

INSPECTION REPORT

TENDRING TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Frinton on Sea, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115348

Principal: Mr Michael Watson

Reporting inspector: Graeme Clarke
1547

Dates of inspection: 27 – 31 January 2003

Inspection number: 249608

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 Years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mrs J Cains
Date of previous inspection:	27 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1547	Graeme Clarke	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
27201	Clive Ashworth	Team inspector	English	
30892	Keith Gordon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1407	Peter Scott	Team inspector	Science	
19043	David Lewis	Team inspector	Chemistry	
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Health and social care</p>	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology (sixth form)</p> <p>Textiles</p> <p>Information and communication technology (sixth form)</p>	
31218	Thomas Allen	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>Citizenship</p>	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History	

13184	Tayeb Chakera	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music Performing arts/Drama	
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	Inclusion
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	Religious education	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	Business education	
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22577	Margaret Hart	Team Inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Tendring Technology College and sixth form centre is an above average size mixed comprehensive foundation school for students aged 11-18 years. The split-site college serves an urban and rural area to the west of Frinton on Sea where socio-economic circumstances are about average overall. The upper school, at Frinton on Sea, caters for students in Years 10 to 13 whilst students in Years 7 to 9 are educated in the lower school at Thorpe le Soken about 5 miles inland. The current roll is 1672, 830 boys and 842 girls, including 228 sixth form students, and is oversubscribed. Students now entering Year 7 have about average ability. Forty-one students were admitted during last year and sixty-six left during the year which is in line with the average of similar size schools. The proportion of students in Years 7 to 11 eligible for free school meals is a little below average at 10.6 per cent. An about average number of students have special educational needs (SEN), including those with statements, for specific learning, behavioural or physical difficulties. A very small number of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and, of those for whom English is not their mother tongue, none is at a very early stage of learning the language.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Tendring Technology College is a good school. Standards in Year 9 tests in 2002 were about average, and results in GCSE were also about average. In relation to their attainment when they begin the college, students make good progress and achieve well in the Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations. Sixth form students also achieve well. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11 with only a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons. The principal and senior staff give excellent leadership and key staff manage the college very well. Clear and appropriate priorities for improvement are set and acted upon, and a thoroughly systematic approach to monitoring the college's development is securely in place. Given good improvement since the last inspection, students' good achievement in examinations and the efficient use made of funds available, the college is giving good value for money

What the college does well

- The quality and range of opportunities for students to learn reflect well upon its technology college status.
- The college makes very good arrangements to ensure students' welfare, and for their academic and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Constructive links with partner institutions significantly enhance the curriculum and contribute to improvements in teaching quality.
- The college promotes very effective links with parents.
- Excellent leadership with very good governance and management ensure cost effective provision and good value for money.

What could be improved

- Attendance, which is still below the national average.
- Attainments in English in Year 9 tests and GCSE, and history in GCSE, which were below average in 2002.
- Arrangements for daily acts of collective worship, which do not meet statutory requirements.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in January 1997 is good. The key issues have been addressed, mostly with success. Notably, the college has improved standards attained in public examinations. The amount of good teaching has risen markedly. There are very good and rigorous procedures for evaluating the work of departments, and for the college as a whole. The college now makes very good provision for students' welfare, and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very good arrangements meet requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education and for teachers' performance management, but those for daily collective worship do not meet

the college's obligations. Despite strenuous efforts for dealing with poor attendance, it has not improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	N/A	

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

Over the period 1999 to 2002, the results in the national tests for Year 9 students in mathematics and science improved to above the national average and are above the national average for schools in similar circumstances. English results improved until 2001 but fell below national and similar schools' averages in 2002. The overall results have improved in line with the national trend, and in 2002 were about average. When Year 9 students joined the college in 1999, their attainments were a little below average, reflecting good overall achievement by 2002. Between 1999 and 2002 the GCSE results were close to the national average but in 2002 they fell from above to below the average of schools in similar circumstances. Overall, improvement was above the national trend until 2001, but fell in 2002 largely because of well below average English and history results. Mathematics and science results were close to the national average. GCSE results fell short of targets set by the college. However, the proportion of students gaining 5 grades A* to C was well above the average of schools where candidates had similar results when they were in Year 9, and their GCSE point score was above average reflecting good achievement overall.

Standards of subject work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average and achievement is good. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good in geography and design and technology. In Years 10 and 11 the standards are above average and achievement is good. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good in design and technology, geography and religious education. Overall, standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are above average.

Students with SEN are achieving well, but some in Years 10 and 11 still have difficulties with basic skills. Most students for whom English is not their mother tongue have a working knowledge of English and all achieve well as a result of sensitive and effective support. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress overall although specific provision is not made in all subjects.

Results in the 2001 GCE A level examinations were about the national average but students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students have positive attitudes. The college encourages them to work hard and achieve their best. Students are enthusiastic, well motivated and confident. They make good progress in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There is an orderly atmosphere on both sites. Students behave well in lessons and around the college. There are few incidents of bullying. Students feel safe and know what to do if anything happens.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. The college promotes tolerance, kindness and good racial harmony which ensures students feel part of the college community. They work and learn well together in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.
Attendance	Below average. The college rightly does not tolerate unauthorised absence. A small minority of students attend infrequently, with some parents condoning truancy, which affects students' education and lowers their standards of attainment. A few students are regularly late.

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.

Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 13. There are many more very good and excellent lessons in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning in English are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, and good in mathematics and science throughout Years 7 to 11. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are very good in geography, history, physical and religious education. Teaching basic skills of literacy is good but for mental aspects of numeracy is unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They have high expectations and plan lessons well and manage learning effectively to meet the individual needs of all students including those with SEN. Assessment of progress is good but there is room for development in ICT and particularly in history. Students value the way their learning is monitored throughout the college and the help they receive to improve their work. They are committed to learning in lessons and outside of classes. Their development of subject skills, knowledge and understanding is good. They show interest in their learning and work hard in lessons. The quality and frequency of using homework to support learning in lessons varies between teachers and although satisfactory overall, should be more consistently used. The very few unsatisfactory lessons include shortcomings in planning for learning or managing students' behaviour.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. All statutory requirements are met apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The <i>Key Stage 3 Strategy</i> is being very well implemented in Years 7 to 9. Students have a broad and relevant curriculum enhanced with opportunities to study drama and vocational courses. Excellent arrangements for transition from primary school, a very good programme of extra-curricular activities and very good links with the community and partner schools enrich the provision.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Students with SEN have access to all aspects of the life of the college. Focused individual support for language development leads to some students missing other subjects. The college provides the best curriculum balance it can and is developing more appropriate courses and examinations for students with SEN in Years 10 and 11 who cannot achieve at GCSE.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional	Satisfactory. The very small number of students with English as an additional language are fully integrated into lessons where provision is

language	the same as for all others.
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Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. A well co-ordinated programme, which includes citizenship, health, and careers education, reflects the clear aims and ethos of the college and successfully promotes values and respect. Arrangements for spiritual and cultural development are good, and for moral and social development are very good. The upper and lower school councils provide opportunities for the development of social responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. Provision makes a valuable contribution to students' personal and academic development. Class tutors know their students well and carry out a very successful mentoring scheme which supports students' academic and personal development very effectively. Excellent systems ensure child protection, health, safety and welfare and build upon good links with the various support agencies.
How well the school works in partnership with parents;	Very good. The college works hard to maintain a very effective liaison between home and college. Parents have generally positive views as a result of receiving a broad range of high quality information. They have many opportunities to meet with staff to discuss their child's education. They are regularly consulted over a number of issues through questionnaires and evaluations.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Very good overall. The principal provides excellent leadership. The senior management team has a clear vision for the college's improvement and has ensured it is shared by all teachers. Most staff with management responsibilities carry them out very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed to improving the college. They review its work and understand its strengths and weaknesses through consultation and first hand involvement. The statutory obligations for daily acts collective worship are not fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Priorities for development are very appropriate. A thorough and rigorous process effectively links evaluation in subject departments with college wide perspectives shared between the senior management team and governors
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The college is very well staffed with suitably qualified teachers, and with technical, clerical and learning support staff. Resources, including computers and books, are very good. Accommodation is generally very good, with new building taking place at the upper school. Funds are closely targeted to college development and to support staff training. Best value principles are applied well. The college diligently acts upon analyses of comparative information and consultations.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their child makes good progress.• The teaching is good.• They are kept well informed.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems or questions.• The school expects their child to work hard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their child gets the right amount of homework.• Arrangements for keeping them informed about how their child is getting on.• Arrangements for working closely with them.

Inspectors agreed with everything that parents like about the college. They find the use of homework to be inconsistent, but where homework is set, it is effective in helping students to consolidate the work they have done in lessons, or to extend their learning. The inspection team considered the college to have very thorough arrangements for keeping parents informed, and for developing close working arrangements through the home-college agreement, regular consultations, contact and updates.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

TENDRING TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form at Tendring Technology College (TVIC) has 228 students and is larger than average. It has increased in size by about 20 students every year for the last three years, and is expected to continue to do so. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Two students speak English as an additional language. Entry requirements to the sixth form are normally set at four or more A* to C grades in GCSE, including grades A*, A and B in subjects similar to the ones the student wishes to study, although exceptions can be made in specific instances. A range of 21 subjects is taught to AS and A level, and about a fifth of students take advanced vocational courses (AVCEs) in one of three subject areas. One-year courses leading to GNVQ (intermediate) are available, and a few students take GCSE examinations in the sixth form. Retention rates are above average and over two-thirds of students continue into further or higher education when they leave the college. Although the college occupies two sites which are almost five miles apart, all sixth form study takes place on the upper school site, on the outskirts of Frinton.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form at Tendring Technology College is very good. The college works hard to ensure that the range of courses and extra-curricular opportunities available to students is of high quality and well matched to students' needs. Provision in all subjects is good or very good, and students achieve well in relation to their attainment in GCSE examinations. This is in response to teaching which is almost all good or very good. Examination results are well above the national average in English, art, business studies, history and geography. The college supports its sixth form students very well and their personal development and relationships are excellent. The college manages its sixth form budget very well, and is able to offer its students a wide range of very good opportunities outside lessons. The effective financial control, very good leadership and added value, combined with students' excellent personal development mean that the sixth form is very cost effective and gives very good value for money.

Strengths

- Students' attitudes to the college are very good, and personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Advanced level results in art, English, geography, business studies and history are very good.
- The range of advanced courses available is responsive to students needs and aspirations, and takes into account courses available in other institutions in the area.
- The range of extra-curricular activities in which students take part, and the opportunities for personal development and responsibility are very good.
- The college gives very good support to students throughout their time in the sixth form, and especially in relation to university applications and careers.

What could be improved

- Examination results in chemistry and physics at AS and A level
- The advice given to lower attaining students particularly on entry to the sixth form to help them choose a better balance of courses which are appropriate to their aspirations and potential.
- The range of activities for gifted and talented students, and the procedures for sharing information about them between subjects, so that they gain as much as possible from their time in the sixth form.

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 the 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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is good and recent staffing problems were well handled to cause the minimum disruption to students' learning. Students make good progress. The college makes good use of a distance-learning link in teaching further mathematics.
Chemistry	Good. Good teaching helps students to produce work, which is at least in line with their GCSE results. However, examination results are below the national average. The department should consider how students' motivation and progress could be improved.
Business studies	Good. Good teaching results in good learning. Students achieve well and very positive attitudes towards their work. The subject is well led and managed.
ICT	Good. Teachers' good subject knowledge, excellent facilities, and students' very good or excellent attitudes to the subject lead to good learning and improving results. The college has coped well with staffing difficulties over the last year, and the subject is well managed.
Health and social care	Very good. The subject is very well organised and the very effective teaching and considerable advice and support enable students to make very good progress, often from modest prior attainment.
Art and design	Very good. The quality of teaching is very good and the standards and results are above the national average. Students make very good progress and develop a wide range of artistic skills. A considerable number of students progress to further art courses throughout the country.
Performing arts	Good Because of the good and very good teaching and learning all students are expected to do well in the music and drama examinations. Students have a good rapport with their teachers and are committed and work hard.
Design and technology: resistant materials and graphics	Very good. Good teaching and students' very good attitudes to the subjects mean that students achieve well and that standards are improving markedly. Vocational courses are needed to extend the range of learning opportunities.
Design and technology: textiles	Very good. Very good or excellent teaching support students in producing very high quality work in class and, in 2002, two-thirds of students gained the highest grades, A or B. Too few boys choose to take this subject.
Physical education	Very good. Appropriate courses are available. Students are highly motivated and in response to very good teaching achieve good results when gauged against attainment on entry (value added). The percentage of students gaining the highest grades A and B is below the national average.
Geography	Very good. As a result of very good teaching, the students are highly motivated and achieve good results.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Sociology	Very good. Consistently high quality teaching and students' enthusiasm for the subject support very good progress and good examination results with some high grades. Leadership is excellent and gives clear direction to the subject.
English	Very good. Consistently good and often very good teaching leads to good learning. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Students are well motivated and enjoy independent research.

In addition, lessons were sampled in RE, French, physics, biology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance given to sixth form students are very good. A good system of tutors and personal mentors, and very good opportunities, combine to ensure that students' personal and academic development proceed hand in hand. Students leave the college as responsible young citizens, who are well equipped for life outside college, whether in further study or in the world of work.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form understands his students very well, and he and his team ensure that the sixth form experience is as wide ranging and stimulating as possible for all students. The college's priorities for development are entirely appropriate and reflect the broader aims of the college. Monitoring of students' progress, and of the performance of the sixth form as a whole, are very good.

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"> Nearly three-quarters of the students enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join the sixth form. Nearly all students feel that teachers are accessible to help them when needed. Nearly all say that they were given good information about the courses on offer. Four-fifths of students say that their work is assessed well and that they are kept well informed about their progress. Four-fifths regard the available courses as well matched to their needs. They think that they are well taught and challenged to do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half the students feel that they are not well advised on what to do after they leave college More than half the students regard the range of activities and enrichment courses available to them as too narrow Just over two students in every five feel that the college does not listen and respond to the views of sixth form students.

The inspectors agree with the many positive comments made by students about the sixth form, both through the questionnaire and in discussion. They agree that students are well informed about progress, that teachers advise students well, and that academic and personal support are very good. Courses are well matched to students' needs. They find that the college has a very good programme for advising students about higher education or entry to the world of work. They disagree that the college is

unresponsive to students' views or that the range of activities for them is restricted. On the contrary, they judge these aspects to be amongst the many strengths of the sixth form.

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 students' achievements

- 1 When Year 9 students started in Year 7 their attainment, measured using a standard test, and in the statutory tests at the end of primary school, was a little below average. At the end of Year 9 in 2001 they gained results above national averages for the statutory tests in English, mathematics and science. In 2002 the results remained above average in mathematics and science but fell below average in English. Over all three subjects, this represents good achievement for Year 9 in 2002 in relation to their attainment when they started secondary education. However, their results are well below the average of schools where students had similar prior attainments in the national tests. When compared with the results of schools in similar social circumstances, results in mathematics and science are above average, but well below average in English. Although boys do not attain as highly as girls in English, the difference is small. The poor English results in 2002 stem from instability and lack of continuity in the teaching team, and inadequate preparation, which together have depressed students' overall attainment and affected comparisons with other schools.
- 2 GCSE candidates attained results close to national averages in 2002. Forty-six per cent gained 5 or more A*-C grades compared to 50 per cent nationally, and 88 per cent gained five or more A*-G grades compared to 91 per cent nationally. Each student's average point score of 39.6 was also close to the national average. These results reflect either a standstill or decline since 2001 when the average point score, at 42.7, was above the national average. The fall is directly attributable to difficulties over continuity of teaching. The situation in English that adversely affected Year 9 results similarly depressed the GCSE results to 28 percentage points below the national average for A* to C grades. These results significantly affect the overall average because nearly all students take the examination. Results in history, a subject taken by nearly a third of students, were 30 percentage points below national average for reasons attributed to teachers travelling between the college's two sites.
- 3 The percentage gaining 5 or more A*-C grades and the GCSE average point score were well above average in comparison with schools where students had similar prior attainments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 which is an improvement on 2001. This represents good achievement. The proportion gaining 5 or more A*-G grades fell from well above average to average reflecting a change in entry policy for lower attaining students. However, compared to schools with similar socio-economic circumstances, the percentages gaining 5 or more A* to C and A* to G grades were below their average but the average point score was about the same. Over all subjects, boys' results were below those of girls although the difference is close to the national position.
- 4 Students' attainments at A* to C grades are significantly above national averages in several subjects, notably in business studies, design and technology, geography, French, music, physical education and religious education. Students also attain relatively well in German. However, students attain relatively less well than nationally in English language and literature, science, art and design, drama, history, and child development, often because of difficult problems over staffing.
- 5 The results did not meet targets for 5 or more A* to C grades (46 per cent compared with 50 per cent set) or for average point scores (39.6 compared to 42 set). The 2003 target of 55 per cent gaining 5+ A* to C grades and the average point score target of 43 reflect a careful analysis, but represent a clear challenge to improve levels of performance.

Standards of work seen during the inspection

- 6 Students speak fluently and listen well and their reading and writing skills are average overall in Years 7 to 11. The difference in the average standards now seen in English and the below average examination results in 2002 is due to the high proportion of changes of teachers over the

past year and the relatively low attainment of boys compared to girls. The recent improvement stems from a more stable staffing position and attention to effective teaching for boys and girls. Standards in mathematics are above national averages in Years 7 to 9 where students achieve well in developing skills of handling numbers, algebra and drawing and interpreting graphs. In Years 10 and 11, students' abilities to handle number, understand concepts of shape and space, interpret data and use algebra are in line with national averages. Overall standards in science are above average in Years 7 to 9. They are about average in Years 10 and Year 11 because, although students demonstrate competent laboratory and recording skills, their observational and drawing skills are weak.

- 7 In other subjects students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11 to reach standards that are above average overall. Notably, by the end of Year 9 standards are well above average and achievement is very good in geography and design and technology. By Year 11, standards are well above average and achievement is very good in design and technology, geography and religious education. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory in all other subjects.
- 8 By Year 9 students with SEN are achieving well. Overall, they make good progress towards their individual targets because of very good teaching and very good support from learning support assistants. In Years 10 and 11 most students with SEN are achieving well, but some still have difficulties with basic skills and become frustrated. In consequence their rate of progress is much slower.
- 9 There are very few students in the lower school who are learning English as an additional language. They generally come to the college with a good, working knowledge of English and achieve well, with specific help from the learning support department where students have particular difficulties. The college has historically not needed provision for students at an early stage of learning English but some have recently joined the upper school and sixth form. They are making good progress due to sensitivity to their needs of subject teachers.
- 10 The college systematically identifies gifted and talented students. Where the college has been able to make special provision for these students, through booster classes, summer school, and special projects, in art, language, thinking skills and music, for example, they have made good progress and achieve well. However, their progress is overall satisfactory because provision does not yet permeate the whole of day-to-day teaching in all subjects. Further development is in hand by a working group of teachers, aided by guidance in the college handbook.

Sixth form

- 11 About three-quarters of the sixth form students take courses leading to advanced and advanced supplementary level qualifications, and the remainder take courses leading to intermediate level GNVQs or vocational A levels (AVCE). The school sees it as very important to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of its students. It has a very good programme for making sure that all students are well advised in their choices for further study or the world of work, including those who leave the college at age 16. These include some who leave in order to take vocational qualifications at the local FE college, and others who move to selective or independent schools in Colchester or elsewhere. Nevertheless, retention rates are above average, and nearly all students who embark on sixth form courses complete them. There is a strong tradition of entry to higher education.
- 12 The college sets entry requirements for those embarking on A level courses, but some flexibility is allowed, and students as a whole start their sixth form studies with below average attainment. They make good progress and, by the time they reach the end of Year 13, students' attainment is in line with the national average. This is true for students who take vocational examinations as well for those who studied for AS and A levels.
- 13 The school's own data confirms this picture. Careful analysis of progress against students' GCSE results shows that nearly all students leave the school with qualifications which are better than might be expected from their attainment at the end of Year 11. Achievement in the sixth form is therefore good.

- 14 Students who take courses in art, English, geography and history obtain particularly good results, with the number of students gaining the highest grades, A and B, well above the national average. Good or very good teaching, and the good or very good relationships which teachers have with their students, foster a sense of security and lead to very good learning. Results in a few subjects are below average, but the total number of students in these teaching groups is usually small, making statistical comparisons unreliable. This is especially true in the sciences where students have started AS courses with a C grade in GCSE, but the school is aware of the problem and is taking steps to ensure that students who are accepted on such courses have a reasonable chance of success.
- 15 National data for sixth form examinations in 2002 is unavailable at the time of writing, but the schools own data shows that the pattern of the last few years has been maintained. Most students continue to make good progress through Years 12 and 13, and gain results which show that their achievement is good.
- 16 Sensitive and supportive teaching helps those who have special needs to make good progress, and those who are gifted and talented to progress at least as well as other students. However, the college could do still more to help those who are very high attainers to do still better by providing a wider range of activities designed to stimulate their interest and develop their research and critical skills at a high level.
- 17 The college places considerable importance on development of key skills in the sixth form and very good courses are delivered through students' chosen subjects. Students are encouraged to present themselves for assessment but, whether they do so or not, the benefits of the focus provided by these qualifications make a significant difference to their progress in the sixth form. However, students themselves see a key skills qualification as a bonus associated with particular courses: for example ICT for those taking an ICT course. The college should consider how students might be supported in gaining key skills qualifications in areas which contrast with their main interests, for example communication skills for mathematics and science students.

Standards of work seen

- 18 In lessons, the quality of work seen reflects these standards. Students are motivated to study well, and the good relationships within the sixth form combined with good teaching lead to a very good environment in which effective learning can take place. Students quickly pick up the higher standards associated with sixth form work. They learn to take useful notes and the good support from teachers helps them to communicate using the language associated with the subject. In their homework, students are keen to do well, and the many useful comments by teachers help students to develop a written style appropriate to this level of working.
- 19 A feature of sixth form lessons in nearly all subjects is the quality of discussion which takes place. Students learn to listen carefully to their teacher, and their fellow students, to read critically, and to sift what is relevant to their purpose. They can express themselves clearly, and are secure that their ideas will be taken seriously. In this way they quickly grow in confidence and develop an analytical approach which serves them well across a range of subjects, and which leads to further good learning. Research skills are good in several subjects. The highest attaining students, for example, undertake research in the problems facing local businesses and express their findings with fluency and well supported analytical arguments. They make good use of ICT, for example in physical education, where they show a good knowledge and understanding of the history of sport.
- 20 Physical education students also show good understanding of moral and social issues which have affected physical activities. This achievement is reflected in many other areas of the curriculum and is a measure of the uniformity of purpose which the college brings to its sixth form teaching. Students in performing arts, for example show a good awareness of different cultural traditions in music and drama.

- 21 One of many strengths of the sixth form culture as a whole is the consistent approach to strands across many subjects: spiritual in performing arts, English and geography, social issues in health and social care, sociology and geography; and moral issues in science and many other areas. Practical skills are generally good, whether in physical education, performing arts, textiles or science. These cross-curricular links spill over into activities outside the classroom. Students speak particularly highly of their geography field trips, in which they not only learned geography, but also a wider range of social, research and study skills. And following a visit to the Body Worlds exhibition, which was so popular that it had to be repeated, students spent time exploring the many cultural influences seen in the east end of London.
- 22 Not all students achieve at the highest level. Lower attaining students take longer to develop the analytical skills of some of their colleagues, and many of them need greater help in the skills of writing notes which will provide a useful resource for later study. Support of teachers is consistently of high quality so that each student reaches his or her potential in a secure learning environment in which opinions are valued as the route to a better understanding of the world around us and our fellow human beings. This sixth form is unusually successful in presenting a view of scholarship at this level through a mesh of opportunities all of which contribute to an experience which helps its students to grow into responsible citizens who are able to make a good contribution to the world in which they live. Work seen in lessons consistently reflects these ideals.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- 23 Students in both the lower and upper schools generally display positive attitudes to college and their learning. Parents are particularly pleased by the way the college encourages students to work hard and achieve their best and feel this helps them to make good progress. In most lessons a good working atmosphere is achieved and students settle quickly to the tasks set for them. They are enthusiastic, well motivated and confident when answering questions, participating in activities or engaging in discussions. Students are very enthusiastic about the extra-curricular activities in the college and spoke at length about the large variety of sports, clubs and other activities on offer. These activities are very well attended. Students are very vocal in their support and appreciation of their teachers and the opportunities the college gives them. *'It's one big happy family... everyone has an equal chance'*. They feel that they get good support from teachers, *'we get treated like adults'* and *'receive a good education'*.
- 24 Although there are a small number of very challenging students the majority of students behave well both in their lessons and around the college. There is an orderly atmosphere on both sites and the students are well aware of, and generally abide by the college rules and uniform policy. Behaviour during lunch and break times is good and very well managed, particularly in view of the large number of students and limited space when it is wet. Parents feel that attitudes and behaviour have improved over the last two years, and highlight the escorts on the buses as one of the reasons for these improvements. The very good provision for moral and social development results in students responding in a mature and sensible way. Some Year 11 students reported that behaviour is better in the upper school, as a result of *"being treated more like adults"*. The college has a very focused approach to behaviour management and makes effective use of exclusions as part of its behaviour management strategy. The number of fixed term exclusions is in line with colleges of a similar size. Notably, there have been no permanent exclusions over the last three years because the college makes its own appropriate alternative provision. Students on both sites report few incidents of bullying and feel if incidents do occur these are, *'more verbal than physical'*. They feel safe and if anything happens they know what to do.
- 25 Relationships across the college are very good, both between staff and students, and amongst the students themselves. The college works hard to promote tolerance and kindness and ensure students do not feel excluded. Students from different backgrounds generally mix and work well together, generating an atmosphere of good racial harmony. Opportunities are offered in lessons for students to work together in both pairs and small groups. Students co-operate well in drama and dance sessions sharing their ideas and planning the next activity. In design and technology they listen intently during others' presentations; and are not afraid to join in and make mistakes in language lessons. The friendly and supportive atmosphere promotes a good working environment and makes a positive impact on learning. The extra-curricular clubs, including the various different

sporting activities, rehearsals for performances and fund raising events, provide valuable opportunities for teamwork. In each instance the students responded well to the challenges offered.

- 26 The levels of attendance in the college are unsatisfactory and at 89.4 per cent last year are below the national average. This includes 2.2 per cent unauthorised absence, which is high because of the college's policy of *zero tolerance*. The attendance figures are slightly better in Years 7 and 11. Whilst 50 per cent of students have attendance levels of over 94 per cent, 10 per cent of students attend for less than 85 per cent and there are a small minority who attend infrequently. The unsatisfactory levels of attendance were raised as an issue in the previous inspections and these figures have remained consistently low for the last six years. New incentives have resulted in some improvement since September. The low attendance rates are frequently due to parents taking their children on holiday in term time, or in some instances allowing students to miss college for insignificant reasons or are condoning truancy. The lack of attendance on a regular basis by many of these students is having a significant impact upon their education and standards of attainment.
- 27 Punctuality to college in the morning can be a problem with the late running of buses, although there are a small number of students arriving late on a regular basis. Punctuality problems are followed up satisfactorily. Twice daily registration effectively monitors any potential truancy. Class tutors have a good rapport with their classes and are using the morning registration period very effectively to monitor students' diaries and support their personal development. Very good links have been established with the education welfare officer, who, normally being college-based, works closely with the heads of years and follows up incidents as required
- 28 Students with special educational needs in the lower school show good motivation because of the good support they receive and individual support, which is well matched to their needs. In the upper school many students maintain good attitudes and relationships with staff who support them in lessons and help with coursework. However, some become overwhelmed by the courses they follow, and lose their motivation in the face of work which they find too difficult. Students who do not have special educational needs generally have good attitudes to those who do. For example, they may follow special rules in games lessons, allowing a student with physical difficulties more time before they try to get the ball.

Sixth form

- 29 Students' attitudes to the college are very good, both in lessons and around the college. They are highly motivated and well focused on their studies. They know their target grades and what they need to do to succeed. They recognise the great contribution that their teachers make to their education and development. They value the freedom offered in the sixth form and the fact that they are treated as individuals and adults. They quote many activities that they have taken part in and which show their appreciation of what the college does for them. These range from field trips in geography and visits to exhibitions in London or Birmingham, to ski trips and work experience. Many students speak positively of the opportunities they have for independent learning, and often spend time outside lessons working on projects in which they have become involved, for example in textiles. Others speak of their interest in the subjects they are studying and welcome the opportunities they have to read in depth outside lessons.
- 30 A wide range of opportunities is available to sixth form students, and they make the most of them. Extra-curricular activities are numerous and varied. Many, such as the young enterprise scheme and various fund raising activities allow considerable opportunities for students to take responsibility, and to develop leadership qualities. Others provide opportunities for social development and enjoyment. Increasingly, the boundaries between study and recreation are becoming blurred as students take part with equal enthusiasm, and benefit from what is available to them. In turn, the school monitors students' participation to make sure that all of them gain as much as possible from their experiences. Gentle persuasion is sometimes used to point students towards areas that form tutors feel would be of benefit.

- 31 Students' personal development in the sixth form is outstanding, supported by an excellent team, which is led by the head of sixth form. Students appreciate the excellent support, which they are given. The college arranges regular and thought-provoking assemblies, which deal with important moral and social issues such as homelessness. A number of focus days take place during the year, for example on health education and religious education. Students speak exceptionally highly of these events, and it is a tribute to the excellent provision by the school that they are so effective. Students have a strong loyalty to the school, and see themselves as senior members of a community, which serves all its members well. Within this community they develop the skills which they will need as citizens in the wider world, to continue learning throughout their adult life and with the capacity to work independently.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 32 Teaching quality is good throughout Years 7 to 11, and very good in the sixth form. One lesson in seven is very good or excellent in Years 7 to 9, two out of five in Years 10 and 11 and nearly half in the sixth form. Only four unsatisfactory lessons were seen throughout the college. English teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The quality in mathematics and science is good overall. Teaching is very good overall in geography, history, physical education and religious education and good in other subjects. Effective teaching leads to effective learning, particularly in the upper school. This is a considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection. Clearly, it results from a substantial investment in training, for example through involvement in the Essex Coastal Federation of Schools' training agency and visits to centres of excellence in other schools.
- 33 Several very good features contribute to the most effective teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject often coupled to a clear understanding of how students learn. These, and a clear knowledge of students' potential, helps them hold high expectations and plan lessons well. Appropriate and well-managed activities foster positive relationships, and a lively pace and good time management engenders students' good behaviour and involvement. They concentrate well and show interest in lessons. They work hard, both mentally and physically as appropriate. In turn, students' development of subject skills, knowledge and understanding is good. Their learning is effective, and is consolidated, when teachers frequently check and support students' understanding. For example, all students, including those with SEN, make good progress in lessons as a result of questioning that is incisive and focused, as in English and geography, and is related to clearly stated lesson objectives, as in design and technology.
- 34 Teaching reflects the clear inclusive philosophy of the school. Students are fully valued by teachers who generally use varied teaching and learning styles to ensure that their needs are met. Although many classes comprise sets of students grouped by ability, teaching does not always fully develop opportunities for all students to make progress at their own level. In English, modern foreign languages and ICT, for example it is not unusual to find teachers expecting some students to go further than others in their work, and challenging them to make greater progress. In other lessons, however, the work is less clearly matched to students' abilities.
- 35 Teaching literacy is good because in most subjects teachers encourage speaking and listening, and set work which demands reading and writing. However, despite clear guidance, marking is inconsistent in relation to correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation. The arrangements for developing students' numeracy skills are unsatisfactory because the approaches are inconsistent. For example, in those subjects where numeracy is used, such as science, design and technology and geography, students would benefit from a common approach to teaching basic arithmetical techniques and mental methods. ICT is used well to support learning in all areas of curriculum. Most teachers use very good ICT resources effectively to enhance their teaching and help students learn as a result of effective guidance from the ICT department. In turn, students can transfer skills they learn in one area to another effectively.
- 36 The very few unsatisfactory lessons include shortcomings in planning for learning or managing students' behaviour. There are no general weaknesses in teaching, however, but there are aspects that need improvement. On occasions, students do not have sufficient responsibility for their own learning. For example in English some lessons are too teacher-dominated and students become relatively passive. Students' learning is often limited when the lesson content lacks sufficient relevance, for example in ICT students need more opportunity to widen the range of their enquiries to include more real-life situations, or when learning is not sufficiently reviewed and reinforced at the end of the lesson. The one-hour lesson is a long time for some students who have short concentration spans and are easily distracted. In drama, for example, activities are sometimes allowed to run on for too long, and occasionally design and technology lessons lack variety and subsequent pace. In turn the misbehaviour of a small minority of students sometimes slows down learning unacceptably.

- 37 Homework is often used well, but at times it is not consistently set, revealing wide differences between subjects and teachers. It is used particularly well in geography and physical education and well in art, design and technology, ICT and religious education. In most other subjects there is room for improvement to help raise standards in GCSE
- 38 Assessment of progress is good and in turn students value the way teachers monitor their learning and give them help to improve their work. Assessments are used well in matching work to boys' and girls' abilities. Marking is generally effective when it includes supportive comments, such as in English, but there is room for development in ICT where marking is inconsistent, and particularly in history where over-use of minimal indications that the teacher has seen the work do not give students sufficient knowledge of their standards or pointers to improve them.
- 39 Teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall, and very good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers in the Learning Support team, throughout the college, have very good knowledge of methods and approaches for students with special educational needs. They plan work very well, assess and monitor progress carefully and offer students considerable emotional as well as educational support. They use ICT very effectively, for example the *Success Maker* software enables students to develop and have their numeracy skills reinforced independently. Learning support assistants also provide very good support that enables students to gain access to the curriculum in subject lessons; they liaise well with teachers, adapt and interpret work and, through skilled questioning, encourage students to put their hands up and take an active part in lessons. Students' progress is particularly good in those lessons where subject teachers adapt their lesson planning to take account of different needs and abilities, for example in history, physical education, and religious education. However, whilst there are many examples of good practice, subject teachers do not always adapt the work to the abilities of all their students; some are over-reliant on the contribution of learning support assistants or simply accept a standard of work that is too low.

Sixth form

- 40 The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good overall, with some excellent practice. Teachers are well qualified, and have a broad interest in their subjects, which they communicate well to their students. In an English lesson, for example, the teacher responded to students' questions about the nature of language change with real depth of understanding. They are experienced, and have a very good understanding of how young people learn. They are genuinely concerned for their students' success and work hard to support achievement at the highest level.
- 41 The best teaching, for example in health and social care or sociology, is characterised by a good variety of activities which challenge students' learning in different ways, coupled with clarity of purpose. Teachers in all subjects use question and answer sessions to build students' confidence, engage them with the subject and develop the habits of critical appraisal and evaluation. At the same time they get instant feedback on the progress that their students are making and can use this as the lesson develops to support the best learning. For example, some students who are making really good progress in most aspects of the course in health and social care, find more theoretical aspects challenging. Teachers are able to respond immediately to such difficulties as they arise to move the students' learning on and maintain the pace of the lesson.
- 42 Teachers in many subjects use examples from a range of contexts to maintain interest and improve the quality of learning. In geography, for example, students were able to empathise with victims of natural hazards, in chemistry their interest was captured by a study of the properties of different plastics, and in an excellent sociology lesson, the teacher probed beyond the students' initial response to Durkheim's study of suicide to help them to extend and reformulate their answers.
- 43 The excellent ICT facilities in the college also support good teaching. In physical education, for example, students are required to prepare presentations which are presented to the rest of the group; in design technology, students use ICT as part of the design process; and in music technology students undertook sequencing effectively and recorded a synthesised version of

the song *Money, Money Money*. The strength in this, as in most aspects of teaching, is that it offers students a consistent approach to learning in which skills learned in one area are reinforced in another to very good effect.

- 44 Support for students is a strength. In geography and chemistry, for example, students comment on their confidence in their teachers, who give generously of their time to help those who are in difficulty. Teachers are very aware of their students' needs, and extend this support to students of every level of attainment, including those with special needs.
- 45 Although teaching is very good overall, there are still some areas for development. Teachers give good support for students who are gifted and talented within the context of lessons. They vary, for example, their questioning style, often very skilfully, to give such students a greater challenge. Nevertheless, there are times when very able students need to develop greater freedom in their study, perhaps through individual research activities, followed by the discipline of feedback to the rest of the group within a fixed time schedule.
- 46 Where teaching is good, rather than very good, this is often because some students in the class find the work difficult, perhaps because they started the course with below average qualifications. Teachers need to be constantly aware of such students in their planning so that they can make sure that they are presented with appropriate activities, and monitor their progress frequently so they do not fall behind and lose interest.

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

- 47 The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the college are very good in Years 7 to 11. All statutory requirements for the National Curriculum are met apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a relevant experience for most students. There is a well-organised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme which includes citizenship from Years 7 to 11.
- 48 In addition to the basic curriculum, students in Years 7 to 9 have the opportunity to study drama. The breadth of provision in design and technology is particularly good and students have the opportunity for enrichment by taking part in a variety of local and national competitions. However, students are limited to study only one modern foreign language. The quality of learning experiences is very good in Years 7 to 9 where the *Key Stage 3 Strategy* is being very well implemented. Students are able to develop good skills for independent learning, particularly in design and technology, history and religious education.
- 49 In Years 10 and 11, students continue to enjoy rich learning experiences. They can also follow vocational courses and study business. Although there are limited opportunities at present for those students who have difficulty accessing the academic curriculum, the college is developing new and more relevant courses for them.
- 50 The college has very good links with the community and provides a focal point for a number of community activities. Courses on ICT are run for local residents, reflecting well upon technology college status. In association with local churches a youth group operates twice weekly. Nearly two hundred young musicians attend the Tendring Music School on Saturday mornings. Students from the college are members of the Walton Sea Cadets, one of the leading Corps in the country. Representatives of the college attend monthly meetings of the Tendring District Local Authority Youth Forum. In turn representatives of the community make a clear and useful contribution to students' education. Visitors to the college include the Fire Brigade, police liaison officer and representatives from the Department of Transport. The youth ministry from the association of local churches makes regular contributions to assemblies and religious education. Local businesses, including electricity, banks and supermarkets, offer support through the Young Enterprise Scheme. Work experience, via the Trident Project, provides links for students that extend both nation wide and internationally.

- 51 Students make a clear contribution to many local charitable events. For example, the Tendring College Association annual *Fun Run* is highly regarded and prominently reported in the local newspaper. Students from the health and social care course provide assistance in the nearby day care centre and the home for senior citizens.
- 52 There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities including visits and enhancement and support lessons taking place on both sites with almost every subject department involved. For example, the modern foreign languages department operates exchange visits with France and Germany, and the Tendring Music School has given performances in Berlin and New York. Besides educational visits and theatre trips visiting artists take workshops in the school.
- 53 Provision for careers education and guidance is very good and has maintained *Recognition of Quality Assurance* status since 1998. A well co-ordinated programme is taught effectively by specialist teachers within the PSHE curriculum from Year 8 onwards. A very good working relationship exists with the careers adviser linked to the school who provides high quality guidance at strategic times from Year 9 onwards. The careers library is small but well stocked with material regularly kept up-to-date with the help of an outside agency. Currently, efforts are successfully being made to ensure departments play an active role in supplementing careers advice and guidance. The school has developed a wide range of strategies to increase the work-related aspect of the curriculum. It has good links with the local Education Business Partnership for joint projects, such as participation in the Young Enterprise Scheme.
- 54 All students, including those with SEN, have access to all aspects of the life of the college, including residential trips. The college has begun to put in place more appropriate courses and examinations for students who cannot achieve at GCSE level. For example, opportunities for off-site training lead to National Vocational Qualifications covering a wide range of vocational areas and beneficial links with local training providers and employers. This worthwhile development should continue in the light of the unusually complex and varied special needs of students the college admits.
- 55 The high quality of links with the main partner primary schools ensure arrangements for transition are excellent. To ensure the best possible continuity from Year 6 to Year 7, lower school senior teachers have a busy schedule of primary visits to make in the summer term. Primary students in Years 5 and 6 visit the college and there is a full programme of visits and open days that include matinees of college shows and performances by the college band. Teachers from the mathematics, science and design and technology departments go weekly into primary schools to teach and there are also cross-phase literacy links in the summer term. Links continue to develop, for example a joint breakfast club is starting shortly with a neighbouring primary school.
- 56 The six schools of the Confederation of Coastal Schools have strong links and support each other well. The Confederation runs the school centred initial training programme for teachers (SCITT) and the graduate training programme which benefits all members. There is a wide selection of further training opportunities provided, and development work at a senior level looks at Post-16 opportunities, the design of the 11-16 curriculum and enrichment activities.

Provision for students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 57 The provision for personal development is very good leading to mature and responsible students. The clear aims and ethos of the college promotes value and respect for each other, and are reinforced by the good role models of the staff. When used well, tutorial time enables tutors to consult with students, monitor their progress and develop constructive relationships. The PSHE and citizenship programmes address topics relevant to the different age ranges and provides a safe circumstance for students to talk about important issues. In these sessions students share their views and feelings, values and beliefs confidently. Students, particularly in the upper school, respond very well to the opportunities offered to develop their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. They often organise their own work experience programme; undertake personal researches; develop their investigative skills and evaluate their results. Students willingly take advantage of the roles of responsibility offered to them both in class and around the

college. In the lower school a number of Year 9 students undertake the role of senior students providing support to tutor groups and offering peer group mentoring to the younger students. The class and school councils provide a voice for students to put their views across, become involved in decision-making processes and promote the development of social responsibility.

- 58 The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. As at the time of the last report, the college has high expectations which are reflected in its ethos, in the commitment of the staff and the good behaviour of its students. The school provides a consistent framework in which students can grow and flourish. Achievement is regularly celebrated. Many subjects of the curriculum contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Where subjects are not specifically planning for this, opportunities are missed.
- 59 Provision for students' spiritual development is good. This occurs in a number of subject areas as well as in regular assemblies. Students in the upper school attend one assembly each week, while those in lower school attend two. Assembly is used as a powerful way of sharing values and exploring what it means to belong to a learning community. Assemblies are well prepared, presented with humour and sensitivity by teachers and students, and provide opportunities for thought and personal reflection. Spiritual development is nurtured in a number of ways within lessons. For example, in a science lesson keen interest in the creation of life went beyond the mechanical to a higher consideration of the nature of life itself and, in geography, work on natural disasters lead to a consideration of the wonders of nature. Religious education lessons provide many opportunities for students to reflect on meaning and purpose in life and the values promoted in human society.
- 60 The schools' provision for moral education is very good. Students respond positively to teachers' high expectations in their work and behaviour. There is a clear code of conduct which students understand and accept. The school does not accept bullying or cheating. Students learn about the difference between right and wrong in assemblies, form time and mentoring sessions as well as in the routines of daily school life. Respect for rules and decisions are fostered in sport. Moral issues are explored very effectively in different subjects. For example, students confront ethics and justice in religious education, environmental issues in science and geography, consumer rights and health and safety in design and technology, the morality of war in history and dilemmas of the human condition in English.
- 61 Provision for social development is very good, as at the time of the last report. Students work together positively and have good relationships with each other and their teachers. Many lessons provide opportunities for group work when students collaborate and co-operate effectively. There are many residential opportunities, for example geography fieldwork in Swansea, an art weekend in Norfolk and an annual 3-day visit to Tower Hamlets where sixth formers spend working with asylum seekers and homeless people. Social development also occurs in numerous extra-curricular activities, particularly in the areas of sport, music and drama. The school provides opportunities for students to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility. For example, some Year 9 students are appointed to act as peer group mentors to younger students, to escort visitors to school and act as hosts on open days and others volunteer to help in the library.
- 62 The school makes good provision for cultural development within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Students have many opportunities to explore their own culture through numerous visits to theatres, galleries and exhibitions such as the recent 'Body Works' in London and the Clothes Show in Birmingham. There are visits to the zoo at Colchester and appropriate lectures at the University of East Anglia. Artists, musicians and writers come into school to show and talk about their work. A group of students took part in a community project to design and produce a mural at Thorpe station. Prejudice and stereotypes are constantly challenged. Students are introduced to a wider culture in numerous ways. For example, many multi-cultural texts are studied in English, the culture of Islam is explored in history and in religious education students are introduced to the many faiths which make up multi-cultural Britain today. Costume design in textiles has led to excellent research into the cultures of Japan and India as preparation for the design of kimonos and saris. The modern languages department promotes experience of

European culture through foreign exchange visits. The school has links with an Asian school and at the present time a number of Italian students are visiting for 3 months.

Sixth form

- 63 The quality and range of the sixth form curriculum are very good. A good range of AS and A level subjects is taught together with a small range of AVCEs and intermediate GNVQ courses. This range serves the needs of most students in the college well. There are good relationships between the college and partner institutions and students are well advised where further study elsewhere is more appropriate. The college adopts a policy of inclusion, which is fully supported in the sixth form.
- 64 Within individual curriculum areas, provision is at least good, and often very good. This is not only because teachers choose appropriate courses for their students, but their own experience and intrinsic subject interest help them to enliven their lessons with examples from their own studies, and to answer searching questions fully and in a way which furthers students' appreciation of the subject. The curriculum could be improved further if teachers were to incorporate up-to-date resource materials designed to support the new examination specifications in to their lesson plans where appropriate. These materials are particularly designed to help higher-attaining students who do not have sufficient opportunity to develop their research skills and ability to think critically about their work.
- 65 The college has adopted the view that it can serve the community best by offering a full range of AS and A level courses, with a few vocational A levels and GNVQ courses. NVQ courses are available in local FE colleges. Nevertheless, the college might usefully consider whether the range of vocational courses might be extended slightly to include the general area of design technology, and to introduce more specific vocational training for a number of students who are interested in a variety of care occupations.
- 66 Enrichment activities play a major part in the sixth form curriculum. A very wide range of activities are on offer, covering sport, music and drama, including major school productions, external visits, fund raising, Young Enterprise, and many others. Participation levels are very high. The senior sixth form staff monitor participation carefully to make sure that students' personal development is well balanced and offer additional support and encouragement where necessary. There is, however, no recreational physical education in the sixth form, which is available to all students.
- 67 The school makes excellent provision for students personal development through a variety of other activities. Students speak exceptionally positively about, for example, the focus days devoted to religious education and to health education. There is no doubt that these, and more routine elements, such as assemblies and tutor periods, make a real difference to the quality of sixth form education in the college.
- 68 As part of these arrangements, the school offers very good careers guidance in which there is an excellent blend of advice to help students to make appropriate choices in areas which are properly theirs and down-to-earth practical advice on issues such as writing a CV or applying for a job. Similar advice is given to those applying for places in higher education. Students themselves are very appreciative of the careers advice which is available but less so of help given in relation to university entrance. This may be because expertise on specific university courses may be more widely distributed amongst subject teachers, or may simply relate to the timing of the inspection, before the main university application season had begun.
- 69 In practice, students have relatively little free time in school. What they have is used for private and valuable social interaction. This aspect is important in a college where many students have no easy transport links from home, making the college an important centre for them. It is yet another measure of the college's understanding of its students that they recognise the importance of these contacts and do whatever they can to foster them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 70 Provision for students' health, welfare and guidance is outstanding and makes a valuable contribution to their personal and academic development. Parents highlighted the very caring and

supportive environment offered to their children in the college and the advantages offered by the split-sites. The class tutors, subject specialists and the year heads know their students well and act quickly when they see a need. The academic mentoring scheme is very successful in supporting students' academic and personal development by identifying their progress against set targets. This results in students knowing clearly how well they are doing. The review sessions also enable tutors to focus on personal development issues, such as building confidence and self-esteem or better attitudes to learning. This information is reported back to parents through 'cause for concern' or 'praise' letters, which are sent home.

- 71 Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good and contribute effectively to the good levels of behaviour. The lower school is successfully piloting a comprehensive behaviour management system, *discipline for learning*, which is clearly linked to ensuring a better learning environment. Behaviour management is consistent and students know what is expected of them. The establishment of an internal exclusion unit, support for challenging classes and a well-developed system of rewards and sanctions have led to recent improvements in behaviour in the lower school. Similar systems are being considered for the upper school where rewards are linked closely with progress grades. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The college takes the issue of bullying seriously. Older students on both sites are being trained to act as peer mediators and are available to counsel younger students who may have problems. Students report that any incidents of bullying which do occur are generally handled sensitively and effectively. They did not consider bullying to be a major problem in the college.
- 72 Procedures for monitoring and improving good attendance are satisfactory. Despite the best efforts of the school some parents are still not ensuring that their children attend regularly. The college has sought ways to improve this situation over the years by implementing many new systems and procedures, including a number of very good incentives to encourage 100 per cent attendance. A new dedicated absence line is available to record messages from parents if their child is ill; otherwise they are called on the first day of absence in an effort to reduce absence and truanting. These recent initiatives have contributed to improved attendance since September 2002 although it is clearly too early to judge their long-term effect.
- 73 The college has excellent systems in place for child protection and ensuring students' health, safety and welfare. Senior members of staff on both sites have designated responsibilities for child protection issues. All staff are suitably apprised of child protection procedures through regular in-service training. Welfare assistants follow well-established systems for taking care of students who may fall ill during the day, and they effectively meet students' medical needs. Enough staff are qualified to provide first aid treatment and the lower school is fortunate in having an on-site nurse. There is a clear internet safety agreement between the college, parents and students which effectively monitors students' access to web-sites. The college has good links with the various support agencies and these specialists attend as necessary.
- 74 The health and safety policy is comprehensive both for students in the college or when out on visits. There are regular health and safety checks and risk assessments undertaken, as well as a review of the security arrangements around the college. The staff and governors take their responsibility for health and safety issues seriously.
- 75 Arrangements for assessing, monitoring and supporting students' academic performance and personal development are good. The college has developed an effective culture of learning linked to the setting of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed targets. Well-developed strategies for monitoring students' academic performance and personal development include giving advice and informing parents. Parents are particularly appreciative and supportive of the college systems which serves them and students well.
- 76 In Years 7 to 9, the assessment procedures are closely linked to the description of levels as stated in the National Curriculum; in Year 10 and 11 the linkage is to individual subject criteria and based upon GCSE examination grades. Regular assessments are incorporated into a well-constructed calendar of recording and reporting. Monitoring progress in lessons and achievement

over time is consistently good and is serving to raise standards overall, but there is less consistency in the use of data for evaluation, for example value-added measures.

- 77 The use of assessment to help improve course and subject planning is good overall. Students are placed in groups of similar ability for learning using the results from assessments. The provision for matching work appropriately to most students, including those with SEN is good, but it is less well developed in supporting the needs of gifted and talented students.
- 78 The support students receive to help them achieve at the highest levels of their potential and make progress is good. Academic mentoring is regular and is linked closely to monitoring students' personal development. Students who are considered as under-achieving are supported and this has brought success in Years 10 and 11 in helping students to reach higher standards in GCSE examinations. The reporting to students and parents meets statutory requirements. Meetings to discuss achievement and progress with students and parents are regular and reports, including an annual report and interim reports, keep parents well informed to their overall satisfaction.

Sixth form

Assessment

- 79 The school has very good systems for assessing students' progress. Good or very good teaching, with a wealth of discussion and questioning sessions mean that teachers have a very good day-to-day knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. They set regular homework and longer assignments. Marking is very good and students' claims that teachers' comments on their work are very helpful are fully supported by inspectors' own observations. Mark books are kept fully up-to-date.
- 80 More formal testing takes place on a unit-by-unit basis within subjects. Tests are often based on questions taken from public examination papers and are firmly rooted in national standards. Results are communicated sensitively to students together with advice for the future. Teachers take good account of the outcomes of these tests in planning their teaching.
- 81 Results of these unit tests are held within departments and are used to monitor progress towards students' targets: students themselves take a very responsible attitude towards their targets and are keen to take action if they should fall short in any area. Major school examinations are held before public examinations ('mocks') and on a termly basis. Regular progress reports are produced and sent to parents. Students' personal tutors have a major part to play in making this well thought-out system a success. They fulfil this role well, and in doing so make a significant contribution to students' progress and improving learning skills.
- 82 Although this system supports nearly all students very well, the introduction of AS examinations in a wider range of subjects has highlighted an issue which the college needs to address. A minority of students embark on AS courses with GCSE qualifications which are barely adequate, for example mathematics or sciences based on GCSE grade C. Such students sometimes find it difficult to assimilate the standards and language associated with advanced courses as quickly as their colleagues and tend to fall behind. It is important that test results for these students are shared effectively between teachers in different subject areas so that swift action can be taken whenever difficulties arise.

Advice, support and guidance

- 83 Advice to students is available from a wide variety of sources. For most students the first line is the personal tutor. Tutors have a wealth of experience in working with young adults and have access to a good range of information about their students. They are easily accessible to students, and also hold formal interviews at regular intervals to review progress.
- 84 More senior members of the sixth form team are also easily accessible. Students are comfortable in approaching them with problems or for advice. This advice is freely given. A range of professional services is also available in, for example, careers or through students' individual subject teachers.

- 85 The real strength in the system, however, is in the consistency in approach, in the defined roles of the members of the sixth form team and in the positive relationships which exist between staff and students who work together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- 86 Very close links are established with parents at the start of the sixth form to keep them informed about what will be happening over the next two years, as well as involving them in the support systems to ensure their children make good progress and succeed. Information sent home early in Year 12 indicates how they can support and encourage students by creating an effective learning environment at home or helping to reduce stressful situations. The very effective home/support partnership maintained through regular contact with parents via meetings and individual contact is having a positive impact on learning.
- 87 Overall, these factors and the very good provision by the school in a wealth of areas combine to make an exceptional contribution, which transcends that of any individual or process.
- 88 Students' personal development is therefore outstanding.

Attendance

- 89 The school now has good systems in place for monitoring and promoting good attendance in the sixth form. Registration procedures were reviewed here following concerns raised during the previous inspection. It was noted that the informal systems of self-registration did not provide an accurate attendance record and led to potential health and safety concerns in the event of a fire. Year 12 students are expected to be present for registration and a tutorial period at the start of the day. Formal registers have been taken within these sessions since September and show a good level of attendance. This process is similar for Year 13 students unless they are noted down as having home study leave. A new electronic smart card registration system - 'Connexions' - was introduced the week before the inspection and was being viewed very positively both by the students and tutors. Appropriate registration in the morning links into a reward system, building up points towards a number of different benefits. This is working well and encouraging many more students to be present at registration time. The college is looking into the possibility and costs/benefits of extending the system across the college.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 90 The partnership with parents is very good. Staff have worked hard to maintain the strong links with parents and to continue the effective liaison between home and college. Parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting have generally very positive views about the college. They feel that teachers have high expectations of students who are encouraged to work hard and achieve their best. They value the way the college keeps them informed about what is going on and feel that links with tutors are good. Parents are comfortable approaching the college if they have problems or concerns. The inspection team agree with the positive comments of the parents. There were a small number of concerns raised, including the amount and quality of homework given. The inspectors found homework to be used effectively in a small number of subjects, but inconsistently in others. A small number of parents felt the college did not work closely with them or keep them informed of their child's progress. The inspection team considered the college to have very thorough arrangements for keeping parents updated and informed and any problems may be down to specific individuals or situations.
- 91 The range and quality of information provided for parents are very good. The attractive college prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provides comprehensive information about the college and its activities. Parents are kept fully informed about what is going on, on a regular basis, receiving helpful information on the curriculum, option choices and regular newsletters.
- 92 The learning support department involves parents appropriately at all stages of planning provision for pupils' special educational needs. There is good, informal telephone contact with special needs co-ordinators on both sites. Parents regularly attend reviews and comment on their child's progress. Where there are anxieties about a child's well-being or provision, these are usually

resolved through discussion with the college. Parents have responded well to an invitation to discuss their child with the special needs co-ordinator during upper school parents' evenings.

- 93 Opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning are developed very effectively and parents appreciate the way the college involves them in their child's education. Parents are regularly consulted over a number of issues through questionnaires and evaluations. Parents value the fact that they are encouraged to help their children by supporting the homework policy and use the diaries/academic logs most effectively to maintain day-to-day contact. Useful meetings are held at significant points of transfer between the lower and upper school and the sixth form. Formal annual review evenings are generally well attended by parents and students. Parents find the annual reports helpful and constructive and they particularly value the interim reports identifying attainment grades and progress against their targets. The support and contribution of parents to the flourishing Tendring College Association is very good. They feel fully involved in the life of the school and many attend drama productions, concerts and the award ceremonies.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 94 The leadership of the college by the principal is extremely effective. His outstanding commitment, conscientiousness and clear sense of purpose have been significant factors in making improvements in key areas. He provides very clear direction focused on promoting the college ethos of inclusiveness, positive values and personal fulfilment. Members of the senior team are equally dedicated and diligent in promoting the same aims and values. Collectively they are a very coherent and effective leadership group, each with clearly established roles and responsibilities. Together they ensure a close association between the lower and upper schools and sixth form to foster a very effective common management.
- 95 The college benefits from very effective middle managers in academic and pastoral roles. Some especially good and productive working relationships are established in subject departments. For example, roles and responsibilities are clear in art, design and technology, geography, ICT, music physical education and religious education where good support is given to less experienced teachers and there is clear cohesion between the two sites. There are many examples of successful practices upon which less successful subject departments, such as mathematics and science, can build.
- 96 The governors have a very high level of commitment in promoting the interests of the college and are directly and actively involved in monitoring its work. The committee structure is very well defined with clear and appropriate terms of reference. The main business of the governing body is properly transacted through committees. They ensure that governors' responsibilities are discharged, except that the obligation for daily acts of collective worship on both sites is not met. The principal and other members of the senior management team keep the governors well informed on all aspects of the college's work, and on its future development, and governors greatly value the openness of their working relationships with them.
- 97 The governing body is very well aware of the strengths and areas of development for the college, gained primarily from active involvement in visits and meetings. Governors have a commendable, proactive role in partnership with the senior and middle management in the drive for strategic improvement. They know the value of seeing aspects of work at first hand, and relate them in discussions to how well targets are being achieved. In this way governors extend their knowledge of the college and have confidence in their opinions about the quality of its work.
- 98 The senior management team are fully informed about the quality of work in subject departments and of year tutor teams through a comprehensive annual review and evaluation process. These systematic procedures inform, and are informed by, the college strategic plan which sensibly embraces broad aims for raising achievement through improving the quality of teaching, and improving each student's learning by improving tutorial and parental support. The planning structure sets out expectations, indicates resources available and gives clear guidance to subject departments, year tutorial teams and individual teachers. In turn they link departmental action

plans and teachers' performance management with the college aims which are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated at the end of each school year. All staff with managerial roles share a commitment to improvement and collectively have considerable potential to succeed.

- 99 The college has a clear policy for education inclusion. Senior managers are aware of inconsistencies and are working with the departments to alleviate them. Through an induction programme and self-evaluation, teachers are asked to reflect on their practice that helps provide support for all students and foster good links with parents. As a result, students do feel a sense of belonging.
- 100 The learning support department now share clear goals for development and liaison between the sites. The SEN co-ordinators ensure interventions are impressively documented, statutory requirements met and records very well maintained. There is very good monitoring of students' progress and accurate assessment of their needs. Staff are effectively deployed and resources are well used. Learning support assistants are well trained and professional. The department is well resourced to assist learning for SEN and to track progress. However, there are not sufficient resources to cater for the growing needs of students who are at early stages of learning English as an additional language. Accommodation for annual review meetings or private discussion with parents or distressed students is cramped. The College has begun to develop good practice in the education of gifted and talented students and this work is ongoing.
- 101 The college is adequately staffed with teachers who are suitably qualified and who mostly teach their main subjects. The school is a key member of the Confederation of Coastal Schools training agency and draws substantially and successfully upon its resources for training new teachers and the continuing training of more experienced staff. All members of staff attend relevant training to help their professional development. Newly appointed teachers, including those newly qualified, are closely helped by more experienced colleagues. The governors' arrangements for teachers' performance management are securely in place on both sites. Technician and learning support, and the contribution of clerical, administrative and janitorial staff are highly valued. Collectively, the arrangements for training, support and deployment of staff are exemplary.
- 102 Overall, resources are very good. The current ratios for students to computers and to books are well above average. The lower school library is an attractive space with a good range of books and computers. However, the upper school facility is very cramped with a range of books and ICT equipment that is not so rich but extensions are planned within the current re-building phase. Stocks of books are held by individual departments to support wider reading provide an effective short-term alternative. Subject departments use their resources well and benefit from the improving audio-visual and ICT facilities in classrooms. Accommodation is very good but space is at a premium because the college roll is oversubscribed. Recently constructed extensions to the lower school and laboratory and design technology facilities at the upper school enhance the premises which are clean and well maintained. Further building work is underway.
- 103 Strategic financial planning is very good and specific grants are put to excellent use. The governing body and senior management team apply principles of best value to good effect. Very good financial decisions are made for the purchase of goods and services, and spending is scrupulously monitored. All recommendations in the recent auditor's report are being properly acted upon. The college makes effective use of national and local performance data in drawing comparisons from information about similar and local schools' performance. Internal review and evaluation procedures continually challenge the senior team itself, and departments, year teams and individuals to seek improvement, but there are gaps. For example, the reasons for rapidly declining performance in English throughout the school last year were not picked up until it was too late for remediation. Very good procedures for consulting with parents provides an effective way to check parents' views of the college, and to act on them and enlist further support.
- 104 The overall effectiveness of the college is good and, of the sixth form, very good. It serves a wide locality where there are pockets of socio-economic disadvantages. It has high aspirations for all the students in the area and adds good value to their academic and personal development through the range of opportunities and support it provides. The college well deserves the esteem that students, parents and the community give. Although expenditure per student is relatively high,

the outstanding leadership and management, wise spending to maintain a complex split-site, good improvement since the last inspection and good achievement of its students, together indicate that the college is giving good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- 105 Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form is well supported by a deputy head of Tending sixth form college (known as TVIC), and two assistant heads of TVIC. One of the college's vice principals carries overall responsibility for the TVIC and is in charge at the Frinton campus. In addition, each student has a personal tutor who is able to offer day-to-day support. The administrative systems maintained within the college provide very good support for students, and ensure that this area of college activity runs smoothly.
- 106 The members of the sixth form team bring a wealth of experience to their work, and have a very good understanding of the needs of these young adults, and of their perceptions. They are aware of the need to support students' growing independence, whilst supporting their development professionally, and socially. This awareness is well exemplified by the variety of methods used in registering students during the period since the last inspection. There is no evidence that attendance is other than good, but the school adopts the principle that home study leave is a valuable tool in developing students' independent learning skills and is keen to avoid the fixed procedures used with younger students. A recently adopted procedure, using swipe cards, promises rewards for good attendance whilst allowing students the responsibility for planning their own time.
- 107 The head of sixth form and his colleagues promote a highly consistent ethos for the sixth form, which makes a major contribution to the personal development of its students, both academically and personally.
- 108 Management of the curriculum is very good. The college is clear where its strengths lie, and has good links with other institutions in the locality whose focus may support some students more effectively. Excellent guidance is available to make sure that students make the best choices for them.
- 109 Students gain examination results which are in line with national expectations and better than expected from the attainment on entry. They are happy to be in the college and would recommend it to a friend. They experience a very good range of activities both within and outside the main curriculum. Personal development is outstanding. The college manages its resources well, seeking always to obtain best value for money. The sixth form neither subsidises nor is subsidised by the rest of the school to any significant extent.
- 110 Overall the sixth form is very effective and gives very good value for money.

Resources

- 111 Overall resources for sixth form teaching are good. Facilities for ICT are excellent, and subject areas are well equipped for day-to-day teaching. There are good supplies of textbooks, although the library is currently in need of further development. Facilities specifically for the sixth form are satisfactory. Students themselves feel that they need a new sixth form area and, were they to have one, they would no doubt make good use of it. But the areas available for both social and study purposes serve them well and do not have a detrimental effect on their progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

112 The college should improve:

- (1) Attendance, which is still below the national average, by continuing with present initiatives, by developing the role of the recently appointed education welfare officer and furthering links with parents. (Paragraphs 26, 27, 72, 89).
- (2) Attainments in English in Year 9 tests and GCSE, by further stabilising the teaching team, by establishing a clear understanding of standards of attainment, and by ensuring that challenging opportunities are available and taken for students to meet expected standards. (Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 32, 34, 35, 115, 116, 117, 120, 123, 124, 128).
- (3) Attainment in history in GCSE, by reinforcing learning through more effective use of marking and assessment. (Paragraphs 2, 4, 32, 34, 38, 172, 173, 174, 177).
- (4) Arrangements for daily acts of collective worship, which do not meet statutory obligations, by exploring ways that smaller groups of students than full year cohorts can meet to embrace the statutory requirements. (Paragraphs 47, 59, 95)

Sixth form

113 The college should improve:

- (1) Examination results in chemistry and physics at AS and A level by introducing a wider range of activities, to foster an appreciation of the importance of science in our lives, to develop the ability to evaluate scientific ideas critically, and to communication with both lay and scientific audiences. (Paragraphs 64, 220, 221, 223, 225)
- (2) The advice given to students on entry to the sixth form so that they choose courses which are appropriate to their aspirations and potential. The college should ensure that information about students' progress is shared between subject teachers so that support can be given promptly whenever it is needed. (Paragraphs 82)
- (3) The range of activities for gifted and talented students, and the procedures for sharing information about them between subjects, so that they gain as much as possible from their time in the sixth form. (Paragraphs 45, 64, 224, 247)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	164
	Sixth form	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		73

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	6	40	69	46	3	0	0
Percentage	4	24	42	28	2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	20	21	7	1	0	0
Percentage	9	37	39	13	2	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1444	228
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	170	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	207	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	41
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	66

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	140	148	288

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	99	101
	Girls	109	103	109
	Total	172	202	210
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (67)	70 (69)	73 (74)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (32)	49 (46)	36 (45)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	98	103
	Girls	113	112	122
	Total	184	210	225
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (71)	80 (74)	79 (76)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (40)	54 (46)	41 (32)
	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	129	125	254

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	59	112	123
	Girls	59	112	121
	Total	118	224	244
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (47)	88 (93)	96 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.6
	National	39.8

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	44	45	89

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	44	45	89
	Average point score per candidate	14	14.4	14.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	40	37	77	4	11	15
	Average point score per candidate	14.4	15.1	14.7	10.5	8.2	8.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1599	228	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	17	11	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	25	4	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	101.56
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	46
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1200

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	23
Sixth Form	15.7

Financial year	2001-02
	£
Total income	4,815,954
Total expenditure	4,967,994
Expenditure per pupil	3,128
Balance brought forward from previous year	273,597
Balance carried forward to next year	121,557

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32.1
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.56
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	1672
Number of questionnaires returned	302

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	53	11	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	62	10	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	61	15	5	1
The teaching is good.	24	66	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	49	12	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	38	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	53	11	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	34	54	6	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	53	5	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	47	7	2	8

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 for English is **good**.

Strengths:

- Some teaching is good, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The teachers are committed and hard-working.
- Resources are very good and used well.
- ICT in English is used effectively.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards throughout could be higher.
- The monitoring of teaching could be further developed.
- Independent learning skills could be developed in Years 7 to 9.
- The level of challenge for some students in Years 7 to 9 is occasionally too low.

- 113 When students join the school their experience and attainment in English are just below average.
- 114 Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below the national average for both Level 5 and above and also Level 6 and above. Both boys and girls underperformed relative to their averages. English results were less good than those of science or mathematics. These results reversed an improving trend over the previous three years. In 2001, the school achieved results, which were average for Level 5 and above and above average for Level 6 and above.
- 115 In 2002, results in GCSE English were well below average when compared with national averages at grades A* to C. Girls performed somewhat better than boys but both were below their respective national average. Far fewer students achieved the highest grades than nationally. Most students however attained a grade A* to G. These results were weaker than those for 2001. Results in the five years prior to 2002 had been relatively stable but had not shown any consistent improvement. English literature results in 2002 were well below average. Both boys and girls performed well below national averages.
- 116 Standards observed in lessons are average overall, with a significant minority of students slightly above average in Year 11. These standards are higher than suggested by the 2002 examination results, which were affected by considerable staffing turbulence, having a negative impact on the continuity and effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- 117 Standards in speaking and listening are good overall. Most students can speak fluently in response to a variety of situations. Higher-attaining students across all years employ a wide vocabulary and a sound range of speaking styles. Lower attainers are ready to ask questions, volunteer opinions and respond appropriately, yet briefly, to oral situations. By the end of Year 9 the majority of students develop their ideas well and with confidence because of the variety of opportunities they have to speak. These skills are developed well in Years 10 and 11 by the range of group and pair work offered.
- 118 Reading skills are average overall across all years. Higher-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 are above average; they demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the process of reading and an ability to engage with the nature of literary texts; for example, lessons where students actively explored *An Inspector Calls* and writings about the Holocaust. Most lower attainers read well for meaning but without significant expression.

- 119 Writing skills are average overall across all years. Students of all abilities are able to construct varied text types, for example letters, narrative, diaries, newspaper reports and poetry. Some creative work is above average, being sensitive, original and well developed. Some lower attainers employ effective vocabulary and often write at appropriate length. A weakness throughout all years and abilities is the inaccuracy of some spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- 120 The department contributes well to the development of literacy. Key words are displayed, writing frames used and spelling and punctuation are carefully corrected. ICT is very well used by the department in the teaching of English, for example there is some sophisticated work linking visuals to poetry written in Year 10. Students with SEN and the gifted and talented make good progress relative to their prior attainment because most lesson planning considers their needs well.
- 121 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is strongest in Years 10 and 11. The best features include well-planned lessons, which are well timed and have an effective pace, thus keeping students engaged and interested. Lessons follow the three-part structure recommended by the Literacy Strategy; this is a strength. All the specialist English teachers in the department have good subject knowledge so that students feel confident in their learning. Many lessons, especially for Years 10 and 11, are constructed around independent learning principles of activity and exploration. Good learning therefore occurs because students are able to “own” their learning. Most teachers’ questioning is incisive and focused. Marking is very thorough; giving encouraging comments, suggesting improvements and linking with grades and levels. Appropriate homework is set and marked. Most teachers have good classroom management skills which enable teaching and learning to occur in a calm and positive environment.
- 122 There are some areas for development, however. Occasionally, especially in Years 7 to 9, lessons are too teacher led and students remain relatively passive. In Years 7 to 9, some lessons, although carefully planned, lack sufficient challenge. At such times, the negative attitudes of a small minority of students sometimes slows down learning unacceptably.
- 123 In most lessons students’ attitudes are positive. They arrive at lessons on time, ready to work. They demonstrate interest and are prepared to take an active part, asking and answering relevant questions. They work well collaboratively in groups and pairs and are supportive towards each other. However, a small minority of students in some classes have negative attitudes towards learning. They are generally well-controlled by teachers but occasionally slow the pace of learning for others.
- 124 The department is now very well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department, has a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve provision further. She has already instituted changes to coursework marking and moderation, one of the possible sources of the poor 2002 GCSE results. Mentoring for students at borderlines between C and D grades, coursework clinics and presentations on grammar are helping to raise standards. Accelerated learning techniques are being carefully introduced and there is now appropriate emphasis on examination practice, including timed essays. Schemes of work are good. Assessment, tracking and target setting are effective. Resources are very good and are used effectively. Staffing is sound but continues to suffer from problems of long-term illness amongst key management personnel. The teachers in the department are hard-working and committed. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available which enhances students’ personal and social development well.
- 125 Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, despite the sharp decline in results in 2002. Progress in all lessons is now at least satisfactory and the pace for lower attainers is generally good when taught by English specialists. Marking is now good and provides all the necessary indicators for improvement. The use of information and communication technology is now a strength of the department. Monitoring of teaching now takes place but should be further developed. Given the present astute leadership and the commitment of staff, the department is well placed to improve further.

Literacy

- 126 Standards of literacy are at least satisfactory overall. Most students, including lower attainers, are able to speak clearly and appropriately. Reading skills are sound with most students able to explore texts for meaning and higher attainers reading a wide range of various text types. Writing skills vary greatly with attainment but even lower attainers produce continuous writing which shows some structure. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation weaken some work at all attainment levels.
- 127 Provision for literacy is good. There is a suitable literacy policy and staff have received training on several aspects of literacy. Most departments encourage wide reading and writing skills and virtually all set work which encourages speaking and listening skills. The correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation is, however, less consistent, and rare in some departments. Not all departments yet encourage drafting as a means to greater accuracy in writing. Almost all subject departments display key words prominently to encourage students to learn subject specific vocabulary and many also use writing frames to assist weaker students in structuring their work. Libraries, and ICT, are used well by one or two departments to encourage literacy skills but it too is not consistent.

DRAMA

Overall, provision for drama is **good**.

Strengths:

- Teaching is consistently good and often better.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Teachers are committed and hard-working.

Areas for improvement:

- The monitoring of teaching needs to be developed.
- The quality and range of some written coursework could be improved.

- 128 Drama was sampled across several year groups and written work was scrutinised.
- 129 In 2002 GCSE results were below the national expectation. However, the school entered a larger percentage of students for drama than is the national average. In 2001, 64 per cent of students entered achieved grades A*-C whilst all students achieved grades A*-G. Girls outnumbered boys in each year and generally performed more strongly.
- 130 Standards in work seen during the inspection were average overall but with wide variations within any one group. Most Year 7 students were able to create effective tableaux, using body language to create character. Year 8 worked well on a *ho –seating* exercise where the main participants remained in character, both in speech and action, and the audience addressed sensitive and fluent questions to them. Year 9 rehearsed creating tension through dramatic techniques. Year 10 students worked well in groups to present a theme on responsibility and society; they produced some mature and technically inventive responses to a challenging brief. Higher attainers are able to use language, movement and space well to create dramatic situations whilst lower attainers find more difficulty in sustaining such situations. Attainment overall is broadly average whilst achievement is good. Students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented make progress appropriate to their prior attainment. Progress within lessons is consistently good for all students.
- 131 Teaching is good overall, but examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen. Major strengths of the teaching include: well planned lessons with clear shared objectives, good teacher-student relationships, the pace of most lessons and efficient class management, allowing learning to proceed without interruption. Teachers are very good at helping their students to develop their creative ideas. Occasionally activities are allowed to run on for too long. Written coursework for GCSE students could be improved by greater depth and breadth.

- 132 Students' attitudes to drama are very good. They are positive, sensible and keen to work hard in class. They demonstrate enthusiasm and, often, a strong sense of independence. They work well collaboratively in pairs and small groups.
- 133 Leadership and management of the subject are now good. Schemes of work are clear and appropriate; the development plan is well focused; all necessary policies are in place. The team of teachers is hard-working and committed and they work well together. Monitoring of teaching, however, needs to be developed to ensure greater consistency of approach.
- 134 Drama was not reported separately in the previous inspection report. However, teaching is now at least good and often better, rather than satisfactory as at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- Good planning.
- Very good use of assessment data to set targets.
- Excellent ICT provision.
- Very good support for students with SEN.

Areas for improvement:

- Introduce opportunities for students to develop mental skills.
- Introduce ICT and opportunities for using and applying mathematics to give planned progression through Years 7 to 11.
- Monitor and support colleagues by sharing good practice on classroom and behaviour management.

- 135 On entry standards are broadly in line with national averages. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9 and at the national average at the end of Year 11. Students achieve good standards overall and respond well to the teaching. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented in Year 7, except for oral and mental starters. Students throughout the school have good attitudes to mathematics. Students tend to be passive learners but will respond well to imaginative teaching. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- 136 Year 9 results have improved steadily from 1997 to 2002 and are consistently above national averages and above the average for schools of a similar nature. At Year 9, mathematics results compare well with those of English and science. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. GCSE results have improved steadily from 1994 to 2001 and were above national averages in 2001. In 2002, GCSE results fell slightly to below the national average. GCSE results are relatively better than in English and science.
- 137 Work seen shows that standards are above national averages in Years 7 to 9 and in line with national averages for Years 10 and 11. For example, by Year 9 higher-attaining students understand standard form. Students throughout are confident with algebra and the efficient use of calculators. They can apply written routines and standard procedures accurately but have limited mental arithmetic skills. Standards of literacy are good and enable students to interpret work from textbooks. Staff encourage students to communicate effectively when writing up coursework. Greater care could be taken by students over the presentation of their work which is a weakness throughout Years 7 to 11. Since the last inspection attainment has improved throughout and is now consistently at or above national averages.
- 138 The quality of teaching throughout the school is mostly good with some excellent teaching seen. Teachers' planning is always at least good. Better teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, interesting and challenging introductions and appropriate pace. Expectations are

satisfactory and, in some cases, very high, particularly with higher-attaining groups. Teaching methods were limited in range but mostly effective. The main teaching style is didactic although teachers are very good practitioners. On the whole, classroom management is good or better. Teachers know their students and respond to their individual needs whilst ensuring that progress is maintained. One strength of the department is the provision for students with SEN. All staff are aware of the specific needs of their students and plan work accordingly. Provision for lower attaining students, at Level 3 in Year 7, is very good with a specialist teacher planning work to meet the needs of individual students.

- 139 Throughout the school students are learning and consolidating knowledge in all lessons. The department effectively uses *Successmaker* software in Years 7 to 9, which gives students the chance to learn independently. They react well to this use of ICT and work with motivation and determination, making very good progress as a result.
- 140 Behaviour is generally good and students show an interest in their work. In class they are co-operative, work well with each other and enjoy good relationships with staff. Some instances of minor disruptive behaviour were seen. All staff are assertive with students but are not all equally effective in managing behaviour. The department would benefit from a consistent approach to class and behaviour management.
- 141 Management of the department is good but the distance between the two sites leads them to operate independently. No formal regular meetings are scheduled. The mostly informal working relationship between the sites works well and is not currently a weakness but has the potential to become one. Both sites would benefit from interaction which would allow upper school staff, especially, to understand the National Numeracy Strategy and its impact on how students have been taught and learned mathematics. The guidance for teachers in the schemes of work is too vague over the use of ICT and providing opportunities for *Using and Applying Mathematics*. Greater clarity is needed for students to benefit from planned programmes in these areas. Accommodation is very good in lower school and good in upper school. Resources are very good in terms of textbooks and ICT provision but the department would benefit from a wider range of practical resources which can be used to promote mental methods and numeracy. Library provision is unsatisfactory in upper school and just satisfactory in lower school, which prevents independent learning of the subject.

Numeracy

- 142 Standards of numeracy throughout the school are good. Students are confident in the use of mathematical techniques and can apply them in other subject areas. For example, students in a lower school science club were observed measuring, plotting graphs, timing events and calculating averages. Learning in all subject areas is enhanced by competency in mathematical skills. However, one significant weakness is a lack of competency in mental methods. Students have difficulty with basic problems using the four rules of arithmetic. Insufficient consideration is given to this in mathematics lessons and students would benefit from a consistent approach to teaching basic arithmetical techniques and mental methods where they are needed throughout the school.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Effective use of targets to raise standards.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Good number skills help learning in science.

Areas for improvement:

- Raising standards in science through the use of extended writing.
- Providing appropriate extension work for higher-attaining and gifted and talented students.
- Improving students' skills in observational and diagrammatic drawings.
- Monitoring and evaluating more closely the work of the department in the college.

- 143 The standards reached by students entering the college are broadly in line with the national average. At the end of Year 9, in 2002, standards were above average. There was no marked difference between the performance of boys and girls and that of students of the same age in similar schools. Higher-attaining students did not reach the high standard of the previous year and this meant overall standards were lower.
- 144 At the end of Year 11, GCSE results show that standards are close to the national averages for the higher grades A* to C and all grades A* to G. However, the highest grades reached, A* and A, were significantly lower than the national picture. In recent years the boys have performed much better than the girls and have now reached standards that are above the national average. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards are similar to those at the previous inspection. They are not as high as those in mathematics but better than those in English.
- 145 Work seen during the inspection confirms that overall standards in science are above expected levels in Years 7 to 9, and in line with expectations in Year 10 and 11. In experimental work students assemble apparatus with confidence and read instruments and measuring equipment correctly, for example thermometers and volumetric apparatus. Throughout the school, students generally have weak skills in observational and diagrammatic drawing and these detract from otherwise generally good recording and presentation of work. The lowest-attaining students find difficulty in organising their work and their learning is affected adversely. Higher-attaining students, including those who are gifted and talented, are not reaching expected levels. This is because insufficient attention is being given to providing materials and teaching that extends their thinking skills. Overall, the standards reached in using grammar, in particular extended writing, are below average because insufficient opportunities are presented to students. This is a factor in the completion of class and coursework and contributes to the lower standards reached by students at the end of Year 11. Standards reached by all students in the use of numeracy, except those who are lowest-attaining, are above average. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well and make good progress in lessons, including those for whom English is an additional language. In Year 10 and 11, students of average attainment and lower-attaining students, except those with special educational needs who have learning support and who make good progress in lessons, achieve at levels below expectations and make unsatisfactory progress. This is because until recently the curriculum and assessment has not been matched closely to their needs. A more relevant scheme of work and appropriate assessment at the end of Year 11 has now been introduced.
- 146 The quality of teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11, over half of the lessons are very good. Strengths in teaching include the teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills and the very good quality of lesson planning. Because these strengths are influenced by students' positive attitudes, their retention of previous work upon which to build new ideas and their capacity to concentrate and apply themselves for sustained periods of time, learning overall is good.
- 147 Overall the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There are some strengths but some notable areas requiring attention. Arising from the requirements of the previous inspection, students' attainment and progress are now closely monitored using effective methods for setting individual targets, the department development plan has become a useful template for action and the professional needs of staff are more closely matched to curriculum development. However, there is not a clear, coherent and co-ordinated vision for the leadership, management and development of the subject for the whole college embracing the two sites. The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of key departmental developments including teaching and aspects of assessment are largely unco-ordinated within the department and some departmental policies are not unified. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- The department is very well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The response and attitude of students are very good.
- Accommodation on the upper site is excellent.

Areas for improvement:

- Standard of drawing in Years 7 to 9.
- Use of ICT for research and art making.

- 148 Levels of attainment are average by the end of Year 9, and by the end of Year 11 fluctuate between average and above average. These standards are an improvement on the last inspection, when standards in Year 9 were below average. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory or better in Years 7 to 9 and either good or better in Year 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is the main reason for the improvement in standards and the very good attitude of students to the subject. The GCSE results in 2001 were well above national average. Although girls outperformed boys, the gap was much less than the national difference. Students achieved much better results in art than they did in other subjects. In 2002, the GCSE results fell to the national average.
- 149 Work seen during inspection showed that overall standards in art are in line with the national average. This matches and supports recent teacher assessments in Year 9 which shows over 70 per cent of students reaching the national expectation of Level 5.
- 150 Students develop a broad range of skills in both two and three dimensions. In Years 7 and 8 there is a greater emphasis placed on the development of craft skills such as printmaking and by Year 9 these skills are well developed and above average. However, during these years, standards of observational drawing are underdeveloped and below average. In Years 10 and 11 students make good progress with drawing and composition skill and reach average standards in these elements by GCSE.
- 151 Throughout all years, students use sketchbooks effectively for research, personal and preparatory work. By Year 11, students can work in variety of scale and use a wide range of two and three dimensional media and materials. The development of ICT skills for both art making and research is limited, particularly at the lower school site. By Year 11, students have developed an above average level of independent leaning and there is much individuality evident in students' work.
- 152 All levels of ability are well supported and make good progress within lessons and from year to year. The specific learning needs of students of all abilities are identified and are met by a combination of appropriate levels of work and a style of teaching that places great emphasis on continuous individual support.
- 153 The overall quality of teaching is good with none unsatisfactory. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good and on occasions excellent. Students are able to make good progress due to well-prepared lessons and resources. In Years 7 to 9, lessons have structure, pace and variety, which maintains interest and lesson flow. All teachers show good command of the subject and a high level of artistic skill, which contributes to the development of student skill. The quality of resources and reference material maintains interest and improves the standard of work. There is a greater emphasis in GCSE classes on the facilitation of individual learning. This is achieved by an individual tutorial, which creates an atmosphere conducive to the development of independent learning, individuality and personal response.

- 154 Students' attitude to the subject and behaviour in lessons are very good. Students enter the classroom in an orderly way and show a keenness to learn. They remain engaged throughout lessons and respond well to instruction and have a good rapport with teachers.
- 155 The leadership and management of the department are very good. Newly established systems of communication and regular meetings have improved liaison and working relationships between the two sites significantly since the previous inspection. Departmental documentation, policies and minutes of meetings are comprehensive and thorough. The department is further developing its systems for monitoring the quality of teaching throughout the department. Comprehensive and up-to-date schemes of work ensure the curriculum is well covered and meets the needs and abilities of all students. Assessment procedures are well developed. Homework is regularly set and marked. The department has numerous links with outside agencies and there are annual art residential visits, usually abroad. Resource and accommodation, particularly at the upper school help create an inspiring atmosphere. Overall, development since the previous inspection has been good.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths:

- A high profile teaching staff, including members of the senior management team, which gives status to the subject.
- Very good relationships between staff and students which encourage a positive attitude.
- Reinforcement of the subject through weekly assembly themes throughout the year.
- The caring ethos of the college which is conducive to the teaching of citizenship.

Areas for improvement:

- Monitoring of the work, especially those areas taught through other subjects to ensure that planned opportunities are actually implemented.
- Procedures for assessing students' work and use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning.
- Explore the possibility of a discreet citizenship programme independent of other subjects.

- 156 Citizenship became a National Curriculum subject for all year groups from Year 7 to Year 11 in September 2002 and is therefore in its first year of implementation.
- 157 The standard of work seen in developing citizenship is good. By the end of Year 9, students have discussed the importance of relationships in building a cohesive society and know that everyone has responsibility for protecting the environment. They examine human rights issues through the study of the life and times of Martin Luther King and occurrences during the Holocaust. They examine ways of resolving conflicts and attempt to relate these to current situations. Year 10 and 11 students examine the need for rules in order to maintain an ordered society. Lively discussions ensue from analysis of the complexity of the rights and responsibilities of car ownership, an issue of relevance to this age group.
- 158 The overall quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. The good subject knowledge and wide range of expertise of the staff are used to good effect in making the students aware of issues hitherto unnoticed, for example the introduction of a congestion charge in London and responsibility for ensuring fairness in its application or the logic of the use of language which is socially unacceptable. Sensitivity on the part of the staff in dealing with themes such as crime and punishment allows for a variety of opinions to be presented and analysed. The topics are made relevant to the lives of the students and this is instrumental in holding their interest and attention. The very good management skills of the staff ensure that learning takes place unimpeded by distractions.
- 159 The good leadership of the programme is carried out by a member of the senior management team with the support of dedicated staff with a commitment to achieving high standards. A very

good start has been made in the introduction of the course with good liaison and co-operation from other subject areas. The management is engaged in regular review and updating of procedures in order to ensure a high standard of performance.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall provision design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Students make very good progress across all years with GCSE standards well above national average.
- Teaching is consistently good with a significant proportion of very good and excellent practice.
- The good equipment and ICT facilities significantly contribute to the high standards of student work.
- Students' learning experience is enhanced by wider than average curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities.
- The very strong leadership and close teamwork contribute the momentum for further improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- There is not yet a coherent 'design and make' focus across all of the otherwise varied and interesting Years 7-9 programmes.
- The best monitoring and assessment practice is not fully established in all areas.
- There are missed opportunities in catering to develop fully a vocational approach to the course.

- 160 When students join the school their experience and attainments in design and technology are below national average though standards on entry are improving as a result of developing links between the school as a technology college and the local primary schools. The improved and varied range of learning opportunities in Years 7 to 9 enable students to make very good progress and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate above average standards in the different strands of the subject.
- 161 Most students continue to achieve very well at GCSE and in the 2002 examinations, overall standards across the five design and technology courses were well above national average. Over two-thirds of students gained grades A* to C compared with around half of students nationally and most students did better in their design and technology courses when compared with their other GCSE results.
- 162 Standards in work seen in Years 7-9 are above national average. In most lessons students are doing well in relation to their ability as a result of the varied and effective teaching and learning in textiles, resistant materials and food. This enable students to handle a wide range of tools and equipment with increasing confidence and measure materials and cut, shape or combine them with increasing accuracy. The improved ICT resources, including computer aided design and manufacture, helps students present their ideas coherently and produce higher quality products. Higher and middle attaining students have a secure background knowledge of different systems and materials and are aware of the main aspects of design. Lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, have more limited design awareness and restricted graphical and literacy skills needed to analyse, evaluate and present their work.
- 163 Standards in the GCSE courses are well above average, particularly in textiles technology and resistant materials where the teaching is often very good. The textiles students have good research skills combined with well-presented design ideas and technical competence resulting in high quality outcomes. High quality products are also made by resistant materials students who largely specialise in designing and making furniture products made possible by their very competent use of powered tools and increasing use of CAD/CAM. Design skills are relatively less strong although higher-attaining and/or well-motivated students do very well in after-school activities and competitions, successfully demonstrating effective problem-solving skills.
- 164 Overall, the quality of teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good and, on occasion, excellent practice. Most of the teaching is effective in the way the different specialists engage the interest of students and generate a commitment to the subject. The very good and excellent lessons are characterised by challenging and varied teaching in which students are given positive support in their efforts to achieve the clearly stated learning outcomes. In those lessons, notably in resistant materials and textiles, students develop knowledge and understanding by the planned

integration of practical and theoretical work. In graphic products project work, the GCSE students' clear understanding of their progress is aided by regular monitoring and the use of progress charts. Satisfactory although less effective practice occurs when learning outcomes are unclear and lessons lack variety and subsequent pace. Teachers are conscientious in setting appropriate homework and marking project work although not all teachers are as effective in helping students recognise and improve their progress.

- 165 Design and technology has shown considerable and sustained improvement since the last inspection. This is directly the consequence of the very good and dedicated subject leader who, with the help of colleagues, has provided the momentum for further improvement and maintained a cohesive team in spite of its size and dispersal across two school sites. This has helped considerably in supporting the training of a number of promising unqualified graduate teachers in the department. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum, criticised in the last inspection, is much improved with considerable breadth and effective use of ICT though there is still a need to ensure a coherent design and make focus across all areas. This breadth continues in later years with five different design and technology courses and a further vocational GCSE in catering. Much of the provision is enhanced by the many lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities resulting in numerous successes in technology competitions. However, there have been only limited attempts to provide a more realistic work context and wider industrial links for the GCSE catering course.
- 166 Overall, the subject has made good progress in responding to weaknesses identified in the last report and in establishing a successful provision based on a strong specialist team and very good technology and ICT resources.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths:

- High standards of attainments and above average examination results.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships with students and between staff.
- The subject made relevant to students' experience.

Areas for improvement:

- Extending the use of ICT in geography.
- Updating the schemes of work to reflect the changing needs of students and the interest of staff.
- Further develop existing differentiation of work for the lower school.

- 167 Standards of attainment, according to teacher assessments, are above national averages in Year 9. There has been a steady upward trend since the last inspection representing good improvement. The work seen during the inspection confirms above average standards. The A* to C grade result for students at the end of Year 11 in the 2002 examinations was above the national average and consistently so since the time of the last inspection. There has also been a steady increase of the proportion achieving A* to C grades over the past four years. The average point score which represents the value added was well above both the school's average for all other subjects as well as the county average for geography. This shows very good achievement for the students and good progress since the last inspection. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above average.
- 168 Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good. In Year 7 students acquire a good foundation in the basic skills of map analysis and interpretation. They know and understand the salient features of landscape formation and change. By the end of Year 9 they analyse settlement patterns and the problems of urban development in case studies of both less economically developed countries (LEDCs) and more advanced states. In preparation for assessment at the end of Year 11 they evaluate the contribution of tourism to the economic development of LEDCs and suggest ideas for sustainable development. Case studies of coastal management provide them with insights into the problems of attempts to control nature.

- 169 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject which enables them to challenge the students and to answer searching questions with confidence. The work is always thoroughly planned with all the resources needed to hand so that no time is wasted during lessons. Planned opportunities within lessons help to foster their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The students make maximum effort which results in good productivity of work presented to a high standard. Time is well used with the work organised in stages of development which maintains the concentration of the students throughout the lesson. A good learning environment is created and very good management skills are used to ensure that lessons proceed in an orderly manner allowing good learning to take place. Special needs support staff and teacher assistants are very competent and give very good assistance to students who need help. Plenary sessions are effectively used to review what has been learnt and to provide guidelines for the next lesson. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend learning
- 170 The quality of leadership of the department is excellent. There is a very clear vision for the subject with the emphasis on attaining high standards and achieving the best for the students. The staff are dedicated and very supportive of one another. Good liaison with the head of lower school helps to ensure a smooth transition to the upper school. There are very good systems in place for assessing students' attainment and for monitoring their progress. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the students. Resources are good and are well used. However insufficient use is being made of computers to enhance teaching and learning especially in the lower school but the department is aware that this needs to be further developed. Good efforts are made to acquire the most appropriate and up-to-date textbooks available for all students. Fieldwork opportunities are good.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of education provided in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- The department has positive expectations and there is a clear commitment to raise standards.
- The quality of teaching, which promotes good learning in lessons throughout the ability range.
- The very good departmental organisation and exemplary display in the lower school.

Areas for improvement:

- The level of attainment at GCSE.
- The marking and correction policy.
- The development of students who are willing to take responsibility for their own learning.

- 171 In 2002, GCSE results were significantly below the national average for all maintained schools. Thirty per cent of students achieved grades A* to C, compared to 47 per cent the previous year. Girls performed better than boys. However, in terms of relative performance, the results of both boys and girls fell significantly below the national average, and history was the weakest subject in the school.
- 172 Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 9 standards are above nationally expected levels, and students are achieving well in terms of their ability and attainment levels on entry. Overall, students show knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. The majority of students have satisfactory oral, listening and writing skills; although the work of some low attainers is flawed by poor grammar and spelling errors. In general, students show a sense of chronology and can use historical terms appropriately.
- 173 At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is about average. However, it is evident from lesson observations that students' historical knowledge and understanding has deepened. In written work, higher-attaining students analyse evidence critically to produce reasoned arguments, and can explain how and why different historical interpretations have been produced. Lower attaining

students can use sources to support their narratives, and draw simple conclusions.

Students are responsive to the directions of their teachers, but most expect to receive knowledge and require prompting to pursue independent lines of historical enquiry. By the end of Year 11, many students are still dependent on their teachers for their learning.

- 174 Students join the school with limited experience and few skills in history. They make good progress in lessons due to the highly focused teaching of basic skills, including literacy and numeracy. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, make similar rates of progress as their peers because of careful planning, the range of differentiated materials produced and the value of teacher interventions. Good provision is also made for gifted and talented students.
- 175 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Without exception, lessons are well planned, paced and structured. Lesson objectives are shared with students at the outset. Knowledge and understanding are systematically consolidated. Teachers are confident in their possession of subject knowledge, and exposition is clear and direct. Lessons successfully incorporate a diversity of learning strategies, styles and activities that promote positive expectations of achievement. By challenging students appropriately, for example through skilful questioning, teachers encourage active participation in class. Where teachers know their students well, secure relationships contribute to excellent levels of classroom control. Good quality resources, including a wide range of teacher-produced worksheets and homework booklets, are used to stimulate interest and help understanding. A sharp rise in the number of students opting to study history at GCSE in 2002, points to a growth in interest and confidence which may be expected to reflect well in future standards of attainment.
- 176 A new head of department was appointed in January 2003, continues a firm commitment to raise standards. The lower school already benefits from the strong organisational ability and vision of a dynamic manager. Overall, teachers work with dedication and share good practice openly. Homework is set regularly, and used to reinforce learning in lessons. However, in contrast to half-termly assignments, which are carefully evaluated and graded, weekly marking provides students with only a limited awareness of how to improve the quality and organisation of their work. Students are taught to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical conventions in class, but errors in literacy are not always highlighted in written exercises. The department excels in the area of display. Substantial effort has gone into the creation of teaching rooms – particularly in the lower school - which not only contribute to an environment which is conducive to learning but which actively stimulate interest in history and a culture of achievement. A programme of visits, including an excursion to the Ypres Salient, is organised annually to enrich the curriculum. There is also evidence of good practice in the use of ICT to support learning in history; including a departmental web-site which provides categorised links to historical sites. Students have access to a good range of history books in the department and school libraries. The department contributes to cultural, moral and social education, as well as the teaching of citizenship.
- 177 The good quality of teaching and learning recorded at the last inspection has been maintained. Standards of attainment, which fell at GCSE in 2002, are being addressed through attention to teaching although there is room for improving marking and assessing students' work to support their learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**

Strengths:

- Management of the department.
- Leadership regarding ICT matters for the whole college.
- Good assessment in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good resources

Areas for improvement:

- Assessment, reporting and recording in Years 7 and 9.
- Lack of discrete ICT in Year 8.
- Monitoring and assessment of the delivery of cross-curricular ICT in Year 8.
- The contribution to students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

- 178 Information and communication technology is taught through timetabled lessons to all students in Years 7 to 11 except in Year 8 where it is taught through other subjects. The National Curriculum statutory requirements for ICT are now being met. This was an area for concern following the last inspection. The provision includes short courses at GCSE level, GNVQ intermediate level and CLAIT. The GCSE short course and the GNVQ course are offered as options in Year 10. Students pursuing the vocational CLAIT course are identified by their Standard Test scores and CAT scores at the end of Year 9.
- 179 Levels of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly in line with the national average. At the end of Year 9, students' attainment based on teacher assessments is above the national average and in Year 11. In the GCSE short course the percentage of students attaining A* to C grades is showing an improvement trend. Both represent an improvement since the last inspection. In relation to their previous learning, students' achievements are good. Measures taken since the last inspection have contributed to these improvements.
- 180 At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are shown to be above the national average. There are no discernible differences in terms of performance between different groups of students. At the time of the inspection, students in Year 7 had covered word processing and spreadsheet applications software. They understand how to select and use different word processing features: font sizes and styles, how to import text and pictures and how to choose the correct form and format of text to be used for a range of tasks. Students can also use the spreadsheet software to investigate and adapt a simple model and enter rules or formulae to test whether a model operates satisfactorily. In Year 9, students can search for and identify appropriate information for a given purpose, design and create ICT based models and test rules. Analysis of work shows that students are making good progress in relation to prior performance.
- 181 Analysis of the GCSE short course results of students entered for the examination shows an overall improving trend over the last 3 years. The percentage of A* to C grades in 2002 was 61 per cent compared to 52 per cent in 2001. No figures were available for the GNVQ course, as the first cohort of students will take their formal assessments in the summer of 2003. In Years 10 and 11, there are no significant differences between groups of students in terms of their attainment. Project and assignment work is generally of a fairly good standard, with some students producing very good work. Students handle software packages well and understand the importance of presentation. They are able to format and edit documents for a given audience. They work well independently and are able to give clear explanations of their work. Students are encouraged to use whatever resources are available, for example the internet, to develop good computing skills, for example in their writing of user guides.
- 182 The general standard of teaching and learning within the department is at least satisfactory. In Years 7 and 9 the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory or better. Planning is good and clear guidance is given to the students to ensure their use of resources is good. The quality of marking is either good, or poor. Clearly, it should be more diagnostic and helpful to the students. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching and learning is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. Of the lessons observed, only one was unsatisfactory. Planning is thorough, resources well used and student needs clearly identified. Key skills are developed and the teaching builds appropriately on work covered previously. However, a majority of lessons lack sufficient pace and rigour, and because they have many 'closed' activities they do not challenge students sufficiently which leads to reduced learning. Marking is helpful, and monitoring, assessing and recording students' progress and attainments are good. The department highlights inclusion and generally the teaching meets the needs of all students. Students requiring extra help are clearly identified and are well supported. Appropriate extension work is set for the more able students although differentiation is by outcome rather than activity. However, throughout Years 7 to 11, students

should be given more opportunity to broaden their lines of enquiry, and to relate their assignments to real-life situations.

- 183 Most students have a positive attitude to learning. They respect staff and each other and take care of the equipment. Their behaviour is generally good although staff would benefit from additional guidance to deal with any behavioural problems that may arise within the classroom. Generally they take advantage of activities offered to them, for example extra-curricular activity which offers students the chance to develop technical expertise by working alongside the technicians.
- 184 The management of the department is one of the strengths of the college. ICT is well led and co-ordinated, both within the department and throughout the college. Strategies for the development of ICT in the college are in place and being developed further. However, ICT is not taught as a discrete subject in Year 8 although careful analysis of the aspects of ICT that need to be covered in Year 8 does ensure that the strands are covered by the other departments within the college. However, monitoring and assessment of students' work and progress need to be further developed through a centralised system. The department should consider the introduction of ICT as a discrete subject in Year 8 to extend the benefits of the teaching arrangements given in Years 7 and 9, particularly to allow for sufficient breadth and depth to ensure progression.
- 185 Throughout the college, ICT is used to support the delivery of the curriculum in other subjects where very good ICT resources are effectively used to enhance the teaching and learning. The ICT department provides guidelines and support for cross-curricular learning. The transfer of skills is used effectively. Extra funding awarded to the college is used well. For example, as part of the *Specialist Technology Schools Initiative*, it is providing an enhanced teaching and learning resource for its partner primary schools.
- 186 Teamwork is good both within the department and with other departments. Significant staffing issues have improved and teachers are well supported through clear guidance on procedures and schemes of work. Training needs are identified and any training undertaken is shared appropriately. The dissemination of good practice could be further developed through mutual observations, although the split-site nature of the college makes this difficult. The accommodation and classroom environment is excellent and is conducive to learning. Overall, there have been very good progress made since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Strengths:

- Results in GCSE examinations have shown a marked improvement in the last two years.
- The department makes effective use of assessment.
- The management of the department is effective.

Areas for improvement:

- There are inconsistencies in teaching styles and methods.
- Students do not develop good oral skills.
- Departmental documentation does not give clear enough guidance.

- 187 In Years 7 to 9 standards are broadly in line with national averages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 over the last two years show that attainment is close to national expectations and this is confirmed by work seen during the inspection. This represents satisfactory, often good, achievement for most students. However the progress made by students is inconsistent. Students make good progress in developing writing skills. All students write accurately and develop a relatively good range of vocabulary. Progress for high attainers in writing is only satisfactory in Year 7 but good in Years 8 and 9. By the end of Year 9 they have developed a good grasp of the main tenses and the best students are able to use more varied vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. However, standards of speaking are below average. High

attaining students develop good pronunciation and can often respond well in single sentences but they do not have the confidence to extend their oral responses. Progress made by low attainers, and particularly students with special needs, is inconsistent. They make good progress in those lessons in which they are actively involved.

- 188 Standards in French and German are broadly in line with national expectations in Years 10 and 11. In GCSE examinations in 2002 results were above average in French and close to the national average in German. In both languages the proportion of students gaining A* to C and A* to G was above average. These results represent a significant improving trend over the past two years. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm that results are in line with expectations and all students achieve well. Students develop good writing skills. Levels of written accuracy and knowledge of vocabulary remain good. Low attaining students often perform above expectations because they can use tenses accurately. Most high attainers are able to use extended vocabulary to improve the quality of their work. The best use complex structures to give their work variety. Listening skills are at an average level but speaking skills remain relatively weak.
- 189 Most students have positive attitudes. Behaviour is always good. Students respond with enthusiasm when they have a chance to become actively involved in lessons.
- 190 Teaching is satisfactory overall. Much of the teaching is good and, occasionally, very good. Students learn well because relationships between teachers and students are good. Teachers are very supportive, particularly of low attaining students so they feel confident to participate in lessons. Students make good progress because they have a clear idea about how well they are doing and because they know what they have to do to improve their performance. This is because teachers assess students' progress thoroughly and make sure that they understand National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Most teachers mark students' work conscientiously. However, in individual lessons, students' understanding of what they have learned is often limited because teachers do not make objectives clear at the start of the lesson and do not review progress. Students improve their knowledge of vocabulary and develop good writing skills because teachers introduce and practise new vocabulary thoroughly and ensure that students have the opportunity for written practice. However opportunities for oral practice are limited. In the best lessons students make good progress because teachers have high expectations, set challenging tasks and conduct lessons at a brisk pace. In some lessons, however, particularly with low attaining students, expectations are too low. Students' progress in developing good speaking and listening skills is limited in many lessons because teachers do not use German and French enough in lessons and do not encourage students to use it for basic communication. Students' learning is often limited because teachers do not always ensure that students are actively involved in the lesson. When they are given the opportunity, as in one Year 7 class in which students undertook a series of self-directed tasks, they respond with enthusiasm and learn very well. Students are given many opportunities to develop ICT skills in Years 7 to 9 but not in Years 10 and 11. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for students.
- 191 Students do not have the opportunity to study a second modern foreign language at any stage. The time allocation in Year 10 and 11 makes it difficult for teachers to prepare students effectively for the GCSE examination. Leadership and management in the department are good. There is a clear sense of direction and effective action has already been taken to raise standards. The head of department and the teacher in charge at the lower school work well together on an informal basis but meetings are not yet formalised. Teachers in the department, particularly in the lower school, work well together as a team and new teachers are very well supported. However the department is not yet achieving consistency in teaching partly because its handbook and schemes of work do not yet give clear guidance.
- 192 The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge encourages students to learn.
- There is very good development of ICT skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Many more students now take GCSE music.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.
- The accommodation restricts the amount of group work being done.

- 193 Levels of attainment are average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. The department has suffered from changes in teachers since the last inspection and standards fell. Since the appointment of a new director of music standards have risen and now match those at the time of the last inspection. Many more students learn instruments and take music at GCSE. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are good. The quality of teaching is good and often very good and is a key factor in improving the quality of learning. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.
- 194 The 2001 teacher assessments showed that students at the end of Year 9 were achieving below the national expectations. The standards in GCSE in 2001 showed all students passed the examination and that grades A* to C were in line with national expectations. The 2002 results continue this trend of improvement. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are also improving because the revised schemes of work address the students' needs and interests. Gifted and talented students make good progress. They play instruments and sing to a high standard in the many extra-curricular departmental activities. Girls appear to be achieving better than boys and students with special educational needs are well-supported. The department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- 195 Work seen shows that students' attainment is average by the end of Year 9. All students make progress and achieve well compared with their prior learning. General musical knowledge is improving because of the lively teaching but the accommodation restricts group work. Higher-attaining students understand musical terminology and use technical language well. Lower attaining students struggle for the right word to describe dynamics. Singing needs more practice and regular use. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average and students make good progress. Many higher-attaining and talented students compose with flare and imagination and reach a high standard of performance. Lower attaining students need more teacher help to finish assignments. Because of the inclusiveness of the subject students with special educational needs make good progress and gain GCSE grades.
- 196 The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 because lessons are well-planned to meet students' needs. In Year 7 they answer questions on musical elements and are able to work out African drumming patterns on computer, but singing is underdeveloped through lack of practice. Year 8 students play melodic riffs on keyboards and higher-attaining students confidently improvise on glockenspiels against the classroom orchestra. Very good teaching enables Year 9 students to use advanced layering techniques on computer for their major/minor pieces and minuets. All abilities, including students with special needs, are well-motivated and concentrate hard to make effective recordings of their work.
- 197 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Years 10 and 11 due to the high expectations of teachers and a willingness to succeed by students of all abilities. Because of good teaching Year 10 students improve their knowledge of reggae with group performances of the song *Israelites*. More capable students sing well and devise accompaniments whilst less capable students lack confidence and need more support from the teacher. Year 11 students improve their understanding of balinese gamelan and gradually improve their performance techniques because of the very good teaching. Students improve their literacy skills by reading background information aloud to the class in preparation for making their own compositions. Recordings of Year 11 work show good style and shape being developed in compositions and performance work. GCSE music is a very inclusive subject and caters for all abilities.
- 198 Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and occasional bouts of negative behaviour are soon checked so that learning is not disrupted.

- 199 There is very good leadership and management of the subject by an enthusiastic director of music who has encouraged positive attitudes to music. Most students are now creatively involved in lessons and over 160 learn to play instruments. Good working relationships exist between teachers which helps co-ordination on this split-site college. All policy documents are in place and the new schemes of work have proved effective. Facilities for ICT are very good in the lower school but need improvement in the upper school because of the large number of students in Years 10 and 11. The accommodation is cramped and barely adequate but a new performing arts block is being built. There are sufficient keyboards and learning materials and the library has an adequate stock of books on music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The very good leadership and management of physical education
- The very good teaching and learning
- The department's care for its students

Areas for improvement:

- The development of planning and teaching to intended student outcomes
- Students' knowledge and understanding of physical education and dance vocabulary

- 200 Standards of attainment in physical education at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations. This represents good achievement through Years 7 to 9. The proportion of students following the physical education GCSE course achieving A* to C grades in 2002 is well above national averages. Comparison of students' standards on entry to the course and the standards achieved in the GCSE examinations represents very good achievement through Years 10 and 11. Standards achieved by girls have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- 201 By the end of Year 9 students make good progress. They develop competence of basic techniques in invasion game and dance. Their development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups. However, students do not consistently have opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of physical education vocabulary. By the end of Year 11, most students have made good progress. Their continued good progress in the development of basic techniques, as in dance, enables them to transfer these basic movements into advanced sequences and solo performances. Where progress is not as good some students fail to transfer their ability to perform basic techniques to more advanced skill practices.
- 202 The overall quality of teaching is very good. The strengths of the teaching include very good knowledge of the subject, organisational skills, positive interaction with students and a commitment to their moral and social development. This means that students are able to learn through appropriate activities and in an environment, which encourages learning. Homework is used very effectively to support students' examination work. There is very good planning and provision for students with special needs. There is, however, a need for additional strategies to extend gifted and talented students. In lessons where teaching is not so good learning was restricted by a lack of planning based on student outcomes and some students were moved onto new activities before they were ready to do so. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. The vast majority enjoy physical education and participation levels are very good.
- 203 Leadership and management in physical education are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for future development focused on raising standards. More planned opportunities for students to improve their knowledge, understanding and use of physical education and dance terminology and teaching based on achieving intended student outcomes would raise standards faster. In general, the quality of accommodation and resources has a positive effect on learning. The physical education curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department recognises the

importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning through very good provision and participation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Lessons are full of interest and variety.
- Early emphasis is placed on key skills and problem-solving.
- The positive attitudes of teachers and most students.
- Recent results are well above average in GCSE.
- Departmental management is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- The behaviour of some classes in Years 7 to 9.
- Students do not always finish homework tasks.
- There is not enough time to offer a short GCSE course for core religious education in Years 10 and 11.

- 204 Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. This demonstrates good improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged as ranging from below to just above average. Students' achievements in relation to their previous learning are good. The quality of teaching in religious education is at least satisfactory and very good in the majority of lessons. This is a key factor in enabling the quality of learning and students' responses to the subject, to reach equally high standards. This also represents good improvement since the last inspection.
- 205 Attainment in GCSE groups has been in line with or just above the national average but rose to well above the national average in 2002 for A* to C grades. Results for grades A* to G have been consistently above the national average for 4 years. Girls achieved better results than boys but boys' results improved significantly in 2002. Students performed better in religious studies than in their other GCSE subjects and many of them exceeded their predicted grades. However, the percentage of students taking the GCSE examination is below the national average.
- 206 Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above the national average. In Years 7 to 9 students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of world religions. They are able to make accurate comparisons, for example, between the teachings of Jesus and St Paul, and the precepts of Buddhism with the Ten Commandments. They develop problem-solving skills at an early stage, for example in a Year 8 lesson students were able to discuss in a mature and sensible way what might be the reaction of Buddhists, materialists and others to various moral dilemmas. Lower attaining students work at a good pace and demonstrate some research skills but sometimes do not back up their opinions with sufficiently developed reasons.
- 207 In Years 10 and 11 the standards achieved are high. A GCSE group were able to talk eloquently and expertly about the problems of building an ecumenical church which would satisfy the requirements of different denominations. Standards in Year 10 and 11 core religious education are also above average. For example, students in a Year 10 lesson made rapid progress in developing their knowledge of events in El Salvador and the martyrdom of Oscar Romero. Girls and boys work equally well and students with special educational needs make the same good progress as others. Gifted and talented students are able to develop well because of the open-ended research tasks which are set for homework. Students achieve a good level of literacy because this is emphasised in all religious education lessons. Computers are used regularly both for research and presentation of work. Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- 208 Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7-9 the lessons are full of varied activities which accelerate learning. Equal emphasis is placed on consolidating students' knowledge and developing their understanding and application of what they have learned. For example, after studying St. Paul's words on social justice students looked at the strategies of global companies and supermarkets. However, the pace of learning slows when classes are not effectively controlled. In Years 10 and 11 students make rapid progress because

the teaching is intellectually rigorous and is delivered in a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere. The effective use of audio-visual material is a particular strength stimulating powerful reaction and debate. Students of all levels of ability and in all year groups are challenged and encouraged to think for themselves. In this way the subject makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Regular emphasis on key words and technical vocabulary, discussions and different writing styles enhance students' literacy skills. A well-chosen range of visits out of college gives students the opportunity to look at the wider community.

- 209 Usually students behave very well because the lessons are interesting and varied. They are enthusiastic and positive and have good relationships with teachers and listen to each other with respect. This is a contributory factor in the high standards achieved. In a small number of lessons, though, in Years 7 to 9, students attempt to be disruptive, call out and do not engage properly in the work set which slows the pace of learning. Most students take pride in the content and presentation of their work. A minority have untidy books, incomplete answers and large gaps in their work.
- 210 The subject is very well led and managed on both sites. Regular departmental meetings ensure that all members share aims and good practice and keep up-to-date with subject developments. A new assessment procedure has been introduced so that students' progress can be monitored more effectively and compared more accurately with national achievement in religious education. The department rigorously evaluates its own performance and is always striving to improve. Management was judged to be good at the last inspection and it has improved still further.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	2	100	76	0	12	1.5	1.69
Mathematics	2	-	70	-	31	-	1.51
Music	1	100	84	100	29	4	2.41
Art and design (post-16 VQ)	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.2	12.24
Business (Post-16 VQ)	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6	10.45
Health and Social Care(post-16 VQ)	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	10.79
Information and communication technology (Post-16VQ)	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.2	9.97

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	24	92	87	33	43	4.75	5.8
Chemistry	7	71	88	0	34	2.3	5.5
Design and technology	14	100	91	14	30	5.3	5.4
Business studies	18	100	92	28	32	6.1	5.5
Information technology (AVCE)	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.2	10.0
Health and social care (AVCE)	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.0	10.8
Physical education	14	86	92	14	25	4.4	5.1
Art and design	8	100	96	63	46	7.5	6.6
Performing arts - Drama	8	100	99	38	38	7.25	6.59
Performing Arts - Music	3	100	93	-	35	3.33	5.74
Geography	16	94	92	56	38	6.9	5.7
Sociology	6	83	86	33	35	5.0	5.3
English	14	100	91	36	30	6.57	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and chemistry. Satisfactory to very good teaching seen in physics lessons sampled reflects average standards of attainment and in biology lessons sampled excellent teaching reflects improving standards.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- Good lesson planning which ensures that progress is made.
- Good subject knowledge helps staff to prepare lessons to meet the individual needs of students of different abilities.
- Resources are well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Students' organisation and presentation of their notes do not support high quality learning and revision.

- 211 Standards in mathematics are good, and reflect the quality of teaching. GCE results at advanced level were better than the national average for grades A to E but below average for the higher grades A and B.
- 212 Teaching is always good or better. Lesson planning is always good or better and is designed to ensure that students make good progress in lessons, either acquiring new knowledge or consolidating skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and can react to the needs of individual students. In one lesson observed the teacher used past examination questions to establish any topics that students felt unsure off and responded to this with excellent diagnostic questioning to build knowledge and understanding. In another, a mathematical anomaly was used to extend a topic. Questioning to assess understanding and knowledge is always very good or better. In all lessons observed students were challenged to ask themselves questions and think for themselves. This challenge and the overall quality of teaching means that students learn the subject well and make good progress at all times. The general atmosphere in classes is very positive and hard-working. Relationships are very good. Interaction between teachers and students shows mutual respect and the atmosphere is conducive to giving students the confidence to ask questions if they have problems. In addition, teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses and use this knowledge to check on and maintain progress.
- 213 Students have very good attitudes to the subject. They are attentive, enthusiastic and participate well in lessons. Discussion in class shows confidence in the use of specialised language and students were supportive of others with misconceptions. Students spoke enthusiastically about the teaching they receive and how they enjoy learning mathematics. Students are aware of their potential A level or AS grade and are encouraged to improve on this with good advice and support. More care could be given to the presentation of work. Work is done on paper and many students did not have any means to organise this. The standard of written work is poor in some cases and would not be useful when revising or checking on work done. Teachers do not give enough attention to this and some students would benefit from help with recording and maintaining notes.
- 214 Sixth form mathematics is managed well. Resources are well used. All students have textbooks and are taught within the mathematics department. Group sizes are manageable. Recent staff changes were managed to ensure the continuity of education of students in Year 12. All classes are taught by knowledgeable and qualified staff. The department takes full advantage of the facilities available through the technology college. Year 13 students studying further mathematics use a distance learning package, supported by some staff time, to study the subject. This is a very good use of limited staff time and is an efficient and cost-effective way of teaching a small

group. The department would like to extend the distance learning facility to all mathematics students as an extra learning resource which is to be encouraged. Library facilities are very poor and would not enable students to learn independently.

Chemistry

Overall, The quality of provision in chemistry is **good**

Strengths:

- Relationships in lessons, based on mutual trust and respect, provide a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully, so that students see the logical development of the subject and are supported in coming to an understanding of it.
- Resources for teaching chemistry are good, and teachers make good use of what is available to help students to learn well

Areas for improvement:

- Not all students do well, and the department should consider how the day-to-day curriculum might be developed to cater more effectively for their needs
- Not all students have assimilated the work ethic associated with this subject: they should be supported and guided more effectively in their studies.
- Monitoring of students' progress is insufficiently developed for those students who find the subject difficult: more regular assessment and feedback to national standards would help them to understand better how they are progressing.

- 215 When students come into the sixth form their attainment in GCSE varies, with some students having reached the highest grades, whilst others have gained grade C on the foundation paper in science: double award. In 2001, at the end of Year 13, their A level results in chemistry were well below the national average. In 2002, results improved considerably, with one third of the students gaining the highest grades, A and B. AS results in 2002 were also low with one student out of eight gaining a grade B, and two failing to pass the examination. However, group sizes are small at about six students and national comparisons must be treated with caution. Analysis of grades in relation to their GCSE qualifications in Year 11 suggests that nearly all students do at least as well as expected, and many exceed their predicted grades. Achievement in the sixth form is therefore good.
- 216 Standards in work seen in lessons are broadly as expected. The highest attaining students understand the nature of chemistry and are able to use their understanding to solve simple problems. They can, for example, use equilibrium constants to determine the position of an equilibrium, or sketch the reaction profile for an endothermic or exothermic reaction. They understand, in molecular terms, the nature and origin of activation energy. Not all students are secure in their understanding, however, of the implications of activation energy in interpreting the stability of everyday substances. Nor are all students confident in their understanding: they find problem-solving and interpretation difficult.
- 217 Generally, students' skills in numeracy are at least adequate for the calculations needed in chemistry. However, further development of literacy skills would make a material difference to their ability to answer examination questions.
- 218 Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their subject well and present it to students in an interesting and logical way. Classroom relationships are very good, and students have a high level of confidence in their teachers. This was evident in lessons where students were working towards an understanding of a topic, by attempting more and more complex problems, for example in polymer structures and their relationship to properties and uses.
- 219 However, despite very positive attitudes towards the subject, nearly all students say that they find chemistry difficult and the department could do still more to help students to come to a better understanding, and thereby raise attainment. At present, teaching is largely based on presentation of content and explanation of ideas, and students see it as their task to learn what

has been covered in lessons. Teachers need to plan more carefully with the specific needs of their students in mind to shift the balance away from what students know and understand to what they can do. Frequent and short-term assessment could also be developed further to help students to learn more effectively.

- 220 Whilst regarding chemistry as a difficult subject, most students are very positive towards their studies. They arrive to lessons on time, take part well in the many discussions which their teachers lead, and learn well as a result. Just a few find the work so difficult that they tend to lose interest, and learning suffers as a result. Although teachers support these students well, either in the context of the lesson or outside it, they could do more by planning appropriate activities for them into their lessons. Teachers could also do more to challenge the highest attaining students, by setting activities designed to improve their problem-solving skills at a high level, and improve their independence.
- 221 Management of the department is satisfactory. Good resources, and a generally good work ethic lead to good learning. However, overall course planning does not make sufficient use of modern resource materials which are focused on giving each student an experience well matched to his or her needs, improving skills in thinking critically about the subject and helping students to communicate their ideas accurately using scientific terms. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on resistant materials and graphics, and on textiles.

Resistant materials and graphics

Overall, the quality of provision in resistant materials and graphics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers' knowledge of the subject and management of students in lessons are very good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of vocational courses.

- 222 Standards are satisfactory and improving. One in six students take the A level product design course in either resistant materials or graphics. Standards on entry are variable and well below the college's average. In 2001, the results of the examinations were broadly in line with the national average with one in seven students obtaining A and B grades; all passed. In 2002, the results were significantly better with almost half of the students obtaining A and B grades. Students did best in the graphics examinations. Girls performed better than boys. In 2001, a student won the national finals of the Young Engineer of Britain competition for the best invention which featured safety as the engineering criterion. Overall achievement is good.
- 223 The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and introduce lessons very well. They give good explanations of what is to be done in lessons and practical demonstrations. Students' involvement is improved by asking them questions as lessons proceed. Individual students are given very good help and guidance with the development of coursework. Lessons are well planned and their pace is very good. Teachers are confident and relaxed and as a result their relationships with students are very good and sometimes excellent. The quality of the products and drawings produced is very good. Students are encouraged to use ICT satisfactorily. Key words are emphasised and students routinely use dimensions and quantities very well.

224 The standard of learning is good overall. Students learn by undertaking major projects in Years 12 and 13, and supporting lessons on materials and design. During the inspection students were seen in Year 12 making a variety of mainly wooden TV stands, CD holders and tables that could be assembled from flat packs very well. All students had made good models of their designs to check whether they could be assembled and the effectiveness of joints. In a graphics lesson in the same year students were observed learning how to optimise marks in their systems case study very well. In a Year 13 graphics lesson students were seen designing promotional materials for a variety of fragrance, CDs and after-shave products. In a Year 13 resistant materials lesson students were seen making a range of mainly wooden products including a chest for board games, a CD holder and a bedside table satisfactorily. Students do not always give enough attention to the technical aspects of their designs.

Textiles

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

- Strengths
- The teaching is very good and often excellent.
- The attainment of students in lessons is very good.
- Relationships are excellent.

- Areas for improvement
- The number of boys taking the subject.

225 Standards are very good. One in ten students, mainly girls, take the A level product design course in textiles. Standards on entry are broadly in line with the college's average. In 2002, students took the AS level examination in textiles for the first time; two-thirds obtained A and B grades and all passed. The attainment in lessons is very good. Achievement is good.

226 The quality of teaching is always very good and sometimes excellent. The teacher has very good knowledge and enthusiasm for her subject. She gives individual students very good help and guidance with the development of their coursework. Practical work is always very well demonstrated. Lessons are well planned and their pace is very good. The teacher is confident and very relaxed and as a result her relationship with students is excellent. Students are encouraged to use ICT very effectively. There is excellent emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects in coursework.

227 The standard of learning is always very good and sometimes excellent. Students learn by undertaking major projects in Years 12 and 13 and supporting lessons on materials and design. During the inspection students were seen designing and making a variety of garments with great flair and imagination. In Year 12, students were researching the Gothic influence on contemporary garment design. In a Year 13 lesson a student was seen working excellently on clothes for a female executive, another was designing and making clothes for a pop-star and another was learning to make lace using a computer-controlled embroidery machine. The production of garment designs using a computer is excellent. The presentation of coursework is very good.

228 The department of technology – embracing resistant materials, graphics and textiles – is very effectively run by an experienced teacher. Teachers have a very good, shared commitment to improve. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection with the quality of teaching and attitudes of students improved.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies at AS and A level

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and often do better in business studies than in their other subjects.
- Good learning is promoted by good teaching, and by well-organised teachers who set high expectations.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Very good relationships and the very positive attitudes of students encourage good learning

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of monitoring and evaluating so that good practice is developed and shared.
- To develop further the links with the business community to enhance the curriculum.

- 229 Standards of attainment are in line with the national average at the end of Year 13. Students' achievement in relation to their previous attainment is good. This is as a result of the good teaching which produces equally good learning. This is promoted by the students who respond very well and display very positive attitudes to their work. Although the subject was not reported on in the last inspection, significant improvements have taken place since that time.
- 230 Standards at A level in 2001 were close to the national average at the higher grades and above at grades A to E as all passed. Most students did better than expected. 2002 results were similar with all students passing and half achieving well by exceeding expectations. This continued the trend of improvement in the last two years with students attaining better results than in most of their other subjects. Results at AS level in 2002 were above average. Over three-quarters of students exceeded their grade predictions. There are no significant differences in the performance of males and females in examinations. Few students drop out during the AS course and the proportion continuing with the A level matches the national average.
- 231 Standards in work seen are in line with the national average. This represents good achievement compared with students' below average prior attainment on entry to the sixth form. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the key business terms and concepts. They select and record information relevantly. They have good skills of listening, reading and speaking, encouraged by much discussion work. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 use their good knowledge to write at length, with fluency, and well supported analytical arguments, for example in their high quality research analysis of problems facing local businesses. Writing skills are less developed in lower attainers in Year 12. Students' other key skills, apart from communications, are also well developed, helped by being integrated into assessment tasks. They confidently use information and communication technology, including PowerPoint for presentations, and the internet, to support their research. Competent numeracy skills are used well in calculating investment appraisal decisions.
- 232 Teaching is good or better in all lessons. Teachers have high expectations and set high standards so that students believe they can succeed. Very good subject knowledge is well used by experienced, specialist teachers to plan a variety of challenging tasks, usually involving students actively. Year 13 students successfully linked company strategies to mission statements after brainstorming and analysing in groups. The lively pace and questioning stimulate strong interest and response from the students, although some Year 12 lower attainers or those without a GCSE in the subject initially find it difficult to keep up. The teachers' enthusiasm and concern for the students, often using humour, promote very good relationships. Thorough marking tracks their progress and targets improvement through effective review sheets after assessments. Their progress is also constantly monitored by checking their understanding during the lesson and against clearly set aims at the end of the lesson, often with imaginative and engaging activities.
- 233 This good quality teaching produces good learning with positive gains in students' knowledge and skills in all of the lessons. Students work at a good pace and output is good. It is also promoted by the good attitudes of the students to work. They co-operate very well with each other and the teacher. They generally display the maturity, responsibility and strong motivation to work well by themselves as the tasks are stimulating and well explained. Consequently, nearly all students

meet deadlines and are enthusiastic about the subject. Students expressed strong appreciation of the support and guidance provided by their teachers. They know their target grades, their current progress and how to improve.

- 234 The department is well led and managed. A clear direction, reflecting the college's improvement priorities, is provided by the enthusiastic head of department. Significant changes have occurred. Revised schemes of work and policies strongly identify opportunities for citizenship, spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Good assessment procedures use information of pupils' prior attainment to set targets and track progress. Results are well analysed by prior attainment, gender and background to guide teaching. Young Enterprise has been very successfully developed to promote stronger business awareness and personal development, although local business contacts have not been fully exploited. Regular and mutual classroom observation is undeveloped as a way of monitoring teaching and sharing good practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on the vocational A level course and on intermediate level information and communication technology (ICT).

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good and sometimes excellent.
- The computer network and facilities are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment of students in all courses.
- Retention of students on the AVCE course.

- 235 Standards are satisfactory and improving. Standards on entry are well below the college's average. In 2001, five students were entered for the GNVQ at advanced level and all passed. In 2002, the results on the AVCE course were better. Seven students were entered for the double award and one in three obtained BB grades; all obtained the award. One student obtained a C grade on the single award course. In 2001, twenty students were entered for the GNVQ at intermediate level and two-thirds passed with distinction or merit. The results in 2002 were significantly better. An A level course was started successfully in 2002. The A level course in computing has been discontinued. Small numbers of students successfully complete the CISC Network Award each year. Overall, achievement is good.

- 236 The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and introduce lessons clearly. They give students good help and guidance in practical lessons. Lessons are well planned but sometimes the pace is slow. Most teachers on the graduate training programme need more support and help. There is good emphasis on the teaching of technical language and key words. Teachers are effective in setting deadlines for the completion of course units. Most teachers are confident and relaxed and as a result their relationships with students are very good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and often excellent. The retention of students on the AVCE course is unsatisfactory.

- 237 The standard of learning is good overall. Students learn by working independently on advanced applications of ICT. The range of learning opportunities is very good. During the inspection, students were seen in a good Year 12 lesson planning to collect evidence on how local companies use ICT. In a very good Year 13 lesson students were observed learning about security on the internet; one student gave a very good demonstration of his web page designed to promote a science-fiction film. In another lesson, students were seen researching three internet

servers satisfactorily. Students on the AS level course were seen using spreadsheets to create either stock control procedures or methods for selecting component parts for personal computers, motorcycles or bicycles well. Students on the GNVQ course in Year 12 were seen working on their multimedia presentation satisfactorily. In this lesson students with SEN and EAL were seen progressing well.

- 238 The subject is very well led by the ICT manager, an assistant headteacher, and the head of the department in the upper school. The department has had difficulty in recruiting and retaining specialist teachers. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Computing facilities are now excellent.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Very good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- The provision of physical education as part of the enrichment programme for all sixth form students

- 239 The percentage of students gaining higher grades in AS and A level physical education was below the national average in 2002. However, when judged against attainment on entry to the course, the results represent good achievement.

- 240 Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of the circulatory system. They have good knowledge of blood viscosity and can relate this knowledge to physical activities. The higher-attaining students have good understanding and use of technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately and effectively in both written and oral presentations. The least competent students show weaknesses in their prior knowledge of the subject and in their learning skills of research and analysis. Most students make good use of their presentation skills including the use of ICT. Students across all ability levels in Year 13 are making good progress. They plan presentations which show their good knowledge and understanding of the history of sport. They support their opinions with additional information when responding to more challenging questioning.

- 241 Teaching in the sixth form is very good. The most effective teaching involves high expectations and a good pace to lessons. Teachers ensure that students understand the intended outcomes of the lesson so that they know what they are expected to learn. However, teachers need better strategies for challenging gifted and talented students and improving students' use of ICT to raised standards more quickly.

- 242 Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic about physical education. Most students are able to express themselves clearly in conversation and discussions, for example when talking about moral and social issues which have affected physical activities over time. Students take every opportunity to develop their own personal performance through college productions, inter-school matches and competitions, and through links with local clubs.

- 243 The leadership and management of sixth form physical education are very good. Assessment procedures are effective so that students are aware of what they can do and how to improve. While there is good provision of physical education examination courses there is no timetabled enhancement lessons for all sixth form students. There is very good extra-curricular provision.

Many sixth form students take lead roles in extra –curricular activities and gain selection to school and representative teams and competitions.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on AVCE and intermediate GNVQ health and social care

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- All students make good progress and some very good, and achieve well despite often starting with very modest qualifications on entry.
- Teaching is very good overall with some strong features in planning assessment and curriculum enhancement.
- Students are well advised and supported and, increasingly, a number successfully progress to related higher education courses.
- The course management is very good and staff work very effectively as a team.

Areas for improvement

- Students benefit considerably from the courses, although a number would gain better progression were the college to provide more specific vocational training.
- On occasion it is more difficult to have a common teaching programme at advanced level because of the smaller teaching groups and varied study patterns.

244 GNVQ Intermediate students successfully completed their course in Summer 2002 and attained standards broadly in line with the national average, with a third of students gaining merits. Advanced vocational (AVCE) students were all successful and four continued into higher education. Most health and social care students start with very modest prior attainment and the high level of successful completion represents very good achievement.

245 Standards in work seen in the GNVQ intermediate lessons are in line with national average overall, although they vary widely because of the very different aptitudes of the students. Higher-attaining students have good personal research skills and sound ICT competence but less strong theoretical understanding of biological aspects. Students with special educational needs benefit considerably in terms of their personal and social development, facilitated by the often very good teaching and support, but struggle to meet the required intermediate standards or keep up with the challenging deadlines for assignment completion.

246 Standards in the advanced vocational (AVCE) are below national average although all students are on target for successful completion. In Year 13, most of the small group have progressed from the intermediate course and so have achieved very well over time. In both years, students work with maturity and independence, making good use of ICT and drawing effectively on their work placements and other experiences to complete assignments. Most have greater difficulty in coping with the background theory of, for example, cognitive development, and lack some of the analytical and evaluative skills necessary to attain the highest grades. However, the students gain valuable experience and overall are well motivated, conscientious and appreciative of the support they receive.

247 One reservation, in what is otherwise a very positive picture, is that more specific vocational training could be more appropriate for those interested in and well suited to a variety of care occupations.

248 Teaching is very good overall. A good pace of learning is sustained by a variety of whole class, group and individual research activities, including good use of the internet. Students are very clear about their progress and what they need to do to succeed because teachers' monitoring and assessment procedures provide good opportunities for students to further develop and improve their work.

- 249 The subject leader is very well organised and has established a wide range of resources and external links to support the courses. The two experienced specialists work closely together to provide a well structured and progressive learning programme though sometimes a number of 'ad hoc' study arrangements for certain students means that they benefit less from that programme.
- 250 Overall, the subject makes a valuable contribution to sixth form provision and has made good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on performing arts, leading to qualifications in music, music technology and drama.

Performing arts

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which supports students' learning.
- Students have competent performing skills.
- Students' excellent attitudes promote very good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' research and literary skills are underdeveloped.

- 251 All students in music, music technology and drama gained pass grades in the AS and A2 examinations in 2001 and three drama students in each year gained the higher grades A and B. Again in 2002 all students passed the AS and A2 examinations and two drama students gained grade A at AS level, and another two gained grade B. The results show no significant differences over subject performances in both years. Nearly all students in these subjects are girls. Based on GCSE qualifications at the start of the course, achievement is very good for drama students and good for those taking music and music technology.
- 252 The standards of work of current students are improving. Amongst Year 13 students there is good achievement in relation to their predicted grades based on GCSE results. In the lessons seen, students are doing well through the effective teaching. The lesson structure and activities are clearly focused on students' learning and aimed at all abilities. Most students recall knowledge well but their written work lacks the confidence of their practical work.
- 253 The practical work of Year 12 students is very good in all disciplines and this shows good achievement over time. The written work in drama, music and music technology is at a lower level to that of students' practical work. Teachers are aware of this and taking steps to make improvements. In discussions with Year 12 students they confirm that they like the practical nature of their courses and enjoy the variety of work. All students would recommend their courses to others but music students feel that musical research and composition require much commitment. All students would consider taking the A2 course and many are interested in some form of arts-related higher education or work. Male students are in the minority and overall do not achieve as well as female students.
- 254 Teaching is very good overall and students learn well because they are exposed to a rich and varied diet in the performing arts that is carefully matched to their needs and interests. The range of methods to bring about learning includes clear objectives and a well-chosen pace to match students' abilities. In a Year 12 lesson on the performance and direction of *Hiawatha* the teacher's concentration on rhythm produced better chanting in a declamatory style and improved understanding of the cultural context of the drama. Year 13 students explore elements of *The Visit* and challenging questions focus their thinking on characterisation and the staging of their ideas. Taped examples of Year 12 saxophone pieces and the song *O mio babino caro* sung in Italian showed a high standard of accuracy and confidence in performance. In the one music

technology lesson sampled, due to good teaching, students undertook

effective sequencing and recording of their synthesised version of the song *Money, Money, Money*. All courses make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

255 Much of the written work is in the form of structured questions and musical exercises and here attainment is at a lower standard. This is partly due to the emphasis placed on practical work. Higher attainers work independently and show careful planning and attention to detail. Lower attainers struggle with dramatic and musical concepts and need much support. Assessment is effective and students know their predicted grades. Attitudes are very positive and students respond well to the teaching and artistic experiences to which they are exposed.

256 The very good teaching and learning in both subjects are the result of work which is well-led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved to improve standards. Schemes of work and development plans are in place and monitoring, evaluation and assessment of students' work are effective. All teachers have attended in-service training courses. Performances of students' work take place regularly in college and the wider community, and preparations will soon begin for the college performance of the musical *Treasure Island* written by one of the teachers. A new performing arts complex is expected to be ready next September which will enhance the facilities available for the arts.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and sociology, but work was also sampled in history.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The very good quality of teaching.
- The good support given to students in preparation of coursework.
- High standards of achievement in examinations.
- The fieldwork experience which the students receive.

Areas for improvement

- Use of computers in teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- There are insufficient opportunities for more independent learning.

257 Advanced level GCE results for 2001 were above the national average in both the proportion gaining an overall pass and those gaining the higher grades A and B. The trend has been consistently upward since the last inspection. This represents very good progress. The value added, represented by the average point score and compared to the attainment at GCSE level, was well above the national average. There are as yet no national comparisons for 2002.

258 In the work seen standards are above national expectations. Students in Year 12 confidently discuss the factors contributing to counter urbanisation and challenge the appropriateness of the term 'suburbanisation of villages' used in the text. They show good understanding of the forces of nature when they study natural hazards such as volcanic eruptions and empathise with people who suffer their impact. In Year 13 the students use the internet to access the latest available information on earth movements along the San Andreas Fault in California and compare their strength on the Richter scale. The examination specification offers a good balance between physical and human geography which the students use to good effect.

259 The quality of teaching is very good. The students are provided with very clear guidelines of what is required and given deadlines for the completion of coursework. Teachers are very supportive

and make themselves available for tutorial guidance. Students highlight this as a strength of the department. Many opportunities are provided for discussion of issues and this helps the students to clarify their ideas. Less confident students feel secure in discussions because of the good relationship between them and the staff as well as between themselves. This has developed partly as a result of co-operation during residential fieldwork. Teachers use opportunities whenever they arise to make the subject relevant to the life and experience of the students and this becomes a highly motivating factor. The good subject knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of the teachers help to challenge the students to attain higher levels.

- 260 The excellent leadership of the department results in high standards of attainment and improvement year-on-year. Resources are of a high standard with the most up-to-date texts in use. The residential fieldwork based in Swansea provides opportunities for a balanced range of topics to be covered in depth. A clear sense of direction is shown and the subject continues to be a popular choice for students.

Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision for sociology is **very good**.

Strengths

- The consistently high quality of teaching in Year 13.
- The enthusiasm of students for the subject.
- Students appreciate the support they receive; relationships are very good.
- The very effective use of assessment to keep students informed of the progress they are making.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies, to engage students more actively in some Year 12 lessons.
- Standards of attainment of male students.

- 261 The number of students entered for the 2001 A-level examination in sociology was too small to make comparison with national figures. Nevertheless, the results were satisfactory. Of the five students entered for the examination, four obtained grades in the A to E range with two obtaining higher A or B grades. The increasing popularity of the subject is seen in the increased number of students entered for the examination in 2002. Eleven students were entered for the examination, all obtained grades in the A to D range with six obtaining higher A or B grades. These results were well above the 2001 national average, the latest year for which national comparative information is available, and represent very good achievement when standards on entry to the course are taken into account. The 2001 student performance at AS level was above the national average. A half of the Year 12 students who took the AS level examination achieved A or B grades and almost all achieved grades in the A to E range. This good level of performance was largely sustained in 2002 with all students obtaining grades in the A to E range, although slightly fewer obtained the higher grades. Nevertheless, these results represent good achievement overall. More girls than boys take the subject. They generally obtain better results than their male peers.
- 262 Inspection evidence shows standards to be above expectations for this stage of the course and the work of Year 13 students is well above the standards expected. Improving standards in Year 13 are due to very good support and guidance, and excellent assessment procedures that are used effectively to provide students with clear information on the progress they are making. Standards in Year 12 are slightly above expectations at this stage of the course.
- 263 Year 13 students are achieving well and their coursework shows a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Their work shows, for example, an understanding of the principles of qualitative and quantitative research and the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies. They are able to compare and contrast the views of different social theorists. Students' essays demonstrate their increasing ability to marshal and evaluate different sources of evidence. This is seen in their essays on public disenchantment with politics, for example and in the best Year 12 essays on the influence of the media. Year 12 students are making good progress and beginning to establish a sound knowledge base for the study of the

subject. Students demonstrate an increasing understanding of the ethical issues related to social research and are building an appropriate technical vocabulary.

- 264 Most students show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject. They are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts. They are keen to express their views and show respect for the opinions of others. In discussion they express their points of view thoughtfully and without rancour. The subject makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Students' work is mostly neat and well-presented, reflecting diligence and good application. Girls' work is usually better organised than that of boys, and will provide a better learning resource.
- 265 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. In most lessons the teacher's excellent subject knowledge is used effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of sociological terms and concepts, and the pace at which most lessons are conducted helps to ensure that students maintain concentration throughout. As a result they make clear gains in understanding. In an excellent Year 13 lesson on Durkheim's study of suicide, the teacher skilfully probed beyond the students' initial response and this encouraged them to extend and reformulate their answers. As a consequence, students' confidence grew and their contributions increased, as did their knowledge and understanding of the topic. However, in one Year 12 lesson, weaknesses in lesson planning and learning activities that did not offer enough challenge to students led to a loss of interest and not enough progress being made in the lesson.
- 266 Subject leadership is excellent and provides a clear direction for work in the subject. Monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and action has been taken to tackle the lack of consistency in teaching in Year 12. Students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored and additional support is provided when necessary. Very good relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature, but lessons were also sampled in French.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and often very good.
- Resources are very good and well used.
- Independent study methods encourage active learning.
- Results are often above the national average.
- There is good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching needs further development.

- 267 Twenty-two students took the 2002 A-level examination. All these students achieved a pass grade and four achieved the higher grades A and B. There were more girls than boys in this group but grades were broadly equally distributed. In 2001, fourteen candidates took the examination: all achieved a pass grade and 36 per cent gained grades A or B. The overall point score was above the national average. Retention rates on these courses are good.
- 268 Standards seen during the inspection are overall slightly above average. There is a range of achievement which largely reflects the varying prior attainment of students, but is good overall. Most students are able to discuss texts in a detailed and focused way. They formulate relevant questions which enable them to gain deeper understanding. This was observed in a Year 13 class discussion on *The Merchant's Tale*. Students are able to analyse aspects of text and present their findings to their peers. For example, a Year 13 group reported back their

interpretations of Carol Ann Duffy's poetry and a Year 12 group gave presentations on the poetry of Robert Frost. Most students have a clear grasp of the specific terminology of literary analysis and are confident in its use. The best of students' written work is fluent, sensitive and well developed; students at this level are able to explore language in depth. Lower attaining students find more difficulty in interpretation and analysis at the necessary depth. Sometimes their work lacks development and rigour. Students have a good range of essays, notes and presentations in their files. They use ICT skills effectively to help them to research and present their work.

269 Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. A major strength of the teaching is teachers' very good subject knowledge. For example, teachers respond with real depth of understanding to students' questions about the nature of language change. This good knowledge enables students to gain full mastery of difficult concepts. Independent learning methods are employed effectively, for example in group work on Frost's poetry. This encourages students' intellectual involvement, gives 'ownership' to their learning and provides an active, collaborative basis to study. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives. Marking and assessment are very good: clear targets are set, comments are detailed and point clearly towards necessary improvements. Questioning skills are very good and help students to utilise latent knowledge and understanding. Learning is good: students are encouraged to explore texts for themselves. Their attitudes to study are very positive. They work hard and with enthusiasm. Many show independence of thought, taking an active, probing interest in texts.

270 Leadership and management are good. A level teachers work well together and are committed to their students' progress. Schemes of work are very good. There is a sound system of tracking and prediction from available data. A very good extra-curricular programme of theatre and other appropriate visits enhances the quality of students' education. Resources are very good and are effectively employed. Formal monitoring of teaching could be further developed.