly well in dance and football.
154. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 9 pupils matched national expectations and showed good improvement from work in Year 7; most pupils are achieving well. They understand basic fitness principles, judge performance accurately and make effective use of individual and team skills in game situations. Pupils show sound compositional skills in the aesthetic aspects. They listen to instructions and confidently try new skills. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good; the pupils' systematic progress is aided by very well-planned and challenging teaching. In a Year 9 badminton lesson, pupils of all different groups made good progress because the teacher simplified tasks, modified rules, set appropriate groupings and used demonstrations. The standards of a small minority are well below average. Their poor levels of body skills, hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness restrict progress. Higher-attaining pupils' work in dance and gymnastics is characterised by creativity and precision; their learning is accelerated by extension tasks in lessons and through extra-curricular opportunities. Learning was not as good in a few lessons, when teaching became more prescriptive and pupils were given

fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. Most pupils in all years show good standards of literacy and numeracy skills. They are given opportunities to measure and record performance and to use scoring systems. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These strategies improve the technical vocabulary and speaking and listening skills of pupils across the attainment levels.

155. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 11 pupils are above those expected nationally. Over half of Year 11 pupils are participating in either GCSE sports studies or dance courses; they are on target to achieve above the national average. Pupils achieve well, overall, because of their good attitudes to learning, good specialist teaching and the teachers' very effective use of ICT resources to support learning. This was very evident in a Year 11 dance theory lesson, where the teacher provided opportunities for pupils to research information through the Internet, to access computer stored photographic support material and to prepare a PowerPoint presentation. Most pupils show good skills and tactical awareness in game situations. They are able to plan personal fitness programmes through applying the principles of training. In a Year 11 gymnastics lesson, the teacher provided good opportunities for independent learning. Pupils composed sequences of movement in floor work, made evaluative comments (including video analysis) and planned improvement. They perform well in this work. The subject provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Higher-attainers use their good ICT skills to analyse and summarise data. A small minority of pupils' progress in the aesthetic aspects is limited by poor physical skills. In dance, despite the lack of specialist accommodation, teachers create stimulating learning environments through the use of appropriate music, video analysis of performance and enthusiasm. Pupils respond well and most are developing good compositional skills; their work is expressive and energetic. No significant differences were observed in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are talented, make good progress.
156. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and used well to monitor the pupils' progress and to set targets. The department liaises well with the library; pupils have good access to up-to-date reference material. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
157. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE examinations in sports studies and dance are well established. Teaching standards have risen. Pupils have greater opportunities to learn independently; learning objectives are now clearly outlined to pupils, and boys' and girls' attainment levels are now similar. In order to improve further, the department needs to improve accommodation for the aesthetic and fitness aspects, develop a subject base for examination theory work, improve curricular links with partner primary schools and increase curricular time in GCSE dance.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching is engaging the pupils in learning and developing positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Effective leadership and management are taking the subject forward.
- The subject is now attracting viable numbers of pupils onto GCSE courses.

### Areas for improvement

- There is inadequate time for the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- There is not enough challenge for higher attainers in the mixed-ability classes.



158. Prior to 2001, there were not enough pupils choosing the subject for GCSE classes to be viable. A few highly motivated pupils took up the offer of lunchtime lessons to prepare for the full or short course GCSE and did well. In 2002, six pupils were entered and all achieved high grades.
159. Standards in Year 9 are average, and pupils achieve well. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The teachers' assessment of pupils' prior knowledge of religions on entry to the college shows below average attainment. By Year 9 the pupils have made good progress and are demonstrating reasonable understanding of basic beliefs in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. Opportunities for extended writing have been limited in the first half term, but Year 9 pupils' imaginative responses to key events in the lives of faith leaders show good understanding of their significance. Good teaching is giving insights to the importance of faith in believers' lives. For example, pupils learnt the importance of prayer for Muslims by using prayer mats and simulating prayer rituals. In another lesson, discussion of issues about which pupils feel strongly led to greater understanding of a Burmese Buddhist's determination to put her faith into action and campaign for political freedom. Not all lessons attempt this level of pupil involvement, and learning is sometimes reduced to comprehension exercises and word games, which do not stretch higher-attaining pupils. Pupils with special needs are included in all activities, and those with hearing impairment are encouraged to express their views in discussion. Lower-attainers are well supported by learning assistants and given extra attention by teachers when the class is working.
160. Literacy is not promoted consistently, except that teachers do correct spelling and grammar when they mark work, and subject vocabulary is carefully explained. Some classes use a range of writing, including news reports and letters, whilst others concentrate more on notes and answers to questions. There is scope for more opportunities for independent learning. Some pupils make the most of projects on places of pilgrimage in Year 8 and Buddhist festivals in Year 9 to research for themselves but many are content to copy from materials provided. There are plans to increase the use of ICT to support learning but at present this is underdeveloped.
161. Standards in Year 11 are average on the GCSE course, which represents good achievement for these pupils. Very good teaching is giving them confidence to achieve their target grades. Relationships in this small group are highly conducive to good learning and the expression of ideas. Support for the pupils' individual learning needs is good, as a Christian youth worker assists with this class. Pupils receive detailed feedback on their work and respond well to their teacher's high expectations of them. In a lesson on halal food, stimulating group discussion around the text gave pupils good understanding of the social problems for British Muslims observing the food laws. Theory was successfully used to devise suitable menus for Muslim guests. A particular feature of pupils' learning is the effective use of tasks that put them in the place of believers, to increase their understanding.
162. Standards on the statutory course in religious education for all pupils are below average in Year 11. This is mainly because only half the time recommended in the Devon Agreed Syllabus is devoted to the subject, the rest to citizenship. There is one specific RE module in each year but the generally good teaching exploits opportunities well in other units to discuss religious issues. For example, in the conflict module, a video on the views of various religions regarding the events of September 11 was used to good effect to help pupils understand the common emphasis on peace and reconciliation. Good marking of pupils' work is promoting positive attitudes, but there is no common form of assessment to monitor progress and validate achievement at the end of the course.
163. After the previous inspection there was a period of decline from which the department has emerged under new leadership over the past year. Improvement is now good. A high proportion of very good teaching was observed and the standard was good overall, though inconsistent. Time for the subject in Years 10 and 11 has doubled since 1997 but is still inadequate and subsumed within citizenship. Negative attitudes are being turned round and more pupils are choosing to study the subject for GCSE. The planned programme of day conferences and additions to the tutorial programme in the sixth form meet the requirements for religious education post-16.

164. Leadership and management are now good. Departmental policies and schemes of work have been updated and a system of common assessments has been put in place this term, along with central records to monitor pupils' progress over Years 7 to 9. A promising development has been the partnership with Initiative in Christian Education and the placement of one of their youth workers at the college.

## **PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM**

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, although comparisons are with 2001 national data, as 2002 information is not yet available.

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	100		66.7		100	
Biology	7	100		14.2		74.2	
Chemistry	4	100		25		80	
Physics	6	100		33.3		80	
Technology	5	80		40		68	
Economics and business studies	18	72.2		22.2		55.5	
ICT	8	87.5		25		52.5	
Sports studies	11	90.9		18.1		67.2	
Art	15	80		20		60	
Performance studies	5	100		60		96	
Geography	7	100		42.8		74.2	
Government and politics	11	72.7		36.3		60	
History	9	100		22.2		66.6	
Psychology	18	44.4		0		23.3	
English language and literature	21	90.4		19		60.9	
Communication studies	15	73.3		13.3		50.6	
German	2	100		50		90	

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E	% gaining grades A-B	Average point score
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		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100		50		90	
Biology	8	87.5		37.5		72.5	
Chemistry	5	100		60		48	
Physics	2	100		0		60	
Economics and business studies	5	100		20		60	
Sports studies	3	100		33.3		66.7	
Travel and tourism	3	100		0		66.7	
Art	6	100		50		83.3	
Performance studies	7	100		0		74.2	
Geography	7	100		85.7		105.7	
Government and politics	6	100		50		90	
History	8	100		25		70	
Psychology	9	100		11.1		64.4	
English language and literature	14	100		21.4		67.1	
Communication studies	6	100		33.3		66.6	
German	2	100		0		60	

### ***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	2	100		50		0	

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

165. Mathematics was inspected in detail in Years 12 and 13. In science, the focus was on biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled. The chemistry results in 2001 were in line with the national average. In 2002 all five students gained a pass grade, with two gaining the higher grade B. Their achievements represent satisfactory progress from GCSE. In the one lesson observed, the teacher used good subject knowledge and individual support to enable the students to make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of NMR spectroscopy.

### **Mathematics**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good and uses clear demonstrations and structured approaches.
- Most lessons are lively and interactive and challenge students to think for themselves.
- Teaching demonstrates care and attention to the progress of individual students.
- Teachers offer different work to different students according to their needs.

- Most students display good motivation, engagement and determination to succeed.
- Students willingly and effectively support each other's learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of information technology in teaching would benefit student learning.
- Opportunities for research and independent study should be better exploited.
- Insecure prior learning sometimes impedes students' understanding and progress.
- Some student folders comprise an inadequate record of work for reference purposes.

166. At A and AS Levels there has been a fairly small entry in recent years. In 2001 seven students were entered at A Level and all gained pass grades. In 2002 there were only three candidates at A Level, all achieving pass grades, although two of these are hoping to increase their grades by sitting further examinations. There were also nine successes at AS Level, the majority gaining high grades and exceeding the predictions based on their GCSE results. While these outcomes are all positive, it is not appropriate to compare them with national norms because the small numbers entered render such comparisons unsafe.
167. In advanced level work seen during the inspection, students' attainment is always at least satisfactory and often good. Year 12 students' folders contain an appropriate mix of work including algebra, differential calculus, linear co-ordinate geometry, and trigonometry. The quantity of work done is considerable, indicating good learning gains. Whilst some folders demonstrate good care by students, others comprise an inadequate record for future reference purposes. One of the best lessons seen reviewed the principles of differentiation and rehearsed the emergent general patterns before going on to apply these to optimisation. Teaching here was energetic and enthusiastic, drawing extensively on students' own ideas and forcing them to develop, clarify, and expound their own thinking, which they did so determinedly, often in co-operation with their peers. Whilst some notes were provided by the teacher, others were generated by students themselves, thus ensuring their active participation in their learning. Students' background skills were monitored carefully, and where gaps in some students' prior learning were identified, further practice exercises were suggested.
168. Year 13 folders contain a variety of more advanced work in pure mathematics including logarithmic graphs, differentiation of products and quotients, integration by substitution and iterative approaches, as well as some bivariate statistics such as rank correlation and regression. While a good range of work is covered, some students' folders are of an unsatisfactory quality, being somewhat disorganised and containing inaccurate diagrams and only brief notes.
169. It is faculty policy that the style of teaching in the sixth form should not differ significantly from that in the main school. It is evident that most teachers do utilise an interactive approach which emphasises active involvement, explicit progression within lessons and careful attention to the needs of individuals; however, as in the main school, information technology is little used in teaching. In lessons seen during the inspection, opportunities existed to integrate graph plotting, calculus software and symbolic manipulation devices to support and strengthen students' learning, help them make links within mathematics and alert them to developments in information technology; however, these opportunities were not grasped. Similarly, the use of independent study as a mode of learning was not observed during the inspection. Critical evaluation, research and analysis should lie at the heart of post-16 advanced level work, and the faculty needs to investigate ways to incorporate these elements into schemes of work to help prepare students for the move to higher education.
170. In the sixth form generally, some marking by teachers is extensive and helpful with clear indications about how the work might be improved, although other marking is less informative. Records kept include analyses of individual students' past performance and derived predictions of target grades, alongside notes such as 'prepare for exams' and 'organise work better'. Whilst this system does provide long-term goals for students, it is less clear how they are helped to acquire the necessary study habits to enable them to fulfil such suggestions effectively; however, the good use of short-term target setting was seen in a key skills lesson which focused on the application

of number, whereby the teacher kept a weekly record of advice given, students' responses, and their resulting progress.

171. The management of mathematics provision in the sixth form is satisfactory and has secured sound progress since the last inspection. Teachers' work is well co-ordinated and there is sufficient communication between teachers to ensure continuity for students; however, further thought needs to be given to some aspects of leadership in the subject, in that the range of approaches used needs to encompass a broader agenda for student development. This agenda needs to include the development of study skills and independent learning which are requisites in higher education, and an appreciation of the widespread use of information technology in many areas of advanced mathematics.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Students appreciate the individual support provided by teachers.
- There is effective leadership supported by a strong team of teachers.
- The day-to-day management of the subject and technical support are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities are provided for students to participate actively in lessons through group discussion.
- Assessment data is not used systematically to set learning targets for students or help them to improve their study skills.

172. The 2001 A Level results for biology were in line with the national average. In 2002, six out of the seven students gained a pass grade and of those, two achieved a grade B and one achieved a grade A. These results represent good progress given the students' prior performance at GCSE. All seven of the Year 12 AS Level students passed in 2002 but only one gained a high grade.
173. Standards observed during the inspection were in line with national expectations. The teachers plan carefully to ensure full coverage of the syllabus. As a result, students in Year 13 have a sound knowledge and understanding across the key themes within the biology course. For example, they are able to describe, using appropriate technical vocabulary, the difference between the cell structure of bacteria and that of other organisms, and the process by which bacteria reproduce. The students' practical skills, such as sampling techniques, are sound, although they are less confident about using microscopes. The students are able to display and analyse data with appropriate levels of accuracy.
174. Teaching is good overall and enables the students to show good progress from a comparatively weak base, particularly when the group size is small. Very good subject knowledge underpins the teachers' expositions, which develop key ideas logically and enable students to consolidate their understanding of biological principles. The majority of lessons are conducted at a good pace. Teachers provide a wide range of activities including research tasks, practical work, use of video and ICT. They draw appropriately from modern research on DNA, for example, to provide added interest to the lessons. As a result the students are engaged and listen attentively, although those in the larger Year 12 group are very reluctant to contribute ideas or opinions. More opportunities need to be provided which challenge students to participate in the lesson, to develop their confidence in discussing biological ideas and to deepen their understanding.
175. Teachers provide detailed guidance and specific examples of good practice to students on the skills required for successful practical assignments. This helps the students to understand the level of expectation and supports them in their planning. Teachers also provide appropriate guidance to students on the techniques of note-taking and they give feedback both verbally and in writing on the work that is undertaken outside the classroom. Whilst this is helpful, a more systematic approach to the setting of targets for improvement in both study skills and the consolidation of knowledge and understanding is required.
176. The leadership and management are good. There is a strong team of teachers who work well together to ensure that the provision for biology is secure and improving. Data is beginning to be used to track progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Given the greater range of attainment within the Year 12 group, more use will need to be made of assessment data to inform curricular planning. The department is ably supported by the technical staff, despite the significant demands on their time. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.



## Physics

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

### Strengths

- The teaching is good and enables the students to achieve well and make good progress.
- Students value and respond well to the individual support provided by teachers.
- The enthusiastic leadership is effectively raising the profile of the subject in the college.
- The day-to-day management of the subject and technical support are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to check understanding when students are engaged in individual or group tasks are not fully exploited.
- Assessment data is not being fully employed to set specific learning targets for improvement.

177. The number of students studying A Level physics in the past has been small so it is not possible to compare their results with national averages. The two students who took the A Level examination in 2001 both achieved a grade D which represented satisfactory progress from their earlier GCSE performance. All of the six Year 12 AS Level students passed in 2002 and two gained A or B grades.
178. Good teaching has enabled the students to achieve well and make good progress. As a result the standards overall in Year 13 are in line with national expectations and higher than those predicted by the students' performance at GCSE.
179. The teachers cover the syllabus well and have ensured that the students have developed a broad knowledge and understanding of the important principles underpinning each of the physics topics. Lively and stimulating presentations, supported by very good subject knowledge, capture the interest of the students who concentrate well and respond positively in class. The teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and provide a range of activities to support the students' learning, which includes practical work, research projects and electronic access to physics-related topics. As a result, Year 13 students are able to apply their knowledge to inform their practical investigations. For example, one higher-attaining student has used his understanding of the behaviour of materials to examine in detail the structure of surfboards and another has applied his knowledge of circuits to investigate how the effectiveness of light sensors varies with distance. The students' practical skills are at least sound and in some instances good. They are able to collect a set of data, and higher-attainers in particular use their knowledge of physics principles to interpret the outcomes with confidence.
180. Teachers often provide good one-to-one support to students in the class and this enables them to clarify any misconceptions in either key principles or mathematical calculations; however, opportunities to explore and challenge the understanding of students when they are engaged in individual or group tasks are not always fully exploited. On a few occasions this leads to a pace which is leisurely rather than challenging.
181. The leadership and management of the physics team are good. There is clear educational direction and an enthusiasm both to raise the profile of the subject and to secure good standards. A new, more modern syllabus has been adopted which supports the innovative approaches being developed by the team. Assessment data is being used to track progress and identify potential grades; however, procedures for assessing students' levels of attainment and the setting of targets for improvement will need to be strengthened, particularly given the larger numbers and wider range of ability within the current Year 12 group. The department runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis and is well supported by the hard-pressed technicians. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.





## BUSINESS

### Economics and Business Studies

Overall, the quality of provision in economics and business studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Very knowledgeable staff teach well-planned lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of student performance and responses.
- Teacher-student relationships are very good and produce a purposeful working environment in class.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are positive; they are able to research topics to good effect.
- ICT is extensively and effectively used by students.

#### Areas for improvement

- More formal monitoring of teacher performance would ensure that good practice is always shared.
- More formal departmental planning which includes the setting of specific examination related targets would lead to further improvement.
- Lesson outcomes should always be explicit and cater for all levels of ability.

182. Students currently follow the Nuffield economics and business studies A Level. Results for the seven students who sat the 2001 examination were below the national average. Results have been generally at this level or in line with national expectations. Although students have not done as well in this subject as nationally and in comparison with their other A Levels, they usually achieve well in the subject and often do better than their GCSE results would predict. This is as a result of good teaching, high expectations set by the teachers and a purposeful working environment promoted by very good student-teacher relationships. As a consequence of this, results in 2002 showed a clear improvement, where the five who completed the A Level all passed and four of the 18 students taking the AS Level achieved A grades, exceeding their predicted grade based on GCSE performance.
183. Current students are achieving at least in line with national expectations, with several exhibiting excellent skills in the analysis and evaluation of business issues. All students have a good understanding of basic technical terms, but the lower-attaining students need to be more accurate in using it when presented with lesson activities and teacher questioning. In a good Year 12 class on financial statements, the teacher made excellent use of an interactive network, supporting students in their construction and analysis of profit and loss accounts. The teacher gave clear explanations using the computer and provided effective support and guidance to all. Clear summaries by the teacher enabled Year 13 students to identify the relevant stakeholders in the world market for coffee. They knew the theory behind excess supply and its effect on price and revenue, could list the characteristics of perfect and imperfect competition and understood the clash of objectives among market stakeholders. The same students also exhibited very good research skills when using the Internet.
184. Students have a positive attitude to the subject. As a consequence they work conscientiously in and out of class and are appreciative of each other's contributions when working in groups. Whilst often reluctant to respond to general questions in the lessons observed, they are able to communicate effectively when asked specific questions on the lesson topic. Their written work shows good evidence of the use of appropriate numerical concepts and coursework is clearly presented in good English using a variety of graphs, charts and diagrams to illustrate the work. Teaching overall is good; there were no unsatisfactory lessons although lesson outcomes are not always explicit and do not cater for all levels of ability, including the most and least able. Furthermore, students are not given as many opportunities as possible to develop their presentation skills in lessons. More formal monitoring of teacher performance should ensure that good practice is always shared between the teachers.

185. Leadership and management of the department are good with an obvious commitment to raising the status of the department and standards achieved, for example by monitoring both recruitment and students' attainment and progress using a range of relevant statistical data. Accommodation and learning resources are good, and the use of computers by students and for lessons is very effective. Further improvements can be gained by more formal departmental planning which includes the setting of specific examination-related targets as well as a continuing review of teaching and learning. The subject was not covered by the last inspection report.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

### Information and communication technology

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching on the A Level and AS courses is good and sometimes very good.
- Students have a positive attitude on the advanced courses.
- Computers are readily available for sixth form use.

#### Areas for improvement

- The standard of coursework at AS Level needs to be raised.
- The ICT skills of some students and attendance at some key skills sessions should be improved.

186. ICT was examined at AS Level for the first time in 2002. Results overall were consistent with expectations, although were much better for theory papers than coursework marks. This is a very encouraging start to the AS course. Standards are improving this year as a result of good teaching. Students are making good progress, particularly those preparing for A Level. The ICT capability of students following the ICT key skills course is below expectations.
187. Evidence gathered during the inspection, indicates that standards of work in the AS ICT course are consistent with expectations. This represents very good progress for some students in Year 12. In one Year 12 lesson, the students were developing their spreadsheet skills by planning an event. This had to start at a basic level for many of the group but the teacher was soon able to move the work forward to include cell protection, scenarios and goal seeking. Students also improved their skills of formatting for a specific audience and some used the automatic labelling function to help the user to understand the spreadsheet. Standards in the A Level ICT course are above average. The A Level students in Year 13 worked in pairs and demonstrated a good level of technical knowledge in a discussion about the security requirements of ICT networks used in business organisations. Subject-specific vocabulary was used well throughout the discussion. Useful and informative comparisons were made between the needs of different types of organisation. The discussion was encouraged effectively by the teacher, with appropriate interventions to seek clarification and increase the depth of students' understanding of the topic. In ICT key skills lessons, which are available to the remainder of the sixth form, standards are below expectations; however, the students who attend the sessions make good progress.
188. In all ICT sixth form lessons, students are very well motivated and keen to produce a good standard of work. They are responsive to questions and are usually able to use correct technical terms when describing procedures or discussing more general issues relating to aspects of the syllabus. The level of discussion in the A Level group, which includes a mature student, is particularly strong. In practical activities in Year 12 there is a good deal of effective peer support particularly in relation to the construction of spreadsheets containing more advanced features. The key skills sessions are particularly important, as students in Years 12 and 13 have not had many structured opportunities in earlier years to develop their ICT skills.
189. Teaching in all ICT courses is good and is sometimes very good in the AS course. The first set of AS examination results have been analysed in great detail and appropriate lessons have been

drawn. Particular attention is being given to the assessment of coursework, which was over-generous last year. This year appropriate training and improved liaison with the examination board is in hand and assessment procedures and practice are now good. Work in the students' folders contains detailed diagnostic comments. Oral feedback from teachers during practical sessions is very good. Schemes of work have been refined, and improved resources are being developed. Good use is made of the Internet for teaching and learning. Teaching in key skills sessions is good, enabling students of all abilities to make good progress in their use of core software, often from a low level of competence. More students should be encouraged to take advantage of the good opportunities which are provided for them to improve their ICT skills.

190. The ICT curriculum in Years 12 and 13 has developed considerably since the last inspection and all students have the opportunity to take an A Level course or to improve their ICT skills. The level of resources for use by students is greatly improved. Computer-based learning resources are used well by some subject departments but there is scope for more use in most subjects.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

191. Physical education was inspected in detail. Lessons were also observed in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. Teaching in the former was good in the Year 12 lesson seen and standards were average. Teaching was very good in the Year 12 leisure and recreation lesson seen and standards were above average.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Examination results are good.
- Leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- There is good access to central learning resources, including ICT.
- Procedures for monitoring and assessing students' progress are used well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Numbers following A Level courses need to be increased.
- Other accredited courses such as the Community Sports Leaders' Award should be provided.
- Specialist accommodation for practical work in the fitness aspects needs to be improved.

192. In the 2001 A Level physical education examination, the proportion of A and B grades was above the national average and all students gained a pass grade. Students achieve significantly better results in physical education compared to their other subjects. Numbers were too small to make valid comparisons with national figures. Students' achievements in the 2001 AS examination were in line with the national average; in 2002, results were above the national average.

193. Standards in lessons and work seen by the current Year 13 students are good and above those expected nationally. Work shows good improvement from standards in Year 12; the nine students are achieving well. They show good knowledge and understanding across the syllabus. For example, most students are able to plan, evaluate and improve their personal exercise programmes. They can write at length on a variety of topics, such as the application of Newton's Laws to sports activities and the historical and social basis of sport. The extended writing skills of a small minority are less well developed and they tend to collect data from notes rather than other sources. Students learn well as the result of very good teaching. The teacher is aware of the different ways in which students learn; he uses methods and provides resources that meet their needs. In a Year 13 lesson, involving theoretical and practical work, the teacher improved the capacity of students to collect, record and analyse data by using video analysis, digital imagery and computerised results. Students use appropriate technical language and most make good use

of ICT to research and enhance written assignments. The teacher contributes to the students' learning by guiding them towards a wealth of background information and resources, including the college library, the subject resource base and Exeter University library. The students' work is marked consistently, and good diagnostic comments aid their improvement.

194. Students in Year 12 have made good progress since the start of their AS course. Standards are above those expected nationally. Students are learning well, particularly in the skills acquisition and historical aspects. In a lesson exploring the effects of gender and sexism on participation and performance, the teacher used a range of resources to stimulate good learning, including a speed radar device. Most students are able to apply their prior understanding of fitness principles to the practical analysis of performance. The few students who do not have a GCSE background in the subject are having to work hard to improve their knowledge of anatomy and physiology. A significant minority of the students are finding the change to sixth form study difficult. The subject leader gives good support and guidance by easing them into research and further reading. Students confidently use ICT for accessing information and to enhance written assignments. They express themselves well in discussion work and use appropriate technical vocabulary. Students in both year groups show good numerical skills; these are very evident when they collect, record and analyse data.
195. The leadership and management of sixth form physical education are very good. The examination courses are well established and good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and used well to monitor the students' progress and to set targets. The good extra-curricular programme provides students with opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities. Several students officiate in the inter-tutor group competitions and help in the coaching of younger members of the college.
196. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The very good A Level results have been maintained, teaching is now very good and an optional lesson is provided to cater for non-examination students. In order to improve further the department needs to increase the numbers of students following A Level courses, provide other accredited courses, such as the Community Sports Leaders' Award and improve accommodation for practical work in the fitness aspects.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

197. Two lessons of health and social care were observed, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching in both was satisfactory and standards were average.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

198. Art was inspected in detail and some lessons in performing arts were also observed. Teaching in the music and drama lessons observed as part of this course is very good and standards are average.

### Art

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and commitment of the teaching team are both good.
- The leadership of the department is strong, enthusiastic and determined.
- Students have very positive attitudes and excellent relationships with their peers and staff.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in A Level examinations need to be raised.
- The accommodation is scattered and resources are insufficient.

- The provision and use of computers and appropriate software for digital-imaging should be increased.

199. Very few students took the AS and A Level examinations in 2001 and it is not possible to make fair comparisons with national averages. This has been the case over the past three years, as the more able students tend to be drawn to the local colleges of further education. No more than one or two students have gained the higher A and B grades each year and the large majority of students have been female. The numbers in the current Years 12 and 13 have increased sharply, and evidence of improved standards of teaching and leadership gathered during the inspection indicates that standards are rising.
200. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 13 is consistent with national expectations. This represents an improvement over previous years and reflects the good teaching and positive attitudes of the increasing numbers taking up art in Year 12. Students in Year 12 develop their personal studies thoroughly and present them to a high standard of finish. They study a complex and detailed painting by the artist Bosch and develop their own ideas from it, working in clay, paint, fabric and mixed media. Lower-attaining students do not push their ideas sufficiently for the development of their triptych painting to be clear in planning. Year 13 students work independently, encouraged by teachers to explore and develop their own ideas. Although their basic drawing and painting skills are well developed, the majority do not have the confidence to explore more abstract concepts of art, feeling more confident with clear, detailed images of a more traditional kind. They are urged to break conventions, but most are reluctant to do so. The more creative students show evidence of very interesting exploratory work in their sketchbooks and are clearly less concerned for the more traditional conventions of artistic presentation. Their work is not effectively celebrated in displays around the college and it is difficult to get a clear picture of overall standards in the department.
201. Students are committed and hard-working, benefiting from enthusiastic and well-informed teaching. They enjoy excellent relationships with their peers and staff and clearly enjoy the relaxed, but purposeful environment for learning.
202. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and a commitment to improving standards. They are able to give quality time to individual students, to evaluate their work, and to advise and guide them in their studies. Students are left to pursue their own line of interest and are expected to take full responsibility for their work. The teachers manage lessons very well, maintaining a steady rate of progress through coursework preparation.
203. The department benefits from strong, enthusiastic and determined leadership and a strong team of teachers who work well together. The accommodation is scattered and generally unsatisfactory and resources are insufficient for the fully effective delivery of the curriculum. Storage facilities are poor. The lack of a qualified and knowledgeable technician puts pressure on the delivery of three-dimensional studies in particular. Although the department works well within the design faculty, there is a need to raise its profile by improving accommodation and resources, ensuring that the work of students is appropriately celebrated around the college and that the head of department has a well-developed management role within the faculty.

## HUMANITIES

204. Geography was inspected in detail, and some A Level lessons of government and politics, history and psychology were also observed. Teaching in each subject was good. Standards are below average in psychology in Year 13. In the most recent AS Level examinations just over half failed. This has considerably reduced the size of the Year 13 group. Standards were average for students in the Year 13 politics group and in Year 13 history.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Standards at A Level have been consistently very good.
- Coursework is of a very high standard.
- Teaching is good; teachers have depth and breadth of knowledge of their subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- Numbers choosing to study A Level have declined.
- The skills of note-taking, presentation of research, and organisation of files need improvement.
- Independent learning skills require greater development.

205. Standards at A Level have been consistently above the national average, with 100 percent pass rate in most years. In 2001, results were very high compared with the national average, with 75 percent of grades being A or B. In 2002, the proportion of A and B grades was even higher, and with all students achieving a grade C or above. Male and female students achieve equally well, although there are consistently more males than females taking geography. The new arrangements for AS module examinations in Year 12 resulted in less success, as two students failed to complete their coursework in time for the June examination, despite voluntarily entering themselves.
206. Numbers taking geography in Year 12 have fallen this year, and only six of the nine have higher grades at GCSE, a lower prior attainment level than previous years. In the Year 12 lessons observed, attendance was poor, only 70% on average; however, those present worked very well, showing appreciation of the teachers' knowledge and skills. Students' relationships with their peers and with their teacher are good.
207. Teaching is good and current standards are close to the national average in both year groups. In one Year 12 lesson, starting work on coasts, the teacher checked on existing knowledge from GCSE work and developed it further. Groups researched the effects of sub-aerial, fluvial, or marine systems on coastal features. By working and discussing together, the students shared existing knowledge and interpretation of information from the texts, with the help of the teacher as he circulated around the groups. Most students needed help to get started, not quite understanding what was required, dredging their memories for previous terms and processes, and striving to adapt to the more advanced vocabulary. Most students responded well to this challenge and to the fast pace set in the time-constrained tasks. Their presentation skills, however, did not do justice to their research. Prompts and questions developed the range of notes to be written in a well-produced diagram, acting as a writing frame. The development of understanding of coastal processes was put to good use in the other observed lesson, a case study of the causes and consequences of the 1953 North Sea Storm surge. The teacher expertly led them through the whole range of causes that they had researched individually and emphasised the dramatic nature of events, making them realise the impact on people. A publicity brochure on the Thames Barrier further extended their up-to-date knowledge and generated a great deal of interest and reflection on tidal and weather effects.
208. Year 13 students were investigating pressures on the tropical rainforest, and the lesson observed was the presentation of their studies of farming, mining or forestry in the Amazon basin. Working in groups of three or four, they had researched using the many magazines, textbooks and reference books in the geography department, and the Internet. They reported on the issues, impact on the environment and justifications given, concluding whether or not it was sustainable. Although the information had been gathered well, it took the teacher's questioning skills and interruptions to bring out the major facts and conclusions as students' presentation skills were poor. Last year's coursework for A Level was highly commended, being used as model answers in moderation meetings.
209. The detailed case studies provided and researched, on all physical, human and environmental aspects and processes, improve the depth and breadth of the students' knowledge and understanding, and lead to high standards when assessed for A Level. Homework is rigorously

set and thoroughly marked, although lesson notes are often not checked and tend to be disorganised. Assessment of standards is accurate, and comments given in writing and verbally help the students to understand how to improve. Most students are very interested in geography, and several intend to study it further.

210. Leadership of A Level geography is good. The main teacher involved is responsible for geography across the college and has great depth and breadth of knowledge which is transferred to students. Management is good, with plentiful text resources, supplemented by magazines such as Geofile, and websites are recommended for research. Fieldwork takes place in Year 12, using Exeter and its surroundings as a basis; however, this fieldwork is to a certain extent a repetition of such urban studies in Years 10 and 11, and there is no guided first-hand experience of physical features or processes. ICT is used widely by the students to produce their coursework, and essay-writing skills are reasonable. Number and graphical skills are of high quality and map drawing and interpretation skills are very high. The new AS and A Level courses have been tackled well, and improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

211. English was inspected in detail and some lessons of French and German. Although very few students continue with modern languages in the sixth form, the lessons are of high quality and standards above average, with the target language used as the sole means of communication between teacher and students.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The students make good progress.
- Teachers give the students detailed and valuable indications of the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve.

#### Areas for improvement

- Student involvement in learning would be greater via more explicit teaching of speaking and listening

212. In both A Level English language literature and A Level communications studies the most recent data on attainment shows a fall in results against a longer-term trend of standards that have been close to average. At AS Level in English language and literature and in communication studies, results are skewed to the lower grades.

213. The students make good progress and standards are average in Years 12 and 13. Students are diligent in attending to the teachers' comments but whilst many are confident at volunteering responses to questions, they often confine themselves to brief replies. There was little sustained oral work of quality observed beyond small group discussion. Students would benefit from teaching which focuses on how they can make more extended evaluative and exploratory points in whole class discussion and when working in smaller groups. Many students show good knowledge and understanding of the texts and issues being studied, including narrative structures and stylistic effects in language. Writing standards are satisfactory. Students are methodical in making detailed notes, and completed work is efficiently organised in folders. Students enjoy English and communication studies at AS and A Level and are keen to co-operate with one another and their teachers.

214. Teaching is good. In the best lessons observed teachers had high expectations of what could be achieved, as witnessed by the requirement for students to use appropriate technical vocabulary where necessary and to sustain concentration on some complex issues. Teachers use a range of



effective teaching strategies to ensure that students make good progress in their learning, including detailed questioning, the use of diagrams to help explain complex points and well-prepared and carefully structured lessons. The hard-working and committed team of teachers draws on good subject knowledge; in a very effective A Level communication studies lesson the teacher's passion for the subject and determination to challenge students to think more deeply about some taxing theoretical issues in varieties of Feminism showed very good academic understanding. As a result, students made good progress in their learning in this lesson. Similar passion for learning was communicated to students in a Year 13 A Level English language and literature lesson on Shakespeare's *Othello*. Through close reading and a range of carefully-framed questions, the teacher drew all students in the class into a detailed consideration of key passages of the play; both linguistic and literary themes were integrated well for students in this lesson. Feedback to students on their achievements is detailed, with helpful guidance on improvements needed. Effective Year 12 teaching was observed in one lesson where students were provided with supportive comments at points through the lesson on which they were able to act as the lesson progressed. The lesson concluded with a review which identified clear learning points for all.

215. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are good. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The recent change to a language and literature syllabus at A Level has been well handled; both teachers and students are enjoying the challenges and opportunities it presents.