

INSPECTION REPORT

GUTHLAXTON COLLEGE

Wigston

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120256

Principal: Michael Fields

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott
3674

Dates of inspection: 28th October – 1st November 2002

Inspection number: 249627

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	14-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Station Road Wigston Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE18 2DS
Telephone number:	0116 288 1611
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	J D Dutton
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

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9271	Selwyn Ward	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
24142	Sylvia McConville	Team inspector	English	
27719	Paul Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18072	Joan Stephens	Team inspector	6 th form Mathematics	
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Science 6 th form Chemistry	
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	6 th form Physics	
23880	Olivia Hall	Team inspector	Art, Community Links	How well does the college care for its students?
30973	Geoff Hancock	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	6 th form Design and Technology	
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	
13623	James Waddington	Team inspector	Geography 6 th form Psychology	
10761	Patrick Willan	Team inspector	History Educational Inclusion	
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
15208	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Physical Education	
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Religious Education	How well is the college led and managed?
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Citizenship Special Educational Needs	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	6 th form Sociology	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	6 th form Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	6 th form Business Studies	
10391	Valerie du Plerigny	Team inspector	Drama and Theatre Studies	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Guthlaxton is a mixed 14-18 comprehensive school in Wigston in Leicestershire, which is close to the boundary with the City of Leicester. The college has achieved Arts College status. It has almost 1400 students on roll including 350 in the sixth form, with equal numbers of boys and girls. Most students have previously attended one of three high schools, two of which share the same campus as the college. Almost all students are of white UK or European heritage and no students are at an early stage of learning English. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, but mostly from an area which is relatively deprived. The number of students on the register of special educational needs is below average, but the number with a statement of special educational need is average. The main special needs are dyslexia, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most students have achieved average results overall in Key Stage 3 tests, but with generally lower standards in English than in the other subjects.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Guthlaxton is providing a good all-round education for its students, with excellent opportunities in the performing arts and strong community links. Standards have risen steadily in recent years from a position where students were significantly underachieving to one where their achievement is in line with the national average. The teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form and the performing arts. The principal and senior management provide excellent leadership and are well supported by staff and governors. The college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- The performing arts make a very strong contribution to the college
- Community links and the college contribution to the community are both very strong
- Considerable proportion of good and very good teaching, particularly in the performing arts, but also across the curriculum
- Very good curriculum, including extra-curricular activities which are well supported by students and provision for students' personal development
- The majority of students have good attitudes and behave well; attitudes in the sixth form are very good
- The leadership and management shows a strong commitment to improvement

What could be improved

- All subjects need to take more responsibility for teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are not well motivated and can be very challenging in their behaviour
- There is not enough consistency across the college in the use of assessment information to plan effectively for the range of needs in classes

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in January 1997. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. The college has achieved Arts College status, the Artsmark Gold Award, Sportsmark, a Department for Education Achievement Award and most recently the Career Mark. The trend in results has been upwards, with an 18% increase since the last inspection, in the number of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C. There have been major improvements to the facilities. The key issues from the previous report have been dealt with systematically through staff training and development planning. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. The curriculum

is now meeting statutory requirements in religious education (RE) and there has been a considerable extension to vocational education.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2001	2000	1999	2001	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A Levels/AS Levels	C	C	C		

GCSE results have increased considerably since the previous inspection. Then about a third of students achieved 5 or more A* to C passes which was well below the national average. In 2002 half the students achieved 5 or more A* to C passes which is in line with the national average. The results have improved faster than the national results and the college achieved its target. Overall girls do better than boys relative to the national results though both are close to the national average. In English the girls do significantly better than the boys but the difference is smaller in mathematics and science.

Students achieve results broadly consistent with their Year 9 test results, which is satisfactory, but the college is not doing quite as well as colleges with a similar proportion of students entitled to free meals. The subjects where students achieve their best results vary from year to year. In 2002 students did better in music, food technology, geography and statistics and less well in physical education (PE), art, media studies, textiles and drama. Current Year 11 standards are very similar to the most recent GCSE results and in mathematics, drama and music students are achieving well. Though their Year 9 English results are broadly average, a significant number of students still struggle with aspects of basic literacy. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are broadly average and used well in other subjects. Students with special educational needs make sound progress in lessons across the full range of subjects. Some gifted and talented students work to a high standard in the performing arts, others are able to take GCSE in the separate sciences, and mathematics a year early and then take statistics.

In the sixth form results at A Level and in the advanced vocational courses are broadly in line with those of other schools and colleges. Achievement is satisfactory overall though girls do better than the boys and better than the national results. Results in music, art and theatre studies are all above average. Relative to their other subjects students have achieved their best results in economics, English literature, French, mathematics and further mathematics. They did less well in ICT, geography, media studies, food technology and biology. Current standards in Year 13 are above average in English, art, mathematics, chemistry, product design, business studies, dance, theatre studies and music. Standards are average in all other subjects.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Most students have good attitudes towards college and are prepared to work hard
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most students behave well and show consideration for others, though a minority are less well motivated or behaved
Personal development and relationships	Good, students respond well to opportunities to participate in college life

Attendance	The college has taken effective steps to improve attendance and most students attend regularly, though a significant minority do not and unauthorised absence is above average
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Very good

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

Over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better and more than two thirds of lesson were good. The teaching was better in the sixth form than in Years 10 and 11. All the sixth form teaching was at least satisfactory and threequarters of the lessons were good or very good. The teaching was good in art, English, history, modern languages, psychology, sociology and business studies and very good in theatre studies. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11 with some major strengths in the performing arts and good teaching in PE and modern languages. In music throughout the college the overall quality of teaching was excellent and in dance and drama it was very good. Teachers insist on high standards of accuracy in both performance and theory and students learn very well.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge which they are keen to impart to students, and a good understanding of examination requirements. Most teachers also have good strategies for managing behaviour which enable students to learn effectively. Relationships are good. The relative weaknesses in the satisfactory teaching are in the use of assessment data for developing teaching and learning in the classroom. This varies too much from subject to subject and can affect the planning of work for students of different levels of ability and attainment. The teaching in mathematics is good and in English and science it is satisfactory overall though with strengths in both subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are not being developed consistently enough across all subjects. In contrast ICT is used well in almost all subjects to support students' learning. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was mainly because weaker or less experienced teachers did not have the skills in managing behaviour and some very challenging students disrupted learning. In the sixth form, the strengths were similar to those in Years 10 and 11 and the relative weaknesses related to the need to make better use of assessment data to plan work for all students; developing independent learning skills, and developing key skills, particularly the use of ICT to support learning.

Students with special educational needs are all taught in mainstream lessons and supported by both teaching assistants and additional support teachers. The teaching assistants provided effective support and the teaching of the lower sets was good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very good curriculum overall with a very wide range of opportunities both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities
Provision for students with special educational needs	Procedures and systems are effective in supporting students with special educational needs
Provision for students with English as an additional language	No students are at an early stage of learning English and those with English as an additional language are well catered for in mainstream lessons
Provision for students' personal,	Good overall with the performing arts and PE making a

including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	particularly strong contribution
How well the college cares for its students	Good in most aspects, though better use could be made of data to track students' achievement

The partnership with parents is generally good. Most parents are keen to support their children and help them make progress. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been very well thought out to meet the needs of the wide range of students. Similarly in the sixth form the curriculum provides a very good range of suitable courses. The curriculum strongly reflects the arts status of the college. The staff understand the need to develop basic skills in Years 10 and 11 and key skills in the sixth form but these need to be more specifically planned across all subjects. Staff have access to a wide range of information but the effectiveness with which this is used to plan work which meets the needs of all students, varies too much from subject to subject.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	The principal and senior staff have a very clear vision for the college and have worked with staff and governors to achieve steady and sustained improvement
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well aware of the college's strengths and weaknesses and share the strong commitment to continuous improvement
The college's evaluation of its performance	The college has a wide range of information which is used effectively to set whole-college targets
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very well to support the college's educational priorities

The college is fully staffed and the match of teachers to the requirements of the curriculum is good overall, and very good in the sixth form and in the performing arts. The facilities are good and have been significantly improved, though there is pressure on the specialist performing arts accommodation. Resources are good. The principal and senior management provide excellent leadership and ensure that the work of the college fully reflects its aims and values. Other staff with management responsibilities understand and support the college priorities and are generally effective, though with some variation. The college is very clear about the need to ensure best value and applies the principles very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like college • Their children make good progress • The teaching is good • The college has high expectations • Parents' feel able to approach the college with questions or problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for parents about their children's progress • How closely the college works with parents

The inspection team broadly supports the parents' positive views of the college. Though the return was relatively small, a significant minority of responses to the questionnaires indicated that the college does

not work closely with parents them and that they are not kept well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team did not agree with the criticisms. Parents receive a good range of information and the student planners in particular, provide very detailed information for both students and parents on key dates throughout the year. These include deadlines for completion of coursework. The college works hard to involve parents and its own records show that it has been successful in this.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

GUTHLAXTON COLLEGE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form numbers around 350. About three-quarters of Year 11 stay in education, and most continue at the college where they have the opportunity to study a wide range of A Levels and vocational courses. Students taking advanced courses are expected to have obtained at least five A* to C passes at GCSE. Other students are expected to have qualifications appropriate to the course they are taking. About three-quarters of Year 13 students go on to higher or further education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. It is well managed and cost effective, with particular strengths in the performing arts. Standards have also improved and are broadly average. Sixth form teaching is very good overall. Students have many opportunities to make a contribution to the life of the college as a whole and they show considerable maturity and responsibility in the support they give in Years 10 and 11 and in the events they organise.

Strengths

- Very good student attitudes and personal development
- Very good teaching overall
- Very good curriculum provision – very appropriate courses and a very good range of activities outside lessons
- The strengths identified in Years 10 and 11 are also seen in the 6th Form

What could be improved

- More effective use of assessment data at the level of subject teachers to support teaching and learning and to enable them to plan more effectively for the range of needs in classes
- Developing students' independent learning skills and supporting the development of key skills across the whole curriculum, particularly the use of ICT

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.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good Teaching and learning are good and students are able to build effectively on their previous work and achieve well. The main areas for development are in a wider range of teaching styles which involves more use of ICT and more practical work for students.
Chemistry	Good The teaching is good overall and standards are above average.

	Lessons are well planned to help students increase their understanding of chemical principles. Students have very positive attitudes and relationships are very good. Teachers need to develop further the use of assessment information and ICT and other key skills.
Physics	Satisfactory Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable and students generally make good progress in lessons, the 2002 results were better than 2001 though still somewhat below average. The student data from examinations and tests and other monitoring processes needs to be used further to evaluate progress and to inform subsequent teaching.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Design and Technology	Satisfactory Students have positive attitudes, the teaching is satisfactory overall and good in product design. Extension of the use of ICT and creating more opportunities to develop students' depth of understanding are priorities for development.
Business Studies	Good Standards are above average and better than might be expected from the students' GCSE results. The teaching is good overall, though teachers could make use of a greater variety of teaching styles and make more use of ICT.
Information and Communication Technology	Satisfactory The teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, though students have good attitudes and some teaching is very good. The college felt that the 2002 A Level results were disappointing and is introducing measures to raise standards.
Art	Good Results are well above average and better than could be expected from the students' GCSE results. The teaching is good, teachers have very good subject knowledge and students acquire good technical skills. They could develop further students' key skills, particularly in literacy.
Theatre Studies	Very good Standards are above average and the teaching is very good. Teachers and students are strongly committed to the courses and work very hard to achieve good standards.
Music	Outstanding Standards are above average, the teaching is excellent and students achieve well and often better than might have been expected from the level at which they start the course.
Geography	Satisfactory AS results were broadly average, but the A2 results were below average and generally not as good as students' other results. However much of the teaching seen was good. More use needs to be made of data in evaluating students' progress and setting targets. The use of ICT also needs further development.
History	Good Standards at A Level have improved. The teaching is good and students are well supported. Relationships are good. The subject would benefit from more book resources and more opportunities for teachers to share good practice.
Psychology	Good The teaching is good and students have very good attitudes to work both of which contribute to good achievement. Results are broadly average. Opportunities for work outside the classroom are limited which

	affects overall standards, and more use could be made of ICT.
Sociology	Good The good teaching and learning mean that students develop good sociological knowledge and skills. Results in public examinations are average but students show very good achievement and have very good attitudes.
English	Good Students achieve well and are keen to learn and respond positively to teachers' advice and guidance. Some students' work is affected by a weak foundation in literacy. Teachers know their subject very well and have a good understanding of students' needs.
French	Good Teaching is good and this leads to good achievement. The main areas for development are increasing the use of ICT and developing students' speaking skills.

The advanced performing arts course is a particular strength of the sixth form, as is the good work on A Level dance and Sports Leadership courses. Sixth form students have a wide variety of opportunities to take responsibility within the college.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are very well supported and have access to good advice and guidance. They appreciate the help and guidance available.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good overall management, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility which has resulted in steady improvement

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"> • They are well taught • The college provides a suitable range of courses • Teachers are accessible for help • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others 	<p>The response to the questionnaires indicated that some students would like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on how well they are doing • More advice on future options

The students were considerably more supportive of the college in discussion with inspectors than they were in response to the questionnaires. They are rightly appreciative of the quality of teaching, the courses and the opportunities they have and value the information, advice and guidance they are given. The inspection team disagreed with the criticisms expressed in the questionnaires but recognised that they were completed early in the Autumn Term when many students were new to 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 college's results and students' achievements

1. GCSE results have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Then, 32% of students gained 5 or more A* to C passes which was well below the national average. Now, at 50% of students achieving these results they are broadly average when compared with all other colleges. The results have improved faster than the national results and the college achieved its target in 2002. Overall girls do better than boys relative to the national results, in terms of the point score, though both are close to the national average. In English the girls do significantly better than the boys. The difference is smaller in mathematics and science. The students are achieving at a satisfactory level compared with their attainment on entry and the college results at GCSE are comparable with those of colleges whose students achieve similar results in Year 9 tests. The college is not doing quite as well as colleges with a similar proportion of students entitled to free meals.
2. The subjects where students achieve their best results vary from year to year. In 2001 relative to their other subjects students did well in biology, science and ICT. They did less well in English, mathematics, modern languages and business studies. In 2002 students achieved their best results in music, food technology, geography and statistics and did less well in PE, art, media studies, textiles and drama. Current standards in Year 11 are very similar to the standards achieved last year at GCSE. In mathematics, drama and music, progress is good in Years 10 and 11.
3. Students' standards of reading and writing are below average on entry. Reading skills improve because they have opportunities to practise their reading using a range of materials. However, students who have problems with writing make slow progress and many have weaknesses in spelling because they do not have a secure understanding of spelling rules. Students do not always know or use the key vocabulary of subjects. These weaknesses have an impact on standards achieved in most subjects, though there is some good practice. For example performing arts students have a good understanding of vocabulary in their subject areas and structured writing guidance supports progress in mathematics. Numeracy skills are broadly satisfactory and used in some subjects, for example to calculate pulse rates in music and students make good use of distance-time graphs in science and higher attaining students can calculate a gradient by drawing suitable tangents. Algebraic skills are used in dance for patterns and sequences. However, further work is needed to ensure greater consistency in the use of mathematics across the curriculum.
4. In ICT the standards shown in the work of current Year 11 students following examination courses, are average. Most students can use ICT tools to carry out tasks for specific purposes, such as providing a spreadsheet for a company to organise its accounts.
5. Students with special educational needs make sound progress in lessons and learn well across the full range of subjects. Analysis of the 2002 GCSE results shows that the students with statements of special educational needs who attended regularly achieved at least a 'G' grade pass in the core subjects. Gifted and talented students work to a high standard in the performing arts, the separate sciences and are able to take GCSE mathematics a year early and then take GCSE statistics.

Sixth form

6. In the sixth form, results at A Level and in the advanced vocational courses are broadly in line with those of other schools and colleges. Overall achievement is satisfactory, though girls do better than the boys and better than the national results. Students have achieved their best results in economics,

English literature, French, mathematics and further mathematics. They have been less successful in ICT, geography, media studies, food technology and biology. Current standards are above average in English, art, mathematics, chemistry, product design, business studies, dance, theatre studies and music, and average in all other subjects.

7. Sixth form students with special needs also make at least satisfactory progress. Year 12 students all achieved at least pass grades in the AS examinations with two achieving 'B' grade passes as their highest grades. As in Years 10 and 11, gifted and talented students in the performing arts work to a very high standard.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

8. In their questionnaire responses, 92% of parents indicated that their children liked college. Discussions with students confirmed this, with many developing a growing pride in the college. The overwhelming majority of students have a positive attitude to learning. Although many lack confidence in speaking when they join the college, students willingly take part in question and answer discussions in lessons. They listen attentively and work with concentration when set individual tasks, for example in writing. Higher-attaining students in top sets, work with particular enthusiasm, and this contributes to the progress they make.
9. The overwhelming majority of students behave well, both in lessons and around the college. Breaks and lunchtimes are orderly, and this contributes to the collegiate atmosphere. Students appreciate and respond well to the college's rules, which are accepted as being generally sensible and for their common benefit, although some resent the requirement to wear college uniform. They appreciate, however, that there are few pointless rules, and so, because they are allowed to chat as they arrive at college assemblies and await their start, they quickly fall silent and are attentive when assembly begins. Although there were only two permanent exclusions, 72 students had fixed term exclusions last year. This number is very high and is significantly higher than the figure at the time of the last inspection. There is no evidence however, that exclusion has been used as an inappropriate sanction, but the use of fixed term exclusions has helped to establish clearly the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. There was no evidence seen during the inspection of bullying or oppressive behaviour, and students generally express confidence that any incidents that are reported to staff are dealt with. A number of students, including both sixth formers and students from Year 11, have themselves initiated a mediation service to help students in the event of any concerns about bullying.
10. Though most students behave well, behaviour is satisfactory overall because a small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are poorly motivated and have little interest in learning. Their poor behaviour, when inadequately managed by teachers, disrupted learning in a small number of lessons. The college has worked hard to interest and include these students, and there is evidence that initiatives such as a vocational educational scheme for students, where they spend part of the week in work placements, have effected a recent improvement in these students' attitude, behaviour and attendance.
11. Students' social development is very good. In addition to the anti-bullying initiative, students have shown themselves keen to take responsibility in other areas too. The student council meets regularly and students from all year groups take a full part in the collective decision-making process over a wide range of college activities. The student councillors take their responsibilities very seriously and show a strong commitment to using the forum as a means of further improving the college environment. Members of the student council have periodically attended and represented student views at governing body meetings. Because, however, students are generally given too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons, their independent study skills are underdeveloped.

12. Relationships throughout the college are consistently good, and frequently very good, and this represents good spiritual and very good cultural development. Although most of the students share a similar, white, United Kingdom cultural heritage, the small number of students from other backgrounds are fully integrated in all college activities. On those occasions when students are given the opportunity to experience other cultures, such as through work in English, art or music, they do so with sensitivity and interest. Many pursue with enthusiasm the opportunities they have in the college to take part in an exceptionally wide range of sporting and performing arts activities, with a very high proportion of students taking part in the many extracurricular activities on offer. Boys and girls mix and work well together. When given work to do in pairs or small groups, students collaborate productively. The good relationships between students and with staff, evident in almost all lessons contribute positively to students' learning.
13. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and show a steadily improving trend. The college has worked hard to improve attendance and the current level of attendance is better than in previous years. Attendance in 2001-2002 was below the average of other secondary schools, though broadly similar to the levels commonly found in Years 10 and 11. Unauthorised absence is above average. Punctuality remains an issue for concern. Several lessons started late because students were late arriving. Sometimes this was due to the time taken getting from one part of the campus to another, but in a number of instances it was clearly due to a lack of urgency from some students in, for example, returning to lessons after the lunch break. A number of students arrive late for morning registration, although registration periods seen during the inspection frequently represented poor use of time, so latecomers did not miss much.

Sixth form

14. Sixth form students also have a very positive attitude to learning and their enthusiasm was a notable feature of lessons in almost all subjects. The good relationships between students and also with staff evident in Years 10 and 11 continue into the sixth form, and contribute positively to students' learning. Students also exercise considerable responsibility. This is particularly the case in performing arts where students take the initiative in organising activities and events and sixth form students play an active role in passing on skills and techniques to students in Years 10 and 11. It was also evident in design technology, where able students act as mentors to others, and in physical education, where students were able to take on sports leadership roles. However, students are generally given too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons and their independent study skills are not as well developed as they might be.
15. Although the views expressed by sixth form students in their questionnaire responses were quite mixed, the views expressed during the inspection were very positive. This was evident both in the discussions that inspectors had with sixth formers in individual subjects, as well as in the more general discussions that inspectors had with student councillors. A number of students expressed particular enthusiasm for the facilities offered as a result of the college's performing arts status. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11 with some major strengths in the performing arts, and good teaching overall in PE and modern languages. Over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better and more than two thirds of lesson were good.
17. Most teachers have good subject knowledge which they are keen impart to students. They also have a good understanding of examination requirements. Most teachers have good strategies for managing behaviour which enable students to learn effectively, and relationships are good.

Teachers apply college rules consistently and students know exactly what is expected of them. In the good and very good lessons in all year groups, the work is well-planned and pitched at an appropriate level for the range of attainment in the class. The aims of lessons were shared with students and they understood what they would be doing. Students listened carefully to instructions and used resources sensibly. The variety of activities holds their attention and the review at the end of the lessons helped consolidate their understanding and ensured that they know what to do next. In these good lessons students learn well. They can see that they are making progress and their confidence increases. Similarly the best marking gives students good guidance on how to improve their work and students were acting on the advice.

18. In music, the overall quality of teaching throughout the college was excellent, and in dance and drama it was very good. Teachers were insisting on high standards of accuracy in both performance and theory and students worked very hard and learnt very well. There were however, strengths in the teaching of all subjects. For example in art, teachers made good use of critical studies and the work of artists, literacy skills were well promoted in design and technology and numeracy skills in geography. In a good Year 11 mathematics lesson the mental starter to the lesson required students to arrange a set of fractions in order of size which consolidated their knowledge and understanding and quickly engaged them in the work of the lesson. The logical sequence of activities in modern languages and a step-by-step approach help students to learn and achieve well. In PE, teachers demonstrated well and were good role models for students. There was a high proportion of very good teaching in the top sets and students are keen to learn.
19. In teaching which was broadly satisfactory rather than good, the relative weaknesses are in the use of assessment data for developing teaching and learning in the classroom. This varies too much from subject to subject and can affect the planning of work for students of different levels of ability and attainment. Sometimes, though not always, this affects the provision for the most able students. The teaching in mathematics is good and in English and science it is satisfactory overall, though with strengths in both subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are not being developed consistently enough across all subjects. In contrast ICT is used well in almost all subjects to support students' learning. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was mainly because weaker or less experienced teachers did not have good skills in managing behaviour. Though they had planned appropriate work, they were not able to engage the interest of all the students and some who were very challenging were allowed to behave badly and disrupt the learning of others. They did not make sufficient use of the college systems for supporting staff and dealing with challenging behaviour.
20. Students with special educational needs are all taught in mainstream lessons and supported by both teaching assistants and additional support teachers. Special needs teachers teach small bottom sets in English and some mathematics and there is support provided in some lower science sets. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, a very difficult group was managed with very good strategies so that the class focused on the task. Potential disruption was avoided because of good quality teaching. The support observed in art and mathematics lessons was also effective. Where students are disapplied from the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11, the learning support department offers additional English lessons as well as coursework support. Teaching assistants are enthusiastic and committed to working with students with special educational needs. They have a good range of experience and expertise and have attended and are attending appropriate courses to enhance their professional development. This has a positive impact on their support for students identified as having special educational needs.

Sixth form

21. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and three quarters of the lessons were good or very good. The sixth form teaching was good in art, English, history, modern languages, psychology, sociology and business studies. It was very good in dance and theatre studies and excellent in

music. The strengths in teaching apparent in Years 10 and 11 are even more apparent in the sixth form and here the overall quality of teaching is very good.

22. In the good and very good lessons the work is interesting and sometimes uses topical examples. For example, in a business studies lesson on marketing, the quality of the teaching had enabled the students to identify and discuss the marketing issues arising from the complex pricing structure of the rail network. The teaching is well matched to students' needs. In an excellent music technology lesson the teacher encouraged the students to experiment and develop their own ideas, but also judged exactly when to intervene to demonstrate how they could improve their work to achieve a high standard of performance. In chemistry, students learnt well because they felt confident that their questions would be taken seriously. In a good ICT lesson the teacher's probing questions helped students to develop partially correct answers more fully.
23. Homework is set regularly and supports work done in college. Students' work is carefully and regularly marked and in some subjects, assessment information is used effectively to plan work but this is not consistent across all subjects. The relative weaknesses in teaching relate to the need to make better use of assessment data to plan work for all students; developing independent learning skills, and developing the key skills, particularly the use of ICT, to support learning.

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

24. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was judged to be good. Since then the college has successfully moved on and taken further steps to improve the curriculum, its organisation and planning. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the curriculum are now very good.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

25. The option system, the examinations and courses offered and the extra-curricular provision, strongly reflect the specialist college status but also provide a curriculum that attracts students whose ambitions lie outside the arts. Curricular planning is imaginative and very effective and the curriculum is flexible and responsive to students' needs. It includes vocational courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism as well as an enhanced academic programme with three separate sciences and courses for gifted and talented students. In mathematics and music some students can take GCSE examinations early and to go on in Year 11 to take GCSE statistics or AS level examinations in music. Future plans include introducing applied GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 and more vocationally oriented courses in the sixth form. Students have equal access to courses, though their choices for example in English literature and design and technology subjects tend to reflect traditional interests. Single sex groups in PE have helped to improve the provision for girls without damaging what is offered for boys.
26. The college meets the statutory requirements for the curriculum although the arrangements for teaching RE do not promote the achievement seen in most other subjects. Citizenship covers all the key requirements and students can gain an accredited qualification in Year 11. The programme for personal, social and health education supports the college's aims and values by promoting self esteem, respect for others and by making students aware of their responsibilities. The provision is good and has improved since the last inspection. The planning is very good but the quality of teaching is more variable. Physical education teachers teach the health aspect of the course well. This includes sex and drugs education. Tutors teach the rest of the programme but the quality of delivery varies, largely because so many tutors are involved.
27. Overall, provision for students with special educational needs is good with a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and teachers work hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all students. Setting arrangements, additional English lessons and the in-class support

gives effective support and access to the full curriculum to students with special educational needs. Those students who are disapplied from the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11 have appropriate alternative provision. Lower attaining students and those with special educational need can take a range of accredited courses, particularly to support their literacy. Students with special educational needs have access to the full range of extra-curricular activities on offer to all students.

28. Each year a small but significant number of students for whom traditional courses are not necessarily appropriate, join the college. They often have a history of exclusions, poor attendance and severe learning and behavioural problems. The *GIVE* course allows students to take vocational courses in, for example, hair and beauty, vehicle maintenance, mechanical engineering and carpentry at a local further education college. They also spend one day a week on an extended work experience programme. Students are supported very well by staff who act as learning mentors. This response to a national initiative is still quite new but appears to be improving attendance and behaviour, and reducing exclusions.
29. Careers education is very good and is taken seriously by staff and students. The progress since the last inspection has been good and the college has just been awarded the “Career Mark”. The well-structured programme of classroom teaching is delivered by a specialist team of staff. The careers education and guidance policy is reviewed at least every two years and the policy is linked to other key college priorities. The policy and its implementation is fully supported by governors and senior managers. All students undertake work experience at the end of Year 10. Some subjects build work experience into their schemes of work, for example through speaking and listening exercises in English, in the unit on People at Work in Business Studies and in coursework in French. Students are debriefed on their work experience during citizenship lessons.
30. There is no coherent approach across the college as a whole to planning activities which develop and promote basic skills except in ICT. The college has a literacy policy but though there is good practice in some subjects, most departments are still at an early stage of identifying weaknesses and implementing strategies to develop students’ literacy. There is no whole college approach to numeracy and the provision for this varies greatly from subject to subject though good in geography and science.

Performing Arts

31. Since the college attained specialist status for the performing arts three years ago there are additional strengths in the curriculum. The range of subjects includes the core arts course taken by all students in Years 10 and 11, GCSE courses in music, dance and drama, and the vast range of extra-curricular activities which support and extend an already wide curriculum. In the sixth form in addition to the more traditional courses the college is able to provide a highly successful advanced vocational course in performing arts and A Level music technology. The enthusiasm and hard work of staff and students for these courses has resulted in improved standards in music, theatre studies, drama and dance, since the last inspection.

Community Links

32. The college has very strong links with the community that effectively enhance the curriculum. A very good range of opportunities is provided through vocational courses, careers education and work experience. Business mentoring in Year 11 is successfully targeting borderline GCSE students to improve attainment and the Young Enterprise venture in Years 12 and 13 is extending work-related opportunities, for example, the Premier Jazz project. Performing arts and music make an excellent contribution to the community outside the college. A wide range of community day and evening classes including an adult special needs project in the performing arts and civic orchestra rehearsals and performances are part of an extending programme within the college. The community lounge is effectively used by local multicultural groups.

33. The expertise in the performing arts is used throughout the Wigston 'Family of Schools' by teachers and students from Guthlaxton visiting other colleges in the 'Family' and vice versa. For example during the inspection, special needs students came from Birkett House to work in the music technology room, and in the space of a day they created their own web site and their own music to play on it. In its second phase of Arts College status, the college is planning to strengthen social inclusion links. Visits and participation in a 'crime victims' event hosted by college effectively raised awareness of moral, social and cultural issues.
34. The links with universities are strong with whole staff training days and Year 10 university experience days for those students with no higher education in the family. A careers forum with thirty representatives from industry, the services and further education is shared with the high schools and is a successful annual event. Charities are well supported, for example, Youth Extravaganza, the Mayor's charity event, is hosted by the college and involves students and the three feeder high schools in a musical event over three evenings. Sporting facilities bring a wealth of local talent and the all weather pitch is used regularly by many community groups.
35. The college is committed to providing continuing education and the governing body's policy encourages a wide use of the premises by the local community. The senior management appointment to oversee provision for Arts College and community links has established an open and caring relationship between students and visiting adults in the college.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

36. The college provides very well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, as a result, students are made to feel valued and they develop a positive attitude to learning which contributes to their achievement. Provision has further improved since the last inspection.
37. Provision for students' social development is very good, maintaining the high standards seen in the last inspection. Students have increasing opportunities to take responsibility and exercise initiative, particularly in performing arts subjects and are also able to take on sports leadership roles in physical education. In all subjects, students are encouraged to work together productively and, as a result, they gain confidence in group and whole-class activities. Students are introduced to democratic structures through elections for the Student Council. Tutor groups additionally have a charity representative who liaises over fundraising activities. The college supports students' own initiatives, such as over the development of an anti-bullying group. The students who volunteered to become mediators have been given the facilities and the space to develop for themselves what they hope will be an effective scheme. The college has participated in several social inclusion initiatives to support better the small number of disaffected students.
38. The provision for students' moral development is good. The college rules and the behaviour policy are well understood and appreciated by students. They are consistently applied by staff and therefore considered by students to be fair. Students have many opportunities to consider moral and ethical issues in their studies in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. For example, students in design and technology have considered the implications of obsolescence in design and packaging. The sixth form general studies course includes science lessons exploring moral and environmental issues. Assemblies during the inspection week also helped students to reflect on environmental considerations. Provision for students' moral development has improved since the last inspection.
39. Assemblies broadly meet legal requirements for collective worship, but the statutory requirements are not fully met because when there is no assembly, most tutor periods do not provide any opportunity collective worship. Nevertheless, provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Many lessons include well-developed opportunities for students to empathise with others or to consider issues reflectively. For example, students in Year 10 benefited from thoughtful reflection on recent newspaper accounts illustrating the theme of

forgiveness, and sixth form students studying sociology and psychology focused with sensitivity on issues of poverty and privation. The performing arts make a particularly strong contribution to students' spiritual development. Even students who were otherwise uninterested in college were moved by their experiences of composition and improvisation in music.

40. The provision for students' cultural development is very good. The high standards described in the last inspection report have been maintained. Both in lessons and through the very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, students in both Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form have a wealth of opportunities to learn about and develop their interest in and appreciation of art, music, dance and drama. In the main, students learn about western cultural traditions, but other cultural references are brought into the work done in a number of subjects. For example, in English, students examine the works of poets from a range of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The college recognises that more could be done to further broaden the experience of students in preparation for life in multicultural Britain, for example by inviting more speakers from other cultures to lead assemblies.

Sixth Form Curriculum

41. The range and quality of the curriculum in the sixth form is very good. There is appropriate progression from vocational and academic courses offered in Year 11 to similar courses at AS and advanced levels with some important additions. Many of the 27 courses on offer reflect the specialist status of the college, for example in the wide choice of information technology courses offered and the advanced performing arts courses. Media studies is a very popular subject in Years 10 and 11 and continues to recruit high numbers of students to the sixth form. Psychology and sociology are also attracting large numbers. The college has taken the deliberate decision to maintain some smaller subjects to ensure that it retains a broad curriculum, relevant to the aspirations and interests of individuals and groups of students.
42. The compulsory core curriculum includes a tutorial, a general studies and key skills programme and RE. This structure provides a broader, more coherent and appropriately planned programme than was the case at the time of the last inspection. As in Years 10 and 11 the range of extra-curricular courses and activities is very good and very well supported. The provision for RE in Year 12 fulfils the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The work covered in tutorials complements the general studies programme well and contributes to students' wider, personal and social development. However, whilst the tutorial curriculum is highly relevant, the quality of the teaching is very variable and some teachers do not provide the level of expertise and challenge that students need.
43. Students have lessons in key skills in the sixth form and can take an external examination at the end of Year 13. Across the college as a whole, subject schemes of work do not identify with sufficient clarity how key skills are progressively developed, what students will learn and what level they can be expected to achieve. The teaching of key skills tends to be implicit rather than made explicit. This limits the impact on learning and is unhelpful to students who are building a portfolio of work that fulfils the key skills examination requirements.
44. General studies and religious education in Year 12 effectively explore moral, ethical and social issues. Evidence shows that this area of the curriculum has improved since the last report. The general studies programme and tutorials also provide appropriate opportunities to support students' independent study. Support materials that offer guidance on revision strategies and how to use time effectively are part of the provision. However in a number of subjects the planning for independent learning was not secure. Also there are a significant number of students whose independent learning is limited by low levels of literacy.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

45. The college makes good provision for the care of all students. Staff know students well and show good knowledge of the local community and of individuals' needs. House tutors remain with their groups and develop constructive and supportive relationships with students throughout Years 10 and 11. The house system fosters a sense of belonging because students regularly meet as a full house and as a year group. Students are confident about referring problems to their house tutors. Personal, social and health education includes work on study skills, making choices and careers. Induction of new students into Year 10 is effective; the identification of students with social and behaviour difficulties is an effective part of the links between the college and the high schools and students have the opportunity to follow a work-related timetable. Students' achievement is recognised by a system of awards of blue slips for exceptional work. These can then be exchanged for "tigers" awards and eventually house certificates are awarded and cards sent home to parents.
46. Child protection procedures comply with legislation. The designated teacher is trained and aware of the role of local Area Child Protection Committees. Staff have received training; however, details had not been included in the staff handbook, though this has since been rectified.
47. The health and safety procedures overall are good and statutory requirements are fully met. The site manager who attends the health and safety working party and has good expertise in this field regularly carries out risk assessments and checks. Procedures in the event of emergencies and fire drills are outlined clearly in classrooms and in public areas of the college. First aid provision is good. The site manager and staff carry portable phone systems for reporting and dealing with incidents. Elements of personal safety and health education are covered during personal and social education lessons and students are given information, appropriate to their age, about sex and drugs. A counsellor and nurse attend the college, offering confidential advice for students.
48. The monitoring and promoting of appropriate behaviour are good. The college rewards system recognises good work and effort. Positive achievement helps raise students' confidence and self-esteem and parents are informed. Teachers organise a very good range of clubs, educational visits, sports teams, dance, drama and musical events, all of which contribute to the development of students' self-discipline, morale, teamwork and self-confidence. The planning for this aspect of the curriculum is very good. Exclusion is used carefully and effectively. Pastoral heads meet with mentors who deal with social and behaviour problems and monitoring is good. House awards for responsibilities encourage positive attitudes. Most teachers follow the college's policy for dealing with poor behaviour and know the procedures for appropriate action when needed, but on a few occasions this was not the case and students are able to exploit this. Anti-bullying is part of the induction for new students and is effectively promoted in assemblies, tutor groups and PSE lessons. Supervision of students at the beginning, lunchtime and end of the day is good and the senior management team has a strong presence around the college buildings.
49. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and have resulted in an improvement. The college continues to seek ways of improving attendance. Students are registered electronically when they arrive in college and in lessons. The college operates a first day call system if parents have not telephoned to notify the college of their child's absence. Responsibility for monitoring attendance lies with the house tutor supported, as necessary, by pastoral heads of house who meet regularly with the educational welfare officer and other agencies. The college promotes better attendance through rewards for students meeting short and long-term attendance targets. Links with local community services to enhance attendance are part of House meetings with students.
50. Students' annual reports detail progress in every subject studied, as required. Teachers' comments focus well on attainment, attitudes, behaviour and attendance, but targets are insufficiently rigorous to assist students in improving their grade. The majority of students know how they are progressing

through the interim progress checks. Parents are invited to discuss with the tutor, their child's performance across the curriculum and this is effective in informing both parent and student of the current level of work, in terms of predicted GCSE grades. Course guides, such as the comprehensive information provided for students in art, effectively link examination criteria and student assessment. Parents express satisfaction with the amount and quality of information they receive through student homework diary comments and information booklets.

51. The college procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment and progress are good but there is inconsistency in the way in which this information is used. The assessment policy is comprehensive and provides a good framework within which departments can devise subject-specific policies and strategies. The college collects and records a substantial amount of data on its students when they enter the college. In May, prior to arriving, student information is used to place students into classes based on their potential attainment. As students progress through the college, further data is collected, shared with heads of departments and this informs them about the progress students make and standards attained. Some departments make good use of this information in order to place students into sets according to ability and some, but not all, departments make use of the data to devise appropriate targets for specific classes or groups of students. The college analyses its GCSE results fully and provides detailed information about how well subjects and individual students achieve. The college reports assessments regularly to students and parents.
52. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is not as strong as the procedures. It is better developed at a whole-college level than within departments, where it is variable in quality. In some departments such as science, ICT and history assessment information is used well. Students have an increasing awareness of their potential grades but less idea of how to achieve them because teachers do not always tell them what to do to improve their work. For example in religious education, the marking does not help students know how well they are doing or what they need to do to get better. In some subjects assessment information is not sufficiently used to influence the content and planning of lessons to match the work closely to the needs of individual students.

Sixth form

Assessment

53. The pattern of assessment in the sixth form is similar to the rest of the college. The assessment policy is similarly comprehensive and provides a good framework within which departments can devise subject-specific policies and strategies. The college policy and procedures for assessing and recording students' attainment and progress are good, but the implementation of the policy is inconsistent. There is a rich wealth of assessment data available to departments, although as in Years 10 and 11, its use is not always consistent. A substantial amount of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the sixth form. This information is then made available to heads of department and to sixth form tutors. As students progress through Years 12 and 13, information is gathered on their attainment and stored centrally, updated regularly and available to all teaching staff. Records on students' personal progress also complement the system.

Advice, support and guidance

54. The sixth formers receive very good support and guidance. Tutors maintain very full records through regular mentoring and monitor and guide students in terms of both their academic and personal development. Mid-term information on attainment and progress is available to students and those with an interest, such as parents. Sixth form staff have a very good knowledge of their students through individual mentoring. They are aware of their learning needs and provide effective support throughout their studies. The Post 16 Study Skills handbook includes useful information on revision techniques. The relationships between students and staff are very good.

55. Students value the information, advice and guidance they are given in relation to their studies. The guidance provided in Year 11 concerning their choice of course is both comprehensive and objective. Students choose their area of study on the basis of what is best for them. Tutors discuss the progress of students' personal statements regularly on an individual basis. Advice of a similarly high standard is provided as they move to higher education or employment. Parents value the advice provided and, like the students interviewed, appreciate the support that ensures they are able to settle into post-16 work.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The number of parents who returned their questionnaires or attended the pre-inspection meeting with the Registered Inspector was low. Although more than a quarter of those parents who returned their questionnaires considered that the college does not work closely with them and that they are not kept well informed about how well their children are doing, and this is a significant minority, inspectors disagree. The college's own records, for example of attendance at consultation evenings, show that it has been successful in involving parents. There may of course be individual cases where the college response has not been as good as it usually is or should have been. Parents benefit from good information provided to them. Regular monthly newsletters keep parents well informed about news, events and activities in the college and help them to get involved. Good information is provided on the curriculum and on study options. Parents also receive good information about the many performing arts productions that take place and these are well attended. Every student has a planner to act as a diary and for use in home-college communication, for example over homework. These planners provide very detailed information for both students and parents on key dates throughout the year, including deadlines for completion of coursework.
57. In addition to parents' meetings, held over several nights because of the size of the college, parents receive an annual report on their child's progress. The reports seen included details on attendance and descriptive comments on punctuality and uniform. Reports include comments from the principal (or a deputy principal), pastoral head and form tutor, as well as a reflective, self-evaluative comment from the student themselves. Progress summary sheets are provided for each subject, with grades for effort, attitude, knowledge, understanding, homework and coursework. Parents are given a predicted grade and handwritten comments that are personal to the student. Sometimes, however, these comments are a little general and could apply to any subject. Rarely do reports specifically identify what the student needs to do to improve and reports do not include targets for improvement. Nevertheless, inspectors judged the information provided by the college to parents to be good.
58. Parents are appropriately involved in the event of any problems. Of those returning the questionnaires, 92% indicated that they considered the college approachable with any questions or problems, and inspectors' view of the arrangements for discussing concerns with staff supports this positive view.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

59. Since the last inspection, the college has improved in all respects. Results at GCSE and A Level have risen year on year. Standards of teaching are higher, and the quality of the accommodation has been improved. The college ethos makes a significant impact on the social development of its students. The college makes a very good contribution to the community it serves, and has developed outstanding provision for the arts in meeting its targets since it acquired Arts College status. The college has gained national recognition for its work in various areas. The securing of a

range of awards, including *Investors in People*, *Sportsmark* and the *Arts Mark Gold Award*, is a clear indication of its success when assessed by nationally-recognised criteria.

60. These developments have taken place as a result of the excellent leadership of the principal and other staff with senior posts of responsibility. The senior management team, all of whom have up-to-date job specifications, work harmoniously to fulfil the college's aims. The head maintains a constant presence around the college, monitoring what goes on and personally promoting the college and its stated aims. All staff carry out their responsibilities effectively. Leadership and management of subjects are good overall. Several departments are very well led, and the leadership of the performing arts is excellent. In each subject leadership is at least satisfactory. The pastoral responsibilities of the college are very well organised.
61. The governing body has a very thorough knowledge of how well the college is progressing. Governors are linked with individual departments and many make regular, focused visits to monitor developments and gain first hand information. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, and, through an appropriate range of sub-committees, effectively oversees and guides the work of the college. Heads of department submit an analysis of their examination results to governors each year. Examination results are closely scrutinised and the college held to account. Suitably challenging targets are set for the principal and senior management team.
62. The college's planning is of a very high standard, and covers a three-year cycle, which is reviewed and extended each year. The plan is wide-ranging and responds to national initiatives and to the needs of staff which become apparent as a result of the efficient line-management of departments by senior staff. In this way, individual departments are able both to reflect whole-college development in initiatives contained in subject development plans, and to contribute positively to whole-college development planning. The governors are consulted over strategic planning at an early stage in the process and make a good contribution to the overall process. Current priorities are: extending and developing inclusion, introducing further vocational courses and developing other aspects of the curriculum, developing teaching and learning, improving and refining the use of data for setting targets for students. Further development of the accommodation is planned; an important initiative is to be the installation of lifts to accommodate the needs of disabled students.
63. The college pays due regard to the new Code of Practice for special educational needs and the register is effectively organised and up-to-date. However, the policy requires refinement to ensure that it meets fully the requirements of the current regulations for the information it includes. The governing body, however, has not yet reviewed the role of the SENCO in relation to the changes introduced by the new Code of Practice for special educational needs.
64. Overall, the quality of leadership and management of the learning support department is effective. The SENCO is experienced and well-qualified. Improvement planning and department documentation is effective in guiding the work of the learning support department. The SENCO provides effective management of the procedures for the support of students on the college's register of special educational needs and has successfully introduced the new Code of Practice. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in order to provide the required support for the number of students with statements of special educational need. Special needs support teachers and additional support teachers are deployed effectively across a range of subjects and teach additional English lessons. On the whole, this helps provide the breadth and level of support required for those students on the special needs register. The college uses external funding appropriately and adds a considerable amount from its own resources.
65. The college has effective procedures for performance management and targets are formally shared so that training requirements are identified and addressed. Procedures for performance management are carefully considered and timetabling makes good provision for the planning, monitoring and reviewing cycle. All staff, including support staff, are included in the process and

managers receive external training for their roles. As reported at the last inspection, the college has a strong commitment to professional development and induction. Staff training is a continuing priority. Whole-college training is appropriately linked to the college development plan and complemented by departmental training which is arranged during the summer term. The college also offers a well thought through modular programme of staff training in preparation for middle and senior management.

66. Achieving *Investors in People* status has proved beneficial in identifying priorities for training as well as reviewing and evaluating the training offered by the college. Staff development is managed well. The longer-term impact of training on raising standards in the classroom is monitored well in most, but not all, subjects. The induction of new staff and the training of newly qualified teachers are very good. The college offers a very good induction programme with timetabled meetings covering a wide variety of appropriate topic areas. The meetings are supplemented by fortnightly observations and regular review meetings. Newly qualified teachers confirm the valuable support offered by the college programme. The college enjoys partnership arrangements with a number of providers of initial teacher training and is actively committed to the training of new teachers.
67. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good, although there is insufficient technical support in science. The college is well staffed with teachers who are experienced and well qualified to teach their subjects. There is an appropriate balance between new staff and longer serving teachers. The few teachers experiencing difficulty in managing challenging behaviour would benefit from further support through the sharing of expertise in managing challenging behaviour of more experienced staff.
68. The college manages its resources well and there is good provision in the majority of subjects. The funding derived from the Arts College status has successfully enabled it to improve resource facilities. The outstanding ICT facilities and the facilities for music technology, and the way in which these are used, contribute fully to the strength of these subjects. Although there are insufficient textbooks in history, the strong commitment of teachers in producing their own resources compensates. The library has a stock that is adequate for the needs of the college. The effectiveness of the library resources for learning is considerably enhanced by the commitment and helpfulness of the library staff.
69. The accommodation has been extended and improved since the last inspection, and it is now good overall. As the arts provision expands, however, the accommodation has become a limiting factor. Problems of sound-proofing remain, and a second dance studio is needed because the requirements of all of the performing arts groups cannot be fully met with the existing facilities, and this limits what can be taught. The learning support department's base provides a pleasant learning environment with good ICT resources, including commercially produced programmes to support the learning of students with special educational needs. The accommodation is maintained very well and is in very good decorative order. The site manager and maintenance staff show good initiative in carrying out adaptations and improvements.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

70. The sixth form is well led by the head and deputy head of sixth form. The sixth form is organised and managed along strongly pastoral lines to guide and support the students and to encourage their ambitions to enter higher education or employment after they leave Year 13. Most students are from families without a tradition of entering higher education. Organisation and routines are carefully geared to supporting their needs and wishes. Opportunities for students and the college's expectations of those who follow sixth form courses are fully explained in the very informative documentation which is available to Year 11 students.

71. Governors are well aware of and strongly support all developments in the sixth form. Religious education has now been introduced into Year 12, as a start to remedying the previous breach in statutory provision. The college does not provide daily collective worship for sixth form students.
72. The sixth form provides good value for money. Sixth form finance is managed very well. Expenditure is carefully monitored and the college provides a good range of courses, while retaining a close watch on the financial viability of provision. Members of the sixth form benefit from the provision the college makes as a result of its Arts College status.
73. The emphasis on students developing a sense of responsibility and the college's expectations of them as mature young people are stressed in documentation and in the organisation of the sixth form. The very good pastoral organisation ensures that students' work and welfare are monitored and supported well by those who manage the sixth form and the form tutors who deal with students on a daily basis.

Resources

74. Resources for learning are satisfactory in the majority of subjects. They are good in English, chemistry, French and ICT. In English, learning is particularly enhanced by library and ICT resources. Up-to-date French resources effectively maintain the topicality of the subject. In chemistry, books and ICT resources, designed for self study, enhance independent learning skills. Students on the ICT courses value the up-to-date resources that are available for lessons and individual study. Resources are inadequate in psychology, because funding is not sufficient to keep them up-to-date, and also in food technology, where the range is not sufficient.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Building on the good practice apparent in the college, the principal, staff and governors should ensure that:

- (1) All subjects plan more specifically for teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy using the full range of techniques

Paragraphs 19, 30, 75, 79, 82, 84, 90, 92, 95, 101, 122, 159

- (2) The few teachers who are experiencing difficulties

- are given further support through the sharing of expertise in managing challenging behaviour;
- make full use of the college systems for supporting staff;

Paragraphs 10,19,48,67

- (3) Practice is more consistent across the college in the way in which subject teachers make the most effective use of assessment data and other information to enable them to

- plan more effectively for the range of needs of the students in their classes to support learning;
- give students clearer guidance on how to improve their work.

Paragraphs 19, 51, 52, 62,79,104, 106, 122,143,160.163

Sixth form

- (1) Subject teachers make the most effective use of assessment data and other information to support learning and enable them to plan more effectively for the range of needs of the students in their classes

Paragraphs 20, 53, 181, 185, 187, 198, 212, 226, 229

- (2) Teaching is planned more effectively so that work in every subject supports the development of

- independent learning
- and
- key skills in the use of ICT, literacy and numeracy

Paragraphs 23,44,172,180,185,193,198,200,203,254,255,256,262

In addition the college should consider how best to:

- (1) Improve the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a few subjects

Paragraph 40, 101, 136

- (2) Develop further its success in improving attendance

Paragraph 49

- (3) Fully meet statutory requirements for daily collective worship in all year groups

Paragraph 39

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 10 and 11	128
	Sixth form	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 10 and 11							
Number	5	39	40	35	5	4	0
Percentage	4	30	31	27	4	3	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	18	24	14	0	0	0
Percentage	8	29	39	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	1036	350
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	80	

Special educational needs	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	36	3
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	105	3

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	55

Pupil mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

College data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

College data	2.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	271	238	509

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	102	238	256
	Girls	125	216	223
	Total	227	454	479
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45 (43)	89 (89)	94 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91(91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	37.1
per pupil	National	39

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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	2001	62	58	120

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	62	58	120
	Average point score per candidate	12.8	17.6	15.1
National	Average point score per candidate	62	58	120

		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	62	58	120	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	12.8	17.6	15.1			
National	Average point score per candidate	62	58	120			

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last college year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1263	98	2
0		
11		
0		
0		
0		
0		
50		
1		
0		
0		
6	2	
2		
5		
4		
4		
40		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	84.46
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff: Y10 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	737

Deployment of teachers: Y10 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.7
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Average teaching group size: Y 10– Y11

Key Stage 4	21.4
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Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4157153
Total expenditure	4264402
Expenditure per pupil	3168
Balance brought forward from previous year	116640
Balance carried forward to next year	9391

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	26
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Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	29
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	1386
Number of questionnaires returned	150

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	34	59	3	3	1
My child is making good progress in college.	38	55	3	1	3
Behaviour in the college is good.	20	52	13	4	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	62	14	3	1
The teaching is good.	24	61	7	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	47	25	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	41	51	6	1	1
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	53	1	1	2
The college works closely with parents.	17	45	24	3	11
The college is well led and managed.	26	57	5	3	9
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	55	7	1	6
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	44	4	1	18

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

ENGLISH

The provision in English is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Relationships are good; teachers manage students well in class and are always available to give extra help
- Very good use is made of ICT and library resources to support research
- The subject is very well led and managed and there are many strengths in the subject team

Areas for improvement

- Students have weaknesses in the basic skills of organisation and writing
- More strategic planning and support is needed for students in large middle ability classes who learn and work at different speeds

75. In 2001, GCSE results in English language were below the national average in grades A* to C. Almost every student achieved a pass and results were in line with colleges with a similar intake. Boys' results were lower than girls' and the difference between them greater than found nationally. Students' results were better than mathematics but not as good as science. English Literature results in 2001 were above average. However, the entry for English literature was selective; only half the students in the year were entered at their own choice, and they were mainly the higher attainers. Boys and girls results were similar in literature. GCSE results in both subjects improved in 2002 particularly in the numbers attaining the higher grades. The results have fluctuated over recent years, but English Language results have been consistently below the national average as was the case at the last inspection. A small number of lower attaining students take a basic skills examination in English, a new development since the last inspection. This ensures that every student leaves the college with a qualification in English.
76. Students enter the college with average attainment overall, but lower in English than in mathematics or science. Current standards show students' attainment is better now than in 2001, but still below average. By Year 11, most students show a confident response to structured oral tasks, particularly when teachers' questions guide them to think beyond the superficial. Most students read adequately and are expected to keep a record of their reading. In class, middle and lower attainers read and understand a range of GCSE texts but rely heavily on the teachers. Higher attaining students read challenging texts with understanding and obtain information from a variety of sources. In literature essays, they are adept at inserting quotations and subtle references into their writing. A class of Year 11 students comparing the motives of characters in Doris Lessing's story *Flight* with those in *Jane Eyre* showed insight and a personal voice in their writing. A top set of Year 10 students confidently analysed the poem, *Blessing*, by Imtiaz Dharker and, during the lesson, learned more about multi-cultural traditions. Middle attaining students write in simple sentences to communicate information, ideas and opinions. One middle set worked well in the computer suite, supported by a technician and an extra teacher, and most showed considerable skill and speed in designing a book jacket. The lower attainers and students with special educational needs do well in smaller classes, where there is extra support.
77. Achievement from Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory. Students gradually gain more confidence when analysing literature and interpreting film and media. However, for a significant number of students, punctuation, spelling and sentence construction are weak. They are confused between standard and colloquial vocabulary. Students repeat their mistakes constantly; this lowers the overall standard of their work and means that finished work is not always the best they can achieve. When students keep notes neatly and efficiently, and spend time planning, drafting and editing their work, they can produce work of a good quality.

78. Most students' behaviour is good and relationships in class are often very good. Students do as they are asked willingly and quickly because this is what their English teachers expect. They appreciate what teachers do for them and feel valued whatever their ability. They work well in pairs and groups and respond well to praise and commendations in their work.
79. Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good, with particular strengths in class management. Lessons start quickly and continue at a good pace with a variety of activities. Teachers know their subject well. This enables them to interest and motivate those students they identify with special talent in English as well as those students who initially show a lack of interest in education. Teachers plan the lessons carefully, sensitive to the students' personal feelings. However, especially in the wide ability range in the middle sets, teachers' planning does not always take enough account of the students' emergent needs or consolidate earlier learning of basic skills. Most marking is helpful, prompt and constructive. Students appreciate teachers' comments on their coursework cover sheets which indicate the GCSE standard and give specific guidance on what to do to improve.
80. Teaching is accommodated in a dedicated suite of rooms with ready access to a good library and ICT suite, both of which are well used and very helpfully staffed. Students have many opportunities to take part in high quality extra curricular activities to enrich their work, including theatre visits, poetry days, writing quizzes and competitions. Amongst the awards presented annually is one for speaking and listening, held in honour of a past student who died. Good liaison exists with teachers at the local high schools, with whom the department organises joint projects in the summer term.
81. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The staff have many strengths and collaborate closely as a team. The department has been closely involved in setting up a GCSE media studies course, now in its third year and growing rapidly as a popular option for students. Observation and monitoring of teaching is done well and is particularly helpful for newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the college. GCSE results are thoroughly analysed, and the department takes steps to address areas of weakness. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the department is working hard to raise the standard of students' work. Emerging from this is a new initiative which involves teachers working closely with the examination board as examiners.

Literacy

82. The provision for literacy is unsatisfactory because there is not yet a co-ordinated college approach to language development. Students' standards of reading and writing are below average on entry. As they move through the college, their reading skills improve because they encounter a range of reading materials and, in research and wider reading tasks, have opportunities to practise their reading. However, progress by students who have problems with writing is slow. Many students have weak organisational skills in note-taking. They are unsure what is appropriate when choosing language for a particular task and audience. Many experience weaknesses in spelling and lack a secure understanding of spelling rules. Students do not always know or use key vocabulary essential in understanding the concepts in a subject. These weaknesses have an impact on standards achieved in most subjects.
83. There are pockets of good practice, for example, the structured writing support in design and technology. In science, relevant activities help students make good presentations to the class. Lists of key words are displayed and dictionaries are available in most classrooms. Performing arts students have a good understanding of vocabulary in their subject area.

84. However, the college is at an early stage of identifying weaknesses and implementing strategies in all subjects to develop students' basic skills. Departments are not yet at the stage of seeking and creating opportunities for activities which develop and promote literacy. The implications of this for everyday planning of lessons is not yet fully understood.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and very good awareness of examination requirements
- The positive and supportive relationships between teachers and students
- Teachers' management of some students' challenging behaviour

Areas for improvement

- Catering for the spread of ability in classes and challenging the most able
- Development of students' ICT and literacy skills within the department
- Ensuring a wider variety of teaching and revision styles which focuses on student learning

85. GCSE results in mathematics have remained similar to that reported in the last inspection. In 2001, the results were in line with national averages and in line with similar colleges. There was little difference between the performance of girls and boys and students performed less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. However the 2002 results, while broadly similar to 2001, suggest that students are now performing as well in mathematics as their other subjects. When compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9, students' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, although better for the lowest and highest attaining students.
86. The evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed showed that Year 11 students' attainment is in line with the nationally expected level. Work is developmental and covers all of the attainment targets, although students have a limited number of mental arithmetic strategies for calculations such as 3×18 or 6×18 . Students' skills in drawing and graphical work remain under-developed.
87. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported by teachers and teacher assistants. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher assistant provided very good support in the classroom by encouraging students' mathematical work and complementing the work of the teacher. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to take the GCSE mathematics examination early and study GCSE statistics as an additional subject. However, in the classroom, challenging work is less evident so that in a Year 11 express group, opportunities to consider more demanding quadratics such as $x^2 + 9 = 0$ were not pursued.
88. Teaching and learning are good overall but range from poor to very good. The majority of lessons start promptly and in a very good Year 11 lesson, students were required to arrange a set of fractions in order of size which consolidated their work on fractions and quickly engaged them in the work of the lesson. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and a very good awareness of examination requirements. The majority of teachers have a wide range of strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour of a minority of students.
89. However, in a significant number of lessons, there is too little attention given to the spread of ability and not enough challenge offered to students. Teachers have a narrow repertoire of teaching styles and teacher talk dominates the lesson so that students are not actively engaged in their learning. The quality and quantity of homework is too variable across the department and in a Year 11 lesson, it consisted of finishing off the question started in the lesson.

90. Teachers have a very good awareness of students' individual strengths and weaknesses. Marking is regular, but the quality of the feedback is inconsistent across the department. Regular information is recorded in mark books and centrally, although not in a format that allows progress to be tracked in terms of levels or grades. Students have an increasing awareness of their potential grades but less idea of how these are to be achieved.
91. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and the majority of students are hard working, committed and enthusiastic about their work. They enjoy positive, productive and good humoured relationships with their teachers and with one another. In a small number of lessons, students' learning is inhibited by unsatisfactory attitudes and poor engagement.
92. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the college has established good links with partner high schools to ensure curriculum continuity and progression from Year 9 to Year 10. The provision for literacy within the department is satisfactory but inconsistent across the department. Opportunities to develop students' literacy skills are often missed and staff make little use of the technical vocabulary provided on classroom walls for this purpose. The provision for ICT is satisfactory but access to computer facilities is limited. Opportunities to integrate ICT more fully into mathematics lessons are missed although in one Year 11 lesson very good use was made of geometry software to illustrate angle properties of circles.
93. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The leadership of the department ensures a clear educational direction for mathematics but a number of issues from the last inspection remain unresolved. The head of department has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the department but monitoring concentrates too much on individual rather than whole department needs. The head of department engenders a good team spirit among his staff of experienced teachers many of whom have been in post for a long time. There is a commitment for further improvement and a capacity to succeed with a more consistent approach to teaching and a greater focus on learning.
94. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards remain in line with national averages and progress is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and a very good awareness of examination requirements. Students still demonstrate weak mental arithmetic skills and an over-reliance on calculators although measurement and estimation skills are improved. The department is now housed in a suite of specialist rooms so that accommodation has improved since the last inspection. Resources remain satisfactory although the provision of mathematics books in the college library is inadequate.

Numeracy

95. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory although, to date, there is no whole-college policy or training. Number work is used for costing exercises in ICT and to calculate pulse rates in music. Algebraic skills are used in dance for patterns and sequences and practised in ICT for creating formulae in spreadsheets. Students make good use of distance-time graphs in science and higher attaining students can calculate the gradient by drawing suitable tangents. Students also use tables and graphs in design and technology, analyse data from their fieldwork studies in geography and interpret graphs of pulse rates before and after exercise in health and social care. Further work is needed to ensure greater consistency in the provision and use of mathematics across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Overall the provision in science is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Improvement in results between 1998 and 2001
- Relationships in the majority of lessons
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and much of the teaching is good or very good
- Day to day management and organisation of large and spread out department
- Excellent data base to track student performance

Areas for improvement

- Improving the few instances of unsatisfactory teaching
- Stating lesson aims in terms of what students should expect to learn in each lesson
- Identifying opportunities for developing basic skills, ICT, citizenship, and the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the scheme of work
- Amount of technical support to department

96. The 2001 GCSE results were similar to the national average in double science and well above the averages for similar colleges. Students following the separate science performed close to the national average in chemistry and physics and above the national average in biology. Students performed better in science than in mathematics or English. On average point scores, boys and girls perform similarly, but girls gained a higher percentage of A* to C grades than boys. Results have improved steadily over the 6 years since the last inspection. A small number of students were entered for single science. When the results of all science examinations are considered together, students perform close to the national average. Standards were maintained in triple science results in 2002. Although the percentage of A* to C grades was lower in double science, progress from the Year 9 tests was satisfactory.
97. The standard of work of current students is satisfactory overall. In a biology lesson taught to a high attaining Year 11 group, students worked quickly and with interest examining issues connected with town planning. They developed their oral and written ability to express their thoughts as the lesson progressed. Although they could work in groups, at one period in the lesson the group became silent as they worked intently on the problem. In a lower attaining group in chemistry, students showed by their answers to questions that they had understood how to use the reactivity series to predict which metals might be extracted by reduction. Higher attaining students produced some excellent course work. However in a minority of lessons, students' attitude in middle attaining groups sometimes made it difficult for teachers to help them to make progress, or poor planning on the part of the teacher made progress unsatisfactory.
98. Teaching overall is satisfactory, as is learning. Many very good and some excellent lessons were seen. In these lessons aims were stated in terms of outcomes for the students and shared with them. This enabled the students to identify the progress they were making and helped them identify any problems they had. In such lessons, the teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to plan challenging activities suited to students' needs. In a Year 10 lesson introducing course work, the teacher gave an excellent explanation of the purpose of investigational work in science and how student work would be marked. The class was well managed so that all students were either doing practical work or written work. Students responded well to the fact that there was limited equipment and were quickly assigned their task. A tight time frame kept them all working hard. In a Year 11 lesson on kinetic energy, the lesson theme was quickly established using an interactive screen. The use of a model Ferrari captured student interest and one student suggested a link between kinetic energy and the square of velocity. All students were able to do calculations relating kinetic energy to velocity. In such lessons learning was also very good and students made very

good progress. In the weaker lessons, aims were either not shared with students or else they were simply a list of things to be taught. Such lessons were poorly planned, moved at a slow pace which did not challenge the students and did not match activities to student need. This led to unsatisfactory progress and in some cases, poor behaviour.

99. The attitudes of the students to their learning are good overall. They are enthusiastic learners and show interest in their work through the questions they ask. They are keen to learn and to do well in examinations. However, a small minority of students are very challenging and make teaching difficult, particularly during practical sessions.
100. The department is well managed so that lessons run smoothly. The head of department has set up a very good data base that enables student performance to be tracked. Analysis has begun of the performance of different sets and the influence of course work grades on overall results. This will be used to inform the teaching and learning of students. The day-to-day management is very good as the arrangement of the laboratories over three floors and a few huts is very wide spread. The technicians provide good support, but there are too few of them for such a large department. There is no technical support during the afternoons and this puts extra organisational stress on the management of the department and teacher planning. Due to staffing circumstances, the head of science also acts as head of physics and this dual role creates some developmental pressures.
101. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results, teaching and the accommodation have all improved and a suite of computers is available for class use. Schemes of work are now fuller with opportunities for ICT identified but these could be extended. There is also scope to increase the focus on basic skills and develop the contribution science makes to the provision for citizenship, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Investigative skills are now at the national average.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The contribution of multi-cultural resource materials to help students learn how to apply a range of techniques
- The range of expertise of teachers in the art department
- The above average quality of three-dimensional papier-mâché studies based on Egyptian hieroglyphics
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good where effective interactive teaching and learning styles are used

Areas for improvement:

- Attainment overall, particularly for boys and in the higher grades at GCSE for all students
- Achievement for many students in some teaching groups where teachers' expectations are insufficiently high
- Homework expectations are limited for many pupils; they are insufficiently engaged in talking about their work so that they know how to improve its quality
- Greater emphasis on the shared commitment to improve across all teaching groups

102. GCSE examination results in art and design were well below average in 2001. At the last inspection results were broadly in line with national averages and thereafter suffered a sharp decline. The trend since 1999 has indicated a recovery and results for 2002 show that the proportion of students attaining A* to C, though still well below national averages, increased by 10 percentage points on 2001 results. Students' results were, on average, a grade lower in their art examinations in 2001

than in their other GCSE subjects. Boys' attainment is significantly below the national averages for boys and attainment in the higher GCSE grades for all students is well below the average.

103. From the evidence gathered in lessons, looking at portfolios of work and talking to students about their work, standards in the current Year 11 are well below average overall, though just below average in some teaching groups. Examples of above average attainment were seen in the three-dimensional studies based on Egyptian hieroglyphic patterns where students were given the opportunity to add to the sculptural forms in their own way. The good quality of the critical and contextual work in three-dimensional craftwork and painting is beginning to raise overall standards. However, the choice of subject matter, such as drawing from organic forms and flowers, favours girls' attainment. Boys' drawing skills are low and the tendency to copy from second-hand source material is depressing standards. Where the teacher shares assessment with the group, students show a good level of commitment to homework and this contributes to the steadily improving standards seen in these teaching groups. Homework standards, however, are low overall.
104. The majority of students enter Year 10 with at least average attainment and indeed, a good proportion are above average, and many by the end of Year 11 do not realise their potential. Achievement overall is therefore unsatisfactory. Progress is good where sketchbooks are used successfully to record working processes and teachers relate this effectively to assessment grade requirements. However, this is not the case in every teaching group and many students are attaining the lower GCSE grades because the work planned lacks pace and challenge and teachers' expectations of what students understand and can do are too low. For example, in some teaching groups, students were engaged on low-level papier-mâché tasks directed by the teacher that left little scope for independent learning. Some lower attaining and special needs students achieve well, given their prior attainment and teacher assessments. However, a high proportion of them find it hard to refine their work, sometimes because they lack patience, are disruptive or easily disrupted or because they do not know how their work can be improved.
105. The teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Examples of good and very good teaching were evident in both year groups. However, just over a quarter of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory. Teaching expertise in art is good. Some of the teaching seen during the week of the inspection was well focused on how students learn, a characteristic of which was the quality of interactive experiences for the students. These show in the work completed in sketchbooks and in the good balance between directed teaching and giving students choice which supports independent learning. In the best lessons, planning includes clear learning objectives that are shared with students. Teachers' high expectations of what students can do shown in the provision of opportunities for individual oral assessment of their improvement, was an important factor in raising students' confidence and self-esteem. Where lessons were satisfactory, teachers' questioning was often insufficiently open-ended to extend students' vocabulary and planning did not always include a plenary session to check what students had learned. Standards of oral presentation overall are limited in both years. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the activities lacked challenge and pace and as a result, students produced work of a low standard that often lacked urgency in its completion. In these lessons, limited teacher expectations and the absence of short-term targets contributed to the unsatisfactory progress made by students.
106. Students' positive attitudes and behaviour in most lessons contribute to the satisfactory progress seen in many lessons. They generally work well together and the positive ethos and constructive teacher-student relationships in some lessons have a positive marked effect on their approach to study. Examination data and assessment criteria are often used well in some lessons to help students improve their independent research and subsequent grades at GCSE. However this is not done consistently by all staff.
107. Leadership and management of the subject are sound and improvement is broadly satisfactory because of the improving trend in attainment. Monitoring of teaching, the implementation of policies, attainment, students' effort and work rate, are less effective because of insufficient shared

commitment to improve across all teaching groups. The main art area provides an effective learning environment through impressive displays of sixth form work. There are fewer opportunities for those located apart from the main art area to benefit from good teaching and learning. The range of picture resource art books in the department and library is good and reference materials for independent study make a good contribution to students' multicultural study where they are effectively used as a teaching resource. The quality of art displays around the college and in classrooms has improved since the last inspection. Visits to galleries are successfully contributing to steadily rising standards seen in some lessons.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Schemes of work cover the syllabus requirements of the course and there is planned provision in both Years 10 and 11.
- Students are achieving well in developing their skills and knowledge and understanding of the syllabus requirements.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in which all can make progress.

Areas for development

- There is a lack of continuity and consistency in the present timetabled delivery of citizenship, thus there are sometimes long gaps in between lessons - this affects the quality of students' learning.
- The programme for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous
- There are no structured assessment procedures in relation to the end of Year 11 expectations of students' knowledge understanding and skills acquired.

108. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of a sample of Year 11 students' folders show that the majority of students achieve well in this newly introduced subject. They are developing well their knowledge and understanding of, for example, economic, human and legal rights. They are also developing their discussion skills in pairs and small groups as well as improving their skills in justifying their opinions both orally and in writing. There are no significant differences in relation to gender and all groups of students are making sound progress. The more able, though, have produced some thought-provoking essays on the issue of euthanasia.

109. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and results in secure progress and achievement in lessons for all groups of students. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is good. Lessons are well planned and a variety of structured activities help maintain students' interest and keep them on task. Students respond well to this, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, they worked well as pairs and small groups and showed clear respect for the views and opinions of one another when discussing the 'worth' of jobs compared to the actual salary earned. In another Year 10 lesson students worked as pairs and small groups when discussing a scenario of limited human rights by an invading force - this effectively involved them in discussing a range of moral dilemmas they might face as a result. However, because they were working in friendship groups, the teacher had to circulate well in order to keep all of them focused on the task in hand. Learning objectives are written up on the board, thus students are well aware of what is expected of them. However, on occasion the teachers are not always clearly explaining the rationale of moving from one activity to the next, particularly towards the end of lessons. There is a tendency also for the teacher to give all the evaluation at the end of a lesson rather than asking students themselves what they have learned. Students' written work is consistently marked and there is effective use of comments; students are therefore being made aware of their strengths and weaknesses in learning.

110. Citizenship lessons were introduced for last year's Year 10 students and have continued into Year 11 this year. However, during the inspection week not all timetabled citizenship lessons were delivered and the present timetable arrangement leads to a lack of consistency and continuity of delivery of citizenship, which affects the quality of students' learning over time. Schemes of work have been produced that meet the syllabus requirements and are useful in helping teachers plan their lessons. As yet, there are no assessment procedures in place in order to monitor students' progress towards the expected levels at the end of Year 11. Oversight of the teaching of citizenship is the responsibility of a senior member of staff who has ensured the college is meeting statutory requirements for this area of the National Curriculum. Plans are in place to give students the opportunity to take the short course GCSE examination in citizenship next year, thus further broadening the range of their learning opportunities.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching in food technology, graphic products and textiles
- Good leadership and management in the two contributory departments
- The quality of students' making skills which are good in all material areas
- The quality of accommodation and resources that contribute to a positive learning environment
- The provision for CAD/CAM in resistant materials

Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching in resistant materials
- Develop the use of ICT in all material areas
- Ensure a greater challenge for all students by more effective planning for individual needs and by ensuring progression from Year 9 into Year 10
- Raise the attainment of boys in line with national expectations

111. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. Students' results in design and technology were below those they obtained in most of their other subjects. Girls performed much better than boys and the difference in attainment is nearly twice the national average. GCSE results in 2001 were better than the previous year and reflect a rising trend. Results in 2002 rose significantly and continue this improving trend.
112. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment in Year 11 was in line with that expected for students of the same age nationally. This represents satisfactory achievement given students' attainment at the end of Year 9. Standards across the subject vary considerably. They are consistently good in food and textiles where students show confidence in using materials and processes, work with accuracy and precision and show interest and enthusiasm. Where standards are good, students take care in presentation and work is characterised by effective research and evaluation; knowledge and understanding is well developed and students apply this effectively when designing their products. Standards in resistant materials are below expectations.
113. Whilst making skills are good, designing skills are under-developed and lack the rigour required for high achievement. This results from an insufficient challenge in the teaching and the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some students. The introduction of CAD/CAM into the resistant materials course is a very positive development. Students use this enthusiastically and it is beginning to have an impact upon standards. In general, the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation are less well developed and design specifications and subsequent analysis are not being used as the basis for performance criteria within projects. This is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and often leads to superficial design activity. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students.

114. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is some very good teaching in food technology and graphic products, where students are actively engaged, the pace of lessons is brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. However, the poor behaviour of some students and the lack of challenge result in insufficient progress in some resistant materials lessons. Overall, lessons are well planned and the standard of marking is good. Teachers regularly mark students' work against clear criteria and use positive feedback and suggestions for improvement. The use of class files for recording progress within resistant materials and graphics is a positive development and enables the head of department to monitor student progress more effectively. Overall, the assessment and monitoring of students' performance in GCSE coursework is good. Assessment is particularly effective in food technology where realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with students on a regular basis.
115. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. They are very good in food technology, graphics and textiles where students are interested in their lessons and work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods, students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety. In resistant materials, behaviour is unsatisfactory; a significant number of students do not work hard enough, and are unco-operative. The poor atmosphere in these lessons prevents most students from making satisfactory progress and those who want to learn are prevented from doing so.
116. The department makes a good contribution to the development of the students' literacy. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms. A good example of this is the sensory vocabulary used in food technology. In addition, the use of writing frames and quick starter boxes in the resistant materials coursework portfolio supports the least able students. Students' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed through activities such as accurate measurement, marking out and weighing.
117. Overall, the leadership and management of design and technology are good. Despite working independently, the head of resistant materials and graphics and the head of food technology are effective, and provide clear direction and vision for their own subject areas. However, opportunities for sharing good practice and developing a clear vision for the whole of design and technology are being missed. Both heads of department are building upon existing strengths, understand their current strengths and weaknesses in provision and have identified a development plan for future improvement. An established programme of monitoring of teaching and learning is in place in line with the college's performance management policy. Both departments are beginning to use self-evaluation as a tool for improvement. Whilst there is some liaison between the college and the high schools, it is not sufficiently well developed to ensure clear progression from Year 9 into Year 10. This occasionally leads to a lack of challenge for some students particularly the most able, when work previously covered is repeated and no extension tasks are available.
118. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attainment at GCSE, previously below the national average is now in line with national expectations and rose significantly in 2002. Results in food technology have improved considerably since the last inspection; however, results in resistant materials were far below national expectations in 2001 and although they improved in 2002 are still below. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory although major inconsistencies still exist. The refurbishment to accommodation in all areas has led to a considerable improvement in the working environment.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, provision in geography is **satisfactory** with some good features.

Strengths

- Well balanced curriculum which ensures the development of a broad range of geographical knowledge and understanding.
- Positive attitudes of students maintain the pace of learning.

Areas for improvement

- The development of students as independent learners.
- The use of student performance data to inform curriculum planning and raising attainment.

119. Results in geography for 2001 are around the national average when judged by the proportion of candidates gaining A* to C grades and almost all students entered achieve an A* to G grade. The results for 2002 suggest a similar picture, although the number of A* grades has fallen. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. The majority of students complete their course and are entered for the examinations. These results represent good achievement when judged against the attainment of students on entry to Year 10.
120. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are slightly above the national average and the students' achievement is good overall. There are good features, as for example in a lower ability Year 11 class who were beginning to write up their project on local environmental issues. Students with special educational needs generally make good progress when supported by teaching assistants. These staff are well briefed and coordinate well with teaching staff and as a consequence, learning for this group is enhanced. One student observed was able to apply advanced ICT skills and share these effectively with other students. Literacy is a barrier to learning for a significant number of students and the need to overcome this tends to reduce the pace at which geographical concepts and knowledge are being consolidated.
121. Those of middle and higher attainment have a satisfactory and sometimes good understanding of map skills, vocabulary and concepts by the end of Year 11, though the opportunities for extended writing are relatively limited. Within Years 10 and 11, students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, though oral skills remain under-developed overall and there are limited opportunities for demonstrating and developing higher order information and communication technology skills.
122. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The best lessons are crisply planned and make good use of time and resources, for example in a lesson dealing with the impact of migration in less economically developed countries. Students are well briefed on the academic expectations of the course, including external accreditation requirements. However, although the department is clear about the need for independent learning, only limited progress towards this has been made and students of all abilities need more opportunity to discuss their work and share learning points with each other as well as to develop self-evaluation skills. Although lesson objectives are made clear, students would also benefit from brief learning guides which provide a combination of exemplars and strategies for consolidating their learning. Teaching needs to give greater emphasis to a more structured approach to consolidating literacy skills for students of all levels of ability. Marking is satisfactory but target setting is under-developed and this means that students do not always know what they have to do to improve. Although the range of student performance data available is satisfactory, its use could be developed further to strengthen curriculum planning and also a more targeted teaching focus on areas of under-achievement to help in raising standards.
123. There are satisfactory opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Fieldwork is generally well developed but is overly reliant on the immediate environment of the college. There is evidence that more emphasis is now being placed on the use of information and communication technology but this needs to be sustained so that higher order skills including data analysis and modelling can be developed.

124. The attitudes of students to their learning are good. Students are prepared to work hard and persist with topics they find challenging, for example in coursework analysing the environmental costs and benefits of out of town shopping developments and in transactions of urban development. They co-operate well when given the opportunity to do so. The department has worked hard to establish an appropriate work ethos and students speak well of class management and lesson organisation.
125. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improvement since the last inspection has also been satisfactory. Resources are well chosen and meet learning needs well. The suite of teaching rooms is well organised and establishes a good environment in which students can learn. Wall displays are informative but rarely contain exemplars of annotated students' work to set expectation and provide comparators against which students can judge their progress. The department has worked hard to promote the study of geography for all age groups and schemes of work are well considered and up-to-date, although aspects of ICT could be more extensively planned for in both Years 10 and 11. The other responsibilities which staff have make it difficult to develop geography further.

HISTORY

Overall, provision in history is **good**

Strengths

- Higher standards in recent GCSE results
- Good subject knowledge and teaching
- Good leadership and management
- Good relationships with students

Areas for improvement

- Develop library and text resources to support students' learning
- Spread good teaching practice throughout the department through the monitoring and professional development process.

126. The GCSE results in 2001 were in line with national and college averages. Results for 2002 were also broadly in line with national and college expectations. The current head of department and her team have presided over a considerable improvement in public examination results in recent years and students are now achieving satisfactorily. Although boys performed better than girls in 2001, there was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in the 2002 results. Students with special educational needs make good progress.
127. Standards of work observed during the inspection indicate that the improvement in Years 10 and 11 is continuing to be sustained, with students overall in line with national expectations. For example, higher attaining students in Year 10, in their study of Germany after World War One, were able to identify different national attitudes to making the peace. In the light of this, they were able to assess which powers had most reason to be satisfied with the outcome. Higher attaining students in Year 11 responded to evidence from the presidency of Franklin D Roosevelt by drawing on previous learning to inform their observations. For example, they showed good understanding of the New Deal legislation, helping them explain the political thrust of a cartoon suggesting the government was throwing money away.
128. The teaching observed was never less than satisfactory, and often good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and examination requirements. For example, in a good lesson with a lower attaining group of Year 10 students, the teacher had gathered a range of materials, accessible and appropriate for the group. By the end of the lesson, all the students could express some understanding of the different hopes of the successful nations at the peace conference.

Higher attaining students drew on the previous class discussion and group work to explain how different wartime experiences shaped their different aspirations. Teaching which was only satisfactory was characterised by a lack of challenge or a clear focus on what students should learn, and so less progress was made during the lesson.

129. There is some good emphasis on literacy. For example, the topic booklets provided for students have key words and glossaries. Students' exercise books are carefully marked. Occasionally, however, there are inconsistencies in teachers' practice, and misspelled key words go uncorrected. Teachers made effective use of film resources, the overhead projectors, and the whiteboards. Much use of ICT was seen throughout the inspection to support students' learning. There is, however, currently a shortage of text books to support the students' learning throughout the course.
130. The department is well led and managed. Departmental documentation makes expectations clear in relation to student monitoring and support, working with students with special educational needs, and supporting college initiatives on literacy and key skills. Now that examination results have been raised to within college and national expectations, there is a solid foundation on which to develop further good practice in these areas, and so continue to raise students' achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very good achievement in GCSE, with well above average results
- Good curricular provision through a higher than average proportion of students taking specialist courses, a core course for all and opportunities in other subjects
- Very good learning in some lessons, due to energetic, enthusiastic and challenging teaching and very good student response
- Good use of assessment information to improve the curriculum and help students
- Effective leadership and management that has secured good improvement

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes to work of a small number of students
- Teaching in some lessons that does not provide clear procedures to ensure that students pay good attention to explanations and instructions
- Insufficient inclusion for a few less motivated students when teachers accept modest effort
- Insufficient systematically planned opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

131. In 2001, GCSE results were well above average. Most students taking the examination achieved very well, with higher grades than in their other subjects. There was no significant variation in the results of boys and girls. In 2002 the great majority taking the subject followed a GNVQ course. The college has introduced this to increase the challenge for students and the enhanced level of difficulty that they experienced is reflected in less spectacular results than in the previous year. However, the majority of students gained at least a pass grade. A small number of students, who found GNVQ particularly difficult, were entered for GCSE. There were too few for statistical comparison with national results, but while only a few secured A* to C grades, most obtained at least a G grade. The college succeeds in entering a much higher proportion of its students for examinations in the subject than most schools.
132. The standards shown in the work of current Year 11 students, following examination courses, are average. Most students can use ICT tools to carry out tasks to meet specific purposes, such as providing a spreadsheet for a company to organise its accounts. Many efficiently utilise the more advanced facilities of the programs that they use when for example, creating macros and word

processing templates. The work of many students is reduced in standard by failure to carry out all assignment instructions, such as annotating work to explain its purpose, or by simple spelling mistakes, indicating failure to check work. In some lessons, a significant number of students, while using software efficiently, do not have a strong awareness of purpose or audience. For example, most were able to enter data for costing the building of an extension, but few were able to explain confidently for whom this might be useful. Those not taking the examination course also show standards that would be expected of students not specialising in the subject.

133. Generally, students achieve satisfactorily by maintaining the average standards with which they enter the college. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls. Those with special needs generally match the achievement of other students. In the small number of lessons in which they have the benefit of a support assistant, their achievement is good.
134. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of students are good in ICT lessons. They respond well when given clear guidelines and good challenges by teachers. In these lessons, students show good commitment and enthusiasm for tasks and work with pace. Many show determination in seeking solutions to problems, often sharing assistance with other students. In lessons where guidelines are less strong, a significant minority does not work at the best pace. If teachers do not set and reinforce clear requirements, such as turning off computer screens during whole-class introductions, many easily become distracted, so do not listen well. A small minority of students is insufficiently motivated and works with reluctance.
135. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good and in a few it is very good. In the best lessons, teachers provide students with clear guidelines to ensure that they listen carefully and are therefore clear about what they have to achieve. Tasks have a relevant purpose and are challenging, leading to good, or better, improvement in skills and understanding and good scope for higher attainers to reach the levels of which they are capable. Teaching has energy and enthusiasm, which influences the students' own response. There is at least good monitoring of individual work and guidance to support this. As a result, lessons are busy, with all students fully involved. In lessons which, while satisfactory, have limitations, teachers do not always ensure that all students listen carefully when work is being introduced and they are inclined to accept a modest work rate from less well motivated students. This means that, in these lessons, learning is satisfactory overall and better than that only for the most highly motivated. There is a need for a more systematic approach to ensuring that the highest attainers are always sufficiently challenged. Currently, this is too dependent upon the provision made by individual teachers and therefore variable.
136. Opportunities for practising and improving skills in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. When provided, they are usually effective. For example students use word processors to write extended accounts of tasks that they have carried out and spreadsheets to calculate costs of materials for building a house extension. However, there is no underlying policy to ensure that good opportunities are regularly provided. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are unsatisfactory. There are some useful opportunities for social and moral development, for example by considering the impact of computers on life in the home and at work and through signing an agreement that commits students to using computers and the Internet responsibly. However, failure to plan this aspect of learning systematically means that there are insufficient opportunities, especially for spiritual and cultural development.
137. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The main issues were that examination results were below average and that many subjects did not provide sufficient opportunities to work with computers. In each case, the college has been successful in bringing about improvement. Opportunities to use computers are now at least satisfactory in all subjects except religious

education. Provision for students not taking the examination course is further enhanced by a core course, which all take.

138. ICT is well led and managed, both as a subject and as a cross-curricular resource. Learning outcomes, although satisfactory, have been affected by recent instability in staffing, as a significant proportion of well qualified and experienced teachers have left during the last year, to take up more senior posts elsewhere. The college has succeeded well in replacing these with highly committed staff. However, the department acknowledges that it does not now possess such an overall extensive command of the subject and has put effective procedures in place for improving the subject expertise of recently appointed teachers. The stock of high quality, up-to-date, computers is much improved, so that these are now better than in most schools. They are well managed and organised and teachers and students benefit from very good technical support. The department makes good use of information from examination results and other assessment procedures to improve the curriculum for all students. It also thoughtfully makes provision for those finding the GNVQ courses difficult to transfer to a GCSE course in which they have a better chance of gaining a worthwhile qualification.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The good or very good teaching in most classes
- The very good linguistic skills and subject knowledge of the teachers
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in French and German and improve results in GCSE
- Increase the number of students who opt for French in Year 10
- Improve the attainment of boys
- Decrease staff turnover to avoid lack of continuity for some classes
- Continue to develop the use of information communication technology

139. Students' attainment in French when they join the college in Year 10 is broadly in line with national expectations. GCSE results achieved in French in 2001 were below average when compared with the national results. Such a comparison with national results, however, is unfavourable to the college since it entered over four fifths of the 2001 cohort for the examination as compared with the national entry of just under three fifths. A good number of students gained the higher GCSE grades, but overall when compared to results in other GCSE subjects there was significant under-achievement in French, especially for boys. The results in French in 2002 are also below the national average. In 2002 girls again did much better than boys. Students' attainment in German when they join the college in Year 10 is very uneven. Some have had a two year course and others have only learned German for two terms. GCSE results in German in 2001 were below average. Girls performed much better than boys. In 2002 GCSE results in German are well below average. Girls again did better than boys. There was significant under-achievement in German.
140. The standards of French observed in lessons during the inspection were broadly in line with national expectations and these standards were further confirmed by an examination of students' books. Many students can understand lessons conducted almost entirely in French and can ask and answer questions on a range of topics. In a Year 11 French class of average attainers, students could

interview each other quite confidently about work experience when given the appropriate support, and in a Year 10 top set students successfully practised interviewing people about jobs.

141. Higher attainers in French produce a very good range of written work dealing with such topics as family relationships, holidays and healthy eating. They write dialogues, compositions and short letters containing a good range of tenses and structures. Similarly, the standards of German observed in lessons were in line with national expectations. In the Year 10 German class students could understand details from the website of a German college and many showed that they could deduce the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context. In the Year 11 German class students could confidently take part in a role play at a tourist information office and could understand details from a recording about tourist facilities. In general, pronunciation and intonation are sound and knowledge of grammar is satisfactory. In German many students produce written work of a good GCSE standard. Spelling and use of capital letters are generally good and students use a range of basic grammatical structures in a variety of letters and compositions. Some write quite extended compositions containing verbs in the present and past tenses.
142. The teaching and learning of French are generally good or very good. The teaching and learning of German are also good. Teachers of both languages are very good linguists, who are fluent and confident speakers, although very occasionally pronunciation needs to be honed. Most teachers are experienced and all have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. All lessons are very well planned. Teachers have high expectations regarding behaviour and work rate. Some of the best lessons are very challenging and students are fully stretched to achieve their best. Some teachers have very good classroom management skills which enable them to have successful lessons even with classes containing poorly motivated or disaffected students. Generally teachers monitor and help individuals effectively and students with special educational needs are supported well in both French and German. Occasionally, however, teachers do not monitor and support students sufficiently when they are practising in pairs, which results in some students not participating. Teachers always clarify the aims and key vocabulary of lessons and write them up on the board and refer to them frequently. This ensures that students understand fully what they have to learn and why. In all lessons students practise listening, speaking, reading and writing in a logical sequence of activities. Homework is set regularly and plays an important role in consolidating and extending students' learning.
143. Teachers help to develop literacy skills by emphasising key vocabulary, by insisting on high standards of spelling and punctuation and by presenting language patterns clearly and succinctly. All classrooms also have a grammar corner to help students to understand structures and the tenses of verbs. Many students make good oral contributions to lessons, but a significant number in some French and German classes are passive and do not participate until called upon to do so. Most students settle down quickly to do written work and listen carefully to recorded texts. In all French and German lessons the foreign language is used as the normal means of communication for most of the time which helps to develop students' listening and speaking skills. Some teachers use ICT effectively to motivate students and improve their reading skills and ability to work independently. The electronic white board is used to good effect for *Powerpoint* presentations. The television also motivates students and occasionally they work on computers to do research on the Internet. Generally teachers mark students' work regularly and their comments help them to improve. Due to staffing problems, some students' work from last year had not been marked regularly. Teachers keep detailed records of students' attainment and progress as well as graded portfolios of students' work, which helps to ensure that they make sound progress.
144. At the time of the previous inspection modern foreign languages were option subjects and the report was very positive. Since that date modern foreign languages became compulsory and a large number of students who would not previously have chosen the subject were disaffected, as they did not wish to continue learning French. The department found it difficult to cope with this situation.

The instability of staffing in the last two years resulted in lack of continuity and a decrease in GCSE success, especially in German and as a result progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The department is, however, now well-staffed and managed effectively by two teachers doing a job share. Several other members of the department are also part-time, but good team work prevents a fragmentation of approach. The French 'assistante' also makes a good contribution to raising the standard of speaking and listening skills. Departmental documentation is good, schemes of work are currently being updated and teachers share common goals and are committed and enthusiastic. Accommodation and resources are good. There is an annual trip to France which improves the linguistic skills of those who take part. There is some effective use of ICT, but this needs to be implemented more fully across the department.

PERFORMING ARTS

DANCE AND DRAMA

145. Both dance and drama were sampled in Years 10 and 11. In drama, standards are below average on entry. Recent GCSE results have dipped since the last inspection, though, from the work seen, the trend is now towards standards of attainment which are well above average. The hallmarks of the lessons are the excellent subject knowledge and organisation and very good teaching. There are very many opportunities for extra-curricular work, and the auditions for the college's production of *Les Miserables* are eagerly awaited. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is already good leadership and management in the subject, and the potential is there for excellence. Dance teaching is very well informed, rigorous, precise, demanding and friendly. As a result the students learn well – they are totally involved in their work and work very hard. In both dance and drama, the co-operation between all members of staff in the faculty, and the enthusiasm of the students is very evident.

MUSIC

Overall the provision in music is **outstanding**

Strengths

- GCSE results for the last three years have been very high.
- Students gain very good musical skills because of the high quality enthusiastic teaching
- Students' personal development is improved alongside their performance skills because of the high quality opportunities for extra-curricular musical activities.
- Music provision is effective for all its students because of the outstanding leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- The provision of additional less traditional instrumental and vocal tuition to raise students performance standards even further
- The access to music software that is not affected by problems with the college computer network

146. Music education is a flourishing and exciting aspect of college life. In 2001, standards in GCSE examinations were well above average with very high numbers of students entered. These standards rose again in 2002. All candidates entered for GCSE examinations gained A*-G grades which is above the national average. This pattern has been repeated for the past three years, and music is now a very popular option for students of all levels of attainment. All students including those with special educational needs do very well in the subject.

147. By the end of Year 11 students achieve very well and overall standards are above average. The standards achieved by the current Year 11 are slightly below that of previous years. This is because, in line with the Arts College aims, the GCSE music course has become increasingly

popular and is now open to students who have not had any prior musical experience. Many of these students would benefit from tuition on less traditional instruments such as electric guitar, keyboard, pop singing and drums. The more musically talented performers are catered for with a twilight session and the opportunity of taking the GCSE examination a year early. Students make very good progress through Year 10 and 11; rapidly improving their knowledge, skills and understanding of all aspects of music through a well-planned series of topics and enthusiastic teaching. Performance skills are greatly enhanced by the regular opportunities to take part in high quality ensembles and expert tuition from the visiting instrumental teachers.

148. Students demonstrate very good computer skills in music because they get lots of opportunities to use machines with music software. They create, manipulate and refine sounds using electronic keyboards and complex music software. Students' performance standards are better than their knowledge of harmony and notation. For example one Year 11 boy could not read or write music but produced a stunning extended composition inspired by *Pachelbel's canon*, using a variety of styles and voices on the electronic keyboard. His absorption in his own creativity was total and very rewarding. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, do better than might be expected because they are really encouraged by using the computers to create exciting dance and 'acid style' sequences. There are occasional problems with the music software conflicting with the college network which has even resulted in the loss of students' work. Access to a free standing music computer in each of the teaching rooms would enhance their independent learning and solve this problem. Contributions to literacy skills are good with key words and technology used frequently. Students get lots of opportunities to link number skills to music, especially during music technology lessons.
149. Students learn very well because the teaching is of a very high quality. Music teaching is characterised by excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, high expectations and excellent relationships with students. Because teachers are excellent musicians students learn accurate and relevant skills and information. In the most successful lessons, a range of teaching strategies are employed to enable students to effectively solve problems, make decisions, discover things for themselves and learn by practical musical experience. In these lessons the teachers are very demanding and students produce lots of work of a very high quality. Planning for lessons is excellent, students are made completely aware of what they are going to learn and why at the outset and the lessons end with a clear summary to reinforce learning. Teachers build students' confidence with effective use of praise as they circulate well to ensure students are working hard during practical sessions. Teachers manage students very well and as a result, behaviour is always very good. Students are becoming very good independent learners. Relationships within the classroom are excellent and students participate willingly in all musical activities. They are aware that the ethos of the music department is one of concentration, enjoyment and purpose and they value their experiences very much.
150. The leadership and management of music are outstanding. The clear vision of the head of department ensures that the whole performing arts department has a very positive impact on the ethos of the college. The staff team work very well together and are committed to raising standards. Documentation and schemes of work are of a very high standard. The department is supported very well by twenty visiting instrumental teachers. As a result of the management the department has made excellent progress since the last inspection. Through gaining Arts College status, there are now outstanding music technology resources including several MIDI keyboards, computers and a recording studio all of which are valued highly by the students.
151. The contribution music makes to the life of all students is outstanding. There is a wide range of activities including a fun choir and several pop bands. The music department enjoys a high profile within the community with excellent links with partner high schools and local primary schools. Links with professional music companies, visiting artists and the local community are particularly well

developed. A very large number of students choose to be involved in the high quality musical extracurricular activities and instrumental lessons. The college concert and big bands are of an extremely high standard and contribute well to the personal and musical development of students throughout the college and the wider community. They regularly appear in national competitions and undertook a successful concert tour of Austria in the summer of 2002.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good
- Students' attitudes to learning are good
- Very good extra-curricular activities enhance learning opportunities
- Good accommodation
- Good opportunities for responsibility are offered by the sports leadership award

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to target and improve learning by being more aware of their attainment
- A consistent contribution towards literacy and numeracy to improve and understand vocabulary and support mathematical concepts

152. In 2001 teacher assessments of standards provided by the high schools at the end of Year 9 were broadly average compared with colleges nationally. Teacher assessments indicated that students were achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment.
153. The work seen during the inspection, close to the beginning of Year 10, indicates that standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 were below average when compared with national expectations indicating that teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are over-generous. For example, at the beginning of Year 10, students' awareness and experience of hockey is well below expected levels. One girls' Year 10 hockey group of high attaining GCSE students were unable to pass the ball satisfactorily using the drive, they had weak knowledge of manoeuvring the ball using reverse sticks and standards of passing and stopping the ball were low. In Year 10 badminton standards are below average because some students have had little opportunity for this activity in their high schools. In a core curriculum Year 10 badminton lesson half the students had not had previous experience of this activity in their first lesson in badminton at the college. Students, even those with previous experience, were in the initial stages of play and were gradually acquiring the skills and understanding to improve their performance.
154. In 2001 GCSE results were broadly average for both grades A* to C and for grades A* to G when compared with national results. Results are just below this in 2002 but these results are still better than at the time of the previous inspection. Girls perform better than boys; this is a reversal of results at the time of the previous report. Boys do less well in the theory aspect of the course. The majority of students achieve well. The standards seen during the inspection are consistent with results in examinations. In a Year 11 theory lesson students linked their practical work to understand issues of safety, risk assessment and injury. By the end of Year 11, in activities where weaknesses were seen in sports previously covered, most students work to expected levels which represents good achievement.
155. Standards in core curriculum physical education are average and this also represents good achievement. In some activities not always covered by high schools such as badminton and basketball, students are at expected levels by the end of Year 11. In a Year 11 core curriculum basketball lesson students demonstrated effective attacking techniques at average standards. High attaining students were able to guard the ball effectively even when they were challenged. Low

attaining students did not maintain good control over the ball and pathways to the basket were not well targeted because of weak hand-eye co-ordination.

156. Teachers give generously of their time to provide an extensive extra-curricular programme which helps students to improve their standards and extend their knowledge. Students have the opportunity to lead others on the Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA) scheme. In one Year 11 lesson two leaders took responsibility for the whole session showing good qualities of leadership and good knowledge of activities. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily because they are included well in activities and receive individual attention if necessary. Teachers are clear in their explanations and conduct demonstrations for good understanding; this is useful for all students but particularly benefits low attaining students or those with special needs.
157. Overall the standard of teaching and learning is good. Teaching and learning is particularly effective in Year 10 where teachers are focused on raising standards in the first year of examination courses. In a Year 10 GCSE badminton lesson the teacher used good demonstrations to show students the advantages and disadvantages of positioning in doubles play. Students learned quickly but several were hampered by lack of previous experience and a lack of knowledge of the rules, for example a few students served over-arm. In a Year 10 JSLA lesson the teacher concentrated on effective and interesting warm up techniques and explained how students in a leadership role might use these. In a Year 11 core curriculum basketball class the teacher challenged students to achieve and good teaching points on recovering the rebound from the backboard resulted in students following shots up well. Teaching and learning are not as effective when students are not given all the necessary teaching points for success so that low attaining students, in particular, lack the correct body position to direct a shot, target a ball or execute a stroke. Teachers ensure that theory work is well linked to examination requirements and is progressively more challenging.
158. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers insist on good behaviour and relationships were generally good. Teachers check the balance of teams in team games and include all students by ensuring that everyone has equal chances within games. A minority of students do not take sufficient care of the equipment though this is through thoughtlessness not deliberate misuse. Non-participants often contributed well when engaged and, in good lessons, helped others to succeed by giving feedback and critically analysing performance but some non-participants are not engaged sufficiently in the lesson though the numbers not participating are low.
159. Resources are satisfactory and the facilities are generally good though the outdoor basketball surface is uneven because of root intrusion from an adjacent mature tree. This may become a safety risk if not attended to, and changing rooms are barely adequate for the numbers of students participating, particularly in extra-curricular activities. The theory teaching room is useful but could be improved by some upgrading, including blinds to enable videos to be used successfully. There is little opportunity for students to access computer facilities. Teachers make the best use of the facilities available. They work very well together as a team and learn from one another. They also provide good role models, share expertise and work to their strengths. Organisation, planning and procedures are good though objectives concerned with promoting basic skills and safety are not always consistently achieved. For example, planning for literacy and numeracy is not evident in most lessons. Some students risk the safety of others, and infringe the rules of some games, by wearing jewellery.
160. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the strengths have been maintained. The department is very well led and the head of department has made significant and successful changes in the organisation of courses to improve the achievement of some boys at GCSE and reduce the high number of lower grades. New assessment processes monitor students' achievements but students could be better informed by the use of grades linked to examination courses. Students still need assistance in being more aware of their achievement and attainment to set themselves targets for improvement. Most teachers evaluate at the end of lessons but

opportunities to see and learn from the achievements of others are sometimes lost when time is not given for groups to display their work to others for analysis and improvement. Teachers keep up-to-date by networking with other specialists, through attendance at courses and by monitoring one another's teaching to share expertise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, provision for religious education is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Worksheets are of high quality and stimulate students' learning
- Carefully prepared revision booklets greatly assist students' preparations for GCSE

Areas for development

- The thoroughness of some students' written work
- Marking, which does not provide enough constructive guidance
- Continuity of provision to ensure that students' make systematic progress towards GCSE
- Teaching methods, to achieve a more uniformly good response from students

161. Students take the GCSE short course in religious education. A substantial majority of the students take the examination. Results vary considerably from year to year but in the last two years they have been below average. Evidence from lessons observed and a scrutiny of students' work indicate that current standards are also below average overall. This is largely because students are taught religious education for only 44 weeks over two years. Where breaks in provision occur, students do not retain information well enough, and their responsiveness in class and their participation in discussions are adversely affected.

162. Overall achievement in individual lessons is satisfactory. Students gain a satisfactory understanding of basic beliefs in Christianity and other religions, and relate their knowledge to social and moral issues in society. For example, in Year 10 they consider the idea of justified anger when studying the story of Jesus in the temple. Their written work in this topic indicated a good level of understanding of what is meant by a 'just war'. Most of their writing is in note form. This is usually done proficiently, but some lower-attaining students do not complete their work.

163. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the teaching is by non-specialist, but mostly very experienced, teachers. Teachers prepare lessons well and students are made aware of the objectives of each lesson. The lesson content is closely geared to the requirements of the examination syllabus. The good range of teaching methods used is appropriate. Time is carefully allocated to each task to stimulate and maintain a good pace of work. Most students learn readily, but in several lessons observed, they were reluctant to answer questions or express their own views. Most students make careful notes, but some lower-attaining students occasionally leave work incomplete. Work is generally acknowledged, but there is too little constructive marking to improve students' standards of work. Good use is made of resources, usually of literature or videos. In the very good lesson seen, the teacher's challenging questioning, after the class had watched an excerpt from *The Vicar of Dibley* prompted a lively and constructive discussion on 'sexism and the church'. Lessons make a positive contribution to the development of students' literacy. Students gain a precise knowledge of the technical words related to each topic, such as 'discrimination', 'pacifism' and 'social injustice'. The quality of students' learning varied considerably in the lessons seen. Some groups participated readily, others were reticent, despite lively teaching, and one group contained a few students who misbehaved.

164. Religious education is managed efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The teacher in charge has compiled good resources, including a useful revision booklet to help students with examination

preparation. He has no opportunities to monitor colleagues' teaching and few formal opportunities to meet colleagues to develop the subject, but provides regular assistance informally. Overall, the management of religious education is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the short GCSE course has become well established, resources are now good, and the support of the teacher in charge largely offsets the lack of specialist knowledge amongst those who teach religious education. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

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

In the inspection, fifteen 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 for which national comparisons were provided.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	56	73	62	43	15	n/a	1.51
French	16	100	78	94	1.65	n/a	1.65

Other GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E	% gaining grades A-B
Chemistry	15	100	43
Biology	36	89	73
Physics	43	84	25
Business Studies	20	70	5
Design and Technology: Food	15	87	20
Computer studies and ICT	68	78	10
Art and design	12	75	42
Dance	8	100	50
Music	15	100	40
Sports/PE	24	87	29
Geography	32	87	6
Economics	13	100	69
History	23	96	22
Sociology	18	78	28
English Language	30	97	20
English Literature	43	98	23
Psychology	54	83	26
Theatre Studies	11	82	27
Modern Languages German	16	100	66
General studies	114	63	13

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	40	85	87	45	43	5.95	5.8
Chemistry	12	100	90	42	43	6.17	5.9
Biology	19	95	88	37	32	5.89	5.25
Physics	21	86	88	24	40	4.19	5.76
Business studies	5	100	92	20	32	6	5.5
Design and technology (product design and food)	14	100	91	7	30	4.71	5.38
Computer studies and ICT	40	83	86	15	23	4.2	4.62
Art and design	7	100	96	43	46	6.86	6.57
Dance	5	100	89	60	39	7.2	5.53
Music	6	83	93	17	35	4	5.74
Sports/PE	13	77	92	8	25	3.23	5.09
Geography	31	100	92	35	38	6	5.74
Economics	4	100	89	75	36	8	5.52
History	15	100	88	33	35	5.73	5.45
Sociology	13	85	86	38	35	4.92	5.32
English Language	17	94	91	24	30	5.06	6.5
English Literature	24	100	95	46	37	6.5	5.91
Psychology	28	71	87	30	34	3.78	5.3
Theatre studies	10	90	93	0	31	4.6	5.53
Modern languages French	6	100	89	0	38	2.8	5.59
General Studies	13	92	85	31	30	4.92	4.91

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered the AS and A Level courses in mathematics and further mathematics offered by the college, the AS and A Level courses in chemistry and physics. The AS and A Level course in Biology was sampled.

Mathematics

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

Strengths:

- An enthusiastic team of teachers, inspiring enthusiasm in their students
- Students have a very good, mature attitude to their studies
- Good clear teaching founded on teachers' good knowledge of subject and syllabus
- Success in encouraging students to study further mathematics, and good provision for them

Areas for improvement:

- Greater variety in teaching style
- Expansion of schemes of work to include more reference to sources other than the text book and the potential for use of practical resources and ICT
- Better provision for GCSE resit students
- Recruitment of students – the college's numbers at A Level have declined over the past five years much more rapidly than has been the case nationally

169. A Level mathematics students undertake one module of mathematical methods, three modules of pure mathematics and two modules of either mechanics or statistics. Further mathematics students undertake three modules of pure mathematics and three further applied modules. There is also a GCSE course for those students who did not reach grade C in Year 11, and provision for the application of number through key skills.

170. In 2001 forty students were entered for A Level mathematics or further mathematics and fifty six students were entered for AS mathematics. The pass rate was good and a third of students achieved an A grade. The proportions obtaining pass grades and grade A results are reported to be higher in all cases for 2002, with corresponding reductions in ungraded results. However, the total numbers entered at A Level have declined by one third over the past five years. Of the thirty students resitting GCSE in 2001, twelve obtained a grade C.

171. Current standards are good. The standard of work seen in lessons and in student files ranged from satisfactory to very good. Year 13 students showed average progress in developing their earlier work on the vector equation of a straight line to the stage where they could distinguish between parallel, intersecting and skew lines. Year 12 students built soundly on their previous knowledge of conditional probability to the point where they could tackle difficult questions confidently. Year 13 further mathematics students made good progress in an introductory lesson on complex numbers, achieving a very high level of understanding and manipulative skill.

172. Teaching and learning are generally good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge. Many of them have considerable knowledge and experience of examination demands, and this expertise is used well to inform new teachers. Care is taken to use mathematical language precisely, although some mis-spellings of mathematical terms go uncorrected in students' work. Teaching and learning take place largely through exposition and practice, with some effective use of questioning. Graphical calculators are widely used, but no other use of ICT was seen during the inspection. Students report that they have experienced some use of software packages during their study.

173. Students are confident and mature in discussion about their study of mathematics. Almost all of them enjoy the subject and would choose to study it again. They are thoroughly aware of its usefulness, particularly in the context of their future careers. They are very appreciative of the helpful comments they receive on their homework, and they feel well informed about their progress. The students' very positive attitudes are to the credit of the college and are evident in lessons, where they are cooperative, mature and responsive.
174. Twelve students wishing to resit GCSE mathematics are offered one lesson per week, outside the normal timetable, or they can attend the key skills application of number sessions. This provision is not ideal for these students. Good examples of numeracy across the sixth form curriculum were observed in classes in chemistry, geography and music. Students demonstrated a wide range of numerate skill including the competent use of index numbers, ratio, proportion, graphs, and correlation and other statistics. Year 12 physics students have some difficulties with standard form and area formulae.
175. The management of sixth form mathematics is satisfactory. Day-to-day organisation of the provision is good. Students are provided with textbooks for pure mathematics but are encouraged to purchase applied texts. Schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed to be helpful to new teachers embarking on A Level teaching. They need to include more references to sources and resources other than the main textbooks and to identify areas where the use of practical resources and ICT would enhance students' learning, thus encouraging teachers to employ a wider variety of teaching styles than at present.

Chemistry

Overall, the provision in chemistry is **good**

Strengths

- Results in 2001 were above average
- Students develop a sound understanding of concepts. They apply them thoughtfully in class and in answering examination questions. Overall they are achieving well
- Teaching is good overall. Resources and lessons are well planned to help students increase their understanding of chemical principles and enable them to take ownership of their own learning
- Subject is well led so that a good range of learning resources are constantly being developed
- Students have a very positive attitude to their work and relationships in lessons are very good

Areas for Improvement

- Stating lesson aims in terms of learning outcomes for the students rather than a list of what is to be taught in order to help students focus on their own learning needs
- To develop further the use of data in order to monitor the relative performance of boys and girls and student progress
- To continue to develop the use of ICT and other key skills in the subject

176. The GCE A Level examination results in 2001 were above the national average. All students who took the examination achieved a pass grade as they have done over the last three years. Over the last three years, boys have performed better than girls. Above average standards were maintained in the 2002 examinations.
177. The standards of current students are above average. In Year 13, most students are achieving well compared to their GCSE grade. In the lessons seen they responded well to the demands made upon them. In one lesson they enjoyed the opportunity to learn independently. They tackled the work on naming organic compounds with interest and made good progress in understanding how to identify functional groups in order to apply general principles to organic reactions. Practical course work showed that students could write up their work well and handle complex calculations using equations and molar concentrations.

178. Students in Year 12 were just coming to the end of an introductory module. They were all successfully moving on from their GCSE work and worked hard to apply some difficult concepts to redox reactions. They asked sensible questions and persevered despite the challenges they faced. All students could write equations and tackle calculations to find formulae of compounds.
179. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers use well structured resource material to improve students' study skills and their understanding of chemical ideas. A lesson in Year 13 helped students to re-examine Born-Haber cycles using energy level diagrams in order to improve their understanding of the topic after a poorly done homework. Teachers are good at explaining examination techniques and provide many opportunities for students to apply their learning. Students learn well, they are keen and respond well to the supportive atmosphere in the classroom. They feel confident that teachers and other students will take their questions seriously. The activities provided enable teachers to meet individual needs.
180. Although the main library contains a selection of text books, the department keeps more varied resources for students and they have access to a computer suite and appropriate CD-ROMs, to support their study. The majority of students have access to computers at home and can word process their work. They also have access to data loggers and sensors during practical work. However students could usefully develop their communication and research skills through the use of ICT in presentations.
181. The good teaching and learning results from a well-led team working together. Although the new modular course with short term targets helps teachers assess grades more accurately, a better use of value added data to assess progress would assist in identifying learning needs, as would gender analysis. Restating lesson aims in terms of learning outcomes would also help to target the difficulties individual students experience. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Physics

Overall, the provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Quality of relationships between students and teachers;
- Examples of very good teaching shown by various members of the department;
- Experienced and knowledgeable teachers with an awareness of the required standards;
- The syllabus which encourages and develops student independent learning and key skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Raising examination standards, particularly the numbers of students gaining higher grades;
- Increased use of ICT in lessons, by all teachers, particularly in areas such as data logging;
- Use of the information provided from the monitoring of teaching and the development of less didactic teaching styles by all teachers to enhance the quality of learning,
- Increased use of data from examinations and tests and other monitoring processes, in order to evaluate students' progress and to inform subsequent teaching.

182. The attainment of students in A Level physics in 2001 was below the national average point score. Approximately one in four students gained an A or B grade and the overall pass rate was 86%. Although the average point score was marginally the lowest in four years, there was no particular trend and no significant underachievement for this cohort of students, compared to national data. The score rating for the girls was the best for four years and better than that of the boys, who had the lowest rating in this period. At AS level, college data indicates that just under half the students gained grades A to C and the overall pass rate was approximately 84%. While the standards achieved in the 2001 examinations were below average, most students made satisfactory progress, based on their GCSE scores.

183. The A Level results for 2002 show a marked improvement in the percentage of students gaining A/B grades and a slight improvement in the proportion of students gaining A-C and A-E grades. Similar improvements have also been seen in the AS examination results, with a pleasing 95% pass rate, although the number of A or B grades is low.
184. Standards of work seen in the sixth form are satisfactory and cover the full ability range of the students. In a Year 12 class on the investigation of electrical resistivity, students could identify the appropriate variables and with some prompting could calculate the appropriate constant. Numerical skills in Year 12 are being developed by careful attention to students' abilities and the setting of appropriate homework calculations, covering the full range of student needs. Year 13 students have higher levels of numerical, analytical and evaluative skills and are able to discuss reasons for error, as encountered in an experiment on specific heat capacity.
185. The quality of teaching and consequent learning is good overall. The lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to very good, with two thirds being very good. In one very good Year 13 lesson on the kinetic theory of gases, a high level of student-teacher interaction was evident, contributing greatly to the progress and learning of the students. The teaching is generally supportive and students make good progress in lessons. Those requiring additional help are encouraged to seek staff at lunchtimes. Teachers show good subject knowledge and display varied levels of enthusiasm. In some cases, the style of teaching is too didactic and does not match the philosophy of the syllabus followed. In the best lessons, teachers attempt to extend the understanding of the students by skilful use of pertinent and probing questions. The less successful lesson though satisfactory had a slower, less demanding pace. Students were involved in routine tasks which did not challenge or extend their learning enough. The use of homework to reinforce and extend the students' learning is adequate but quantity and quality of assessment varies between teachers. However, students do have access to a CD-ROM, which includes much material suited to independent learning activities.
186. Communication skills are greatly developed by the Year 12 module, which requires students to undertake research into a chosen topic and to present their findings to the other students. Although ICT is used, this is mostly for web research and project reports by the students. More use needs to be incorporated into the framework of lessons. Co-operation is very evident in lessons and male and female students relate well and support each other's learning. Students are developing mature relationships both with each other and with their teachers.
187. Comments made by students from both Years 12 and 13 indicate that they are satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning opportunities provided by the department and feel well supported by their teachers. The teachers have a good understanding of the students' abilities, although enhanced use of assessment information would help in monitoring student progress and identifying specific learning goals. More rigorous analysis should also be made of the extensive test and examination statistics to identify reasons for any under-performance by students.
188. Resources are adequate in terms of available texts and equipment. Information and communication technology provision in the department and other work areas meets the current demands and provides enhanced opportunity for independent learning.
189. Management of the subject is broadly satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies between the four teachers who teach physics in the sixth form, particularly relating to teaching style and demands placed on students. The policy of using paired teachers to even out the provision offered to students is only partially successful. The leadership of the physics department has suffered because the head of physics is also head of science. This makes it difficult to focus on the issues which need to be tackled if standards are to rise.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Overall the provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching in the product design course.
- Positive attitudes of students towards the subject.
- Regular student reviews by teachers to set targets for improvements.

Areas for improvement

- Detailed planning of courses to ensure that students have sufficient depth of understanding to reach the higher grades, particularly in food technology.
- Further develop the use and application of ICT across the department.
- Increase the range and access to resources in food technology so that students can take more responsibility for their learning.

190. The GCE AS and A Level courses offered and inspected in design and technology are product design and food technology. Standards in the GCSE A and AS level examination results for 2001 were below average. Results in product design are better than in food technology. However, results for 2002 particularly at AS level, show an improvement. There are fewer students gaining A and B grades in food technology than in product design.
191. Attainment in lessons is good in product design and satisfactory in food technology. Students following the product design course are able to use a range of drawing techniques to develop their ideas. They also apply their knowledge and understanding of ergonomic principles well. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students considering the development and testing of products were able to identify the ergonomic principles to be applied when considering shape and materials to be used when developing a marketable product. By Year 13 students are modelling and testing their final design well, but the depth of analysis and subsequent modifications are less well developed. Teachers are aware of this and have strategies in place to develop this aspect further.
192. In food technology, students have good practical skills and plan and organise their work well. Their investigative skills are good with students able to compare the impact of different materials on a final product. For example, in a Year 13 lesson students were using traditional ingredients and 'smart' or modified ingredients to investigate and record different outcomes on frozen products.
193. Overall the use of ICT is satisfactory. In product design there are examples of computer- assisted design in coursework folders. In food technology students use computers to record and present but teachers and students do not have sufficient access to the range of computer assisted equipment and appropriate software for students to develop more advanced skills and applications to support higher grades. Students' knowledge and understanding of the implications and impact of industrial and commercial situations is weak in food technology.
194. Teaching in product design is good with students given opportunities to explore and investigate situations and work with other students to initiate and develop ideas. In food, technology teaching is satisfactory. Students are given opportunities to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups developing their organisation, delegation and practical skills. However the opportunities to gain the depth of knowledge is restricted by limited research materials and resources available in lessons. This coupled with the lack of opportunities available for students to explore industrial and commercial issues hinders students' ability to gain higher grades in this subject. Teachers give students good opportunities to work together and to take responsibility for their learning. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students' positive attitudes to the subjects creates a positive and respectful learning environment. Teachers regularly review work

with students giving them opportunities to discuss their work. Students appreciated these reviews as they can set targets to improve their work.

195. Each subject is well managed with each head of department aware of the strengths and areas for development. The departmental plans identify areas for improvement but lack sufficient specific strategies to raise attainment. The departments have hardworking teachers who are committed to improvements.

BUSINESS

The focus was on A Level business studies, but A Level economics was also sampled. In A Level economics, results were well above the national average. One lesson was observed where good teaching led to effective learning with students being required to answer demanding questions regarding the changing relationship between inflation and unemployment in recent economic history. The subject knowledge of teacher and students was good and current examples from the real world were used to enhance students' learning.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the quality of teaching is good.
- Relationships between the teacher and students are very productive.
- Many students achieve results that are well above what might be expected from their GCSE results.
- Constructive guidance and feedback are given on students' work, enabling them to make very good progress.

Areas for improvement

- A wider range of teaching styles to give opportunities for all students with different learning preferences
- Greater use of ICT including opportunities for research using the World Wide Web
- The development of structures and policies to ensure consistency in the quality and quantity of marking.

196. In A Level business studies, standards in the subject are above average and the 2001 results were better overall than the national results. Many students now begin Year 12 with a good record of GCSE success in the subject. However, others start with limited subject knowledge or a record of GCSE results that would suggest reduced chances of gaining high grades or even pass grades, and the department is particularly successful with many of these students. In AS examinations most students exceeded their predicted grades. A Level groups have been small, but recent results have shown significant improvement coupled with larger classes.

197. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. In all the lessons observed there was a clear structure and positive working atmosphere. Lessons are driven by the assured and confident delivery of both teachers and a fast pace of learning is achieved through question and answer sessions, which include most students. Where teaching is very good, students' learning is developed by the use of relevant real world examples – in particular the current trials and tribulations of Leicester City FC. In a very good lesson on marketing strategies, the understanding of Year 13 students was very effectively developed and students were then able to think of their own very good examples such as the complex pricing structures for train journeys. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which is communicated confidently allowing students to make progress by feeling secure. Oral feedback is constant and assists rapid learning.

198. Opportunities for students to develop as independent learners seem to be less well-developed. For example access to the internet is very limited and the department is unusual in that it does not have its own computers for students' use. However, access to bookable ICT rooms is much improved this year. While teachers give very effective real world examples to enhance learning, students' own experiences are less likely to have an impact on their learning. The marking and assessment of students' work varies in quantity and quality, teachers tend to rely on oral feedback to elaborate on numerical marks and brief comments.
199. Students have a high regard for both teachers and one volunteered that the atmosphere in lessons created by both teachers and students is "very friendly" giving them the confidence to make good progress. They appreciate the efforts made by staff to keep them on track, and they are aware that failure to attend or carry out work will be followed up. Students respond well in class, and relationships between students and teachers are good. Students are given clear oral feedback on their work and the requirements of the examination are understood. For example, in one lesson very clear guidance was given to students on the difference between answers that had been awarded different marks based on exam board criteria. The head of department's considerable experience as a senior examiner is very beneficial to students understanding.
200. The leadership and management of the subject are very good with the two teachers forming a powerful team with different but complementary strengths. The subject leader provides very good support for less experienced staff. The department should continue to develop a wider range of teaching styles to give opportunities for all students with different learning preferences and further develop the use of ICT to assist students to become independent learners. Material was seen that had come from business education web sites, but it had been found by the teacher. Students should be encouraged to seek out more material for themselves.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good attitudes of students in lessons and positive views expressed in discussion.
- Very good challenge and inclusion provided by the best teaching.
- Good leadership and management, with a strong commitment to improvement.
- A very good choice of courses to meet the individual needs of students.

Areas for improvement

- A Level results, which were disappointing in 2002.
- Some teaching which, while generally adequate, does not strongly promote independence or inclusion.
- The sense of responsibility for their own learning of some Year 12 students.

201. The GCE A Level results were average in 2001, with students achieving satisfactorily in comparison with their other subjects. The college was disappointed with the 2002 results, as lower proportions of students gained A and B and A to E grades. A major reason was that few students managed to reproduce in the written papers, the standards that they had earlier shown in coursework, the grading of which was accepted by the examination board as accurate. There was also some disruption in teaching as well qualified and experienced staff left the college to take up more senior positions elsewhere.
202. The standards shown by current students are average, matching those shown in the coursework of earlier students and A Level results before 2002. In Year 13, most students taking the Computer Studies course have a sound grasp of the principles of computer logic and the programming languages with which they work, are able to explain how a computer operates and identify the functions of specific components. Many have good skills in binary arithmetic. Most ICT course

students can identify problems and solutions when for example, designing a database to help a parcel delivery company to carry out its operations. They have a sound understanding of the systems that they work with in for example, comparing an information system with a data processing system. Most students are achieving satisfactorily in maintaining the standards with which they entered their courses. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but achieving much as would be expected. In the ICT course for example, most are building upon existing spreadsheet skills, by beginning to use more advanced ones, in work that is preparing them for designing systems to meet specific requirements.

203. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In a few lessons they are good. In the best lessons very good planning promotes continuity and pace in learning. Activities have considerable challenge and teachers' probing questions enhance this and succeed well in prompting students to improve partial, or incorrect, answers. Teachers ensure all students are involved in lessons by balancing the acceptance of volunteered answers and contributions to discussion, with questions directed at individual students. In lessons which are satisfactory activities are appropriate and questioning sound, but teachers limit the independence of students by providing ideas and answers for them, rather than challenging them for their own. Sometimes, individual students are allowed to be less involved in discussions than they could be.
204. Students have positive attitudes to their courses. In lessons, they show considerable interest and effort. Most respond well to opportunities to discuss, or answer questions, sometimes posing thoughtful ones of their own. In groups in which there are very few females, or students from different ethnic groups, those who are in a minority are usually very well involved in activities. A few Year 12 students have yet to develop the sense of responsibility for their own work that is necessary in the sixth form. This leads on occasions to the quality of their learning being less than intended, due to them not having completed important preparatory work. Students' views of the subject are also positive. The great majority are happy with their courses and the guidance they were given when choosing them and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
205. The subject is well led and managed in the sixth form. As a result, it offers very good curricular provision and succeeds in attracting and retaining an above average proportion of students to its courses. In offering A Level courses in both computer studies and ICT and in giving good guidance to students on which to choose, the subject provides effectively for individual needs. The department has a strong commitment to identifying and addressing the reasons for the disappointing 2002 examination results. It has been in close consultation with the examination board and has already introduced several measures. These include an increased focus on helping students to improve their theoretical knowledge, after identifying this as a relative weakness, and improvements in resources. The department acknowledges that the level of staff expertise is not as high as previously and is taking effective steps to improve this, including enlisting former teachers to assist in training.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Dance

206. Dance was sampled in the sixth form. The standards of attainment at A Level are now above average. This represents very considerable achievement on the part of the students and the teachers. This trend is being supported by several developments, one of which is the class for higher attaining students who have just come into the college, which is held after college one night a week. Teachers are very knowledgeable and their approach is rigorous and precise, demanding and yet friendly. As a result the students learn well and enjoy their work. The teachers work very well together for the best benefit of the students, and the effects of this generous approach can be seen in the improving results.

Performing arts: advanced vocational diploma

207. The diploma in performing arts was sampled in the sixth form. This course has been developed in response to the college's designation as a specialist Performing Arts College. It is very popular and provides students with a wide range of skills and experiences not readily available elsewhere. It is in this course that the full value of the integration of all the disciplines on offer in the faculty can be most easily seen. Students learn aspects of classical ballet and of chorus line routines, they learn about the history of music hall and variety shows, they learn to sing, play instruments, devise costumes, lighting and staging, and crucially, how to charm and engage an audience. They thoroughly enjoy all this, and one of the measures of their commitment is their level of attendance at extra-curricular activities. For instance A Level students devised a fund-raising production in response to last year's *Children in Need* appeal. This year, three students from the course have planned, choreographed, staged and taught the routines for this year's response to the appeal, and it says much for the teaching on the Summer school held in August on Performance Arts, that these students can sustain the interest and commitment of about forty other students while teaching complicated dance routines. The leadership and management of this innovative course are very good indeed, and enable students to take advantage of all the best that the college has to offer.

Art

The provision in art is **good**

Strengths

- The combined skills and expertise of teachers across a range of disciplines
- Very good examination results;
- The quality of work in sketchbooks;
- Good and very good teaching that has led to improved standards;

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to communicate critically and analytically;
- Planning for and teaching of key skills.

208. The overall results in recent years have steadily improved. The 2001 A Level results were well above the average. In 2002 the results were also very good. Half of those who were entered attained either A or B grades. Most students who choose to take art have previously attained above average standards in art, textiles or graphics courses in addition to a wide range of other courses. In relation to their GCSE results many students did better than might be expected; this shows good achievement. A high proportion of students who begin the AS course continue, take advanced level examinations and go on to degree courses in higher education or courses at colleges of further education. They are prepared well for the next steps in their education.

209. Students can select from a range of art disciplines and these include ceramics, print and textiles, painting and drawing. They also complete a written study that draws on the contextual factors that affect artists' work. The standard of work by students currently in Years 12 and 13 is quite mixed with some higher attaining students (mainly females), on track for very high grades and some lower attaining students (including a high proportion of males) making sound progress. In the groups overall standards are above average. Students achieve well relative to their various starting points.

210. Standards of practical work - the technical and expressive skills - are particularly strong and some portfolios and sketchbooks contain excellent examples of drawing and painting from life and imagination. Students' gain a great deal from demonstrations and being shown examples of finished work. It helps them see possibilities for their own work and reinforces the value of the preparatory work in shaping final solutions. Technical skills used in ceramics are very strong, for example where students inlay different coloured clays and use relief techniques to explore the themes and styles of art nouveau. In discussion some students were able to suggest ways in which the

techniques they had so carefully reproduced on a small scale could be used in large-scale pieces. However, in the main students were not confident communicators. They did not argue convincingly and authoritatively the connections between their own and others' work nor demonstrate the level of intellectual curiosity that might be expected at this stage.

211. Teaching and learning are good overall. The strengths of teaching are in teachers' very good subject knowledge and their wide range of specialist skills. This expertise is used very effectively to guide and advise students on how best to meet the examination requirements and prepare application forms and attend interviews for acceptance onto courses in further and higher education. Students learn well and the assessments of their work, together with very good tutoring, gives them a clear idea of how they are achieving and where improvements can be made. However the overall curriculum and teachers' lesson plans do not give enough attention to how key skills are to be taught and developed within the subject. Opportunities were missed to challenge students to give extended oral and written comments, as a way of strengthening the decisions they make in their practical work, and fostering higher levels of intellectual and creative development.
212. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Examination results over recent years have improved, recruitment is sound and improvement since the last inspection is good. A comprehensive range of assessment information and data is generated but the underlying messages for planning the curriculum, for teaching and learning and the gender imbalance need to be pursued rigorously.

Theatre studies

The provision in theatre studies is **very good**

Strengths

- Standards are above average
- The teaching is very good overall
- Students have excellent attitudes and work very hard

Areas for improvement

- Students could be more aware of how well they are doing

213. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is average, though this shows improvement over the last two years. Attainment in AS and A2 examinations are above average, and in the work seen they are showing every sign of being well above average in the next set of examinations.
214. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and are committed to the personal development of the students, and to the realisation of their full potential. They take pains to ensure that students are required to use all their prior knowledge as a basis for building on new knowledge, and they have extremely high, but often unspoken, expectations of wit and success. Teaching generates intelligent and independent use of knowledge gained. When encountering Stanislavski and the approach to sub-text, or sub-plot, students could only "Yes" "No" and "Oh" as the dialogue. They used their particularly acute understanding of how to construct a scenario, and in pairs or threes produce scenes of couples choosing furniture or arguing about the channels on the TV, or a threesome of girls trying on clothes in fashion shops. There were absolutely accurate and sometimes hilarious. The assessment procedures in the department are very good and the results are used to plan work for each pupil within the general task though sometimes students are not fully aware of just how well they are doing.
215. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are excellent. They work very hard taking significant levels of responsibility for their own learning, and often for that of other, younger students, they are conscientious about their homework, as they realise its value often using the internet wisely and well, they have a very real sense of the corporate nature of performance, and they are totally

committed to what they do. They study texts with an informed enthusiasm, and their translation of the written word into character, tension, and visual stimulation is very good. This was seen in a study of Shakespeare's Othello when pairs of students played out the discussion between Iago and Rodrigo as to how the latter had been entranced by Desdemona, while at the same time deciding which parts of the dialogue could be cut without distorting or losing the meaning. They did this difficult job with sense and style.

216. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The work is very well planned and led, the curriculum is broad, and the extra-curricular activities which are available to the students because they work in the performing arts faculty make a very significant contribution to the vision and experience of the students. Improvement since the last inspection, therefore, has been good.

Music

Overall the provision in music is **outstanding**.

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic and inspirational with excellent subject knowledge
- Students' access to excellent resources particularly the music technology and recording studio which improves the quality of their learning
- There are excellent relationships between staff and students

Areas for improvement

- The provision of soundproof accommodation and areas for individual musical study to increase opportunities for students' independent learning

217. The college offers courses in AS and A Level music and music technology. These are in addition to courses in Theatre Studies and Performing Arts which many talented musicians choose to take. In 2001 results at A Level music were below the national average, but students gained results that were similar to the other subjects that they studied. The current picture, however, is much healthier with excellent teaching resulting in much higher standards. All students completed the AS course and all but one continued with the subject into Year 13. It is very rare for a student not to complete a course. Numbers choosing to study the course are relatively low considering the high take up of music in Years 10 and 11, but many continue with music as a recreational activity.

218. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students achieve well and are doing better than expected considering their wide variation in musical standards when they start the course. Students are encouraged to develop their skills in a variety of styles both traditional and modern. The college financially supports a large number of students having instrumental lessons from a team of twenty visiting tutors. Performance standards are very high as was demonstrated by one Year 13 boy who skilfully and very musically performed an extended jazz improvisation of "Fly me to the moon". Two trumpet players also showed high levels of musical ability as they played the first movement of a major concerto. Written work, though sometimes less impressive than performance skills, shows a well developed understanding of how to evaluate a variety of musical characteristics and styles. Students in Years 12 and 13 have good speaking and literacy skills and express their understanding clearly and in detail when answering spoken or written questions. Their numeracy skills are also well developed. Students are very proficient in using information and communication technology; they use score writing and sequencing software very well and there is much use of the internet to research a variety of projects. Students on the music technology course use the recording studio very well; as was seen in one Year 12 lesson when the students learned the lyrics and melody of the song "Johnny be good" performed it with guitar, bass and drums and then mixed the recording of their performance all within sixty minutes.

219. Resources are excellent. There is a fully equipped recording studio and computer suite providing the opportunity for students to compose and develop sequencing and score writing skills. The accommodation is very good but because so many students take part in performing arts activities there is incredible demand for performance spaces and individual practice areas. None of the teaching rooms are soundproof and this occasionally results in noise from other areas disrupting learning. For example, in one Year 13 lesson students were carefully analysing an extract from Haydn's "Creation" but were interrupted by the sound of "Paranoid" by the rock group Black Sabbath being played by instrumentalists in the next room.
220. Students learn extremely well because the teaching is excellent. Teachers are inspirational musicians and use their own skills brilliantly to demonstrate musical concepts to the students. Lessons consist of highly organised and tightly planned teaching which is specifically geared to making students aware of, and progressively responsible for, their own learning. Students respond very positively and pose questions of their own to ensure that they fully understand what is being taught. Relationships between staff and students are excellent in all lessons creating an excellent atmosphere for learning. Teachers regularly take opportunity to build in moments for reflection on some of the spiritual and moral issues that arise from the work. They keep a sharp focus on the skills which students need to master, how they will be assessed and ensure that tasks are constantly challenging. Students receive careful guidance and their progress is effectively monitored.
221. Excellent use is made of the very talented technician both within the recording studio and as a provider of high quality teaching resources. Practical sessions are very well planned and organised. Students are provided with excellent practical worksheets and a range of well thought out questions. The result is that students work quickly through a variety of interesting and valuable projects, extending both their practical skills and their appreciation of wider musical aspects. Because of the growing number of students studying the performing arts within the college there are not enough areas such as practice rooms for students to improve their independent learning and this is beginning to make individual study difficult.
222. The leadership and management are outstanding. The staff team are highly skilled and work well together. Results are analysed well and data is used to ensure future success. The documentation and assessment procedures are good and ensure students make good progress through regular monitoring and target setting. As there were no separate judgements made about sixth form education at the time of the previous report it is not possible to comment fully on progress since then. However, the impact of specialist arts college status has significantly improved every aspect of the provision for music.
223. The department provides an invaluable dimension to the cultural life of the college. The subject has a very positive impact on the ethos and atmosphere of the college by fostering students' self esteem, awareness and respect for others. Students are encouraged to use their musical skills in many ways throughout the college and willingly undertake these roles. For example in a Year 11 core arts lesson two Year 13 students helped the teacher with the singing and accompanying and acted as excellent role models. Many past students have been successful in gaining places in music colleges and careers in the profession. Currently seven past students are teaching music in Leicestershire colleges. The involvement and appreciation of students, parents, governors and the local community is a particular strength. The extracurricular contribution of music and performing arts to the enjoyment and achievement of students is outstanding.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Overall, provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Student attitudes are very good and support learning very well
- In the lessons seen, teaching is good and has a positive effect on student attainment

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology should be more extensively planned for within schemes of work to develop higher order skills in the subject
- Student performance data should be more rigorously used and the means by which targets are to be achieved made more explicit for students to assist learning and attainment
- Developing literacy and numeracy skills

224. The department offers the subject at both AS and A Level, and both options were inspected. Results at GCE A Level in 2001 were below the national average in terms of A and B grades and the overall A to E pass rate, although average point scores were better. A similar picture is indicated by the 2002 results though comparative national data is not yet available. This represents unsatisfactory achievement based on attainment on entry and students generally perform less well in this option than in many other A Level subjects. The department is aware of this but is yet to develop strategies to raise attainment.
225. At AS level, results in terms of A and B grades were also below the national average in 2001 and this pattern appears to have been repeated for 2002 with a high proportion of students achieving grade D or less. This however represents satisfactory achievement based on attainment on entry to the sixth form.
226. Students report that they are satisfactorily supported in their studies but would appreciate greater written and oral guidance in terms of what they need to do to improve. Almost all students complete their chosen courses and a relatively small proportion of students continue with their geography studies on leaving the college.
227. In the work seen, students are making satisfactory progress in each of the options. Students' knowledge and understanding are average in both of the options. Their research skills are making steady progress in terms of information finding and numeracy skills are generally at least satisfactory with more able students confident in both identifying and applying statistical tests, for example in dealing with aspects of correlation. Literacy is a barrier to learning for some students, particularly in the AS programme and the department should focus more sharply on developing literacy skills for lower attaining students.
228. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some good teaching was observed during the inspection period. Schemes of work match the needs of learners appropriately although there is relatively little use of information and communication technology. In the best lessons, there is clear feedback on how well students are achieving and expectation carefully set in terms of external examination requirements. The good questioning aids the progress of learning, for example in a Year 12 lesson dealing with processes of change in the countryside.
229. Curriculum enrichment is good with opportunities to explore the human and physical geography of Europe and North America in more depth via visits to Barcelona and New York. Students also appreciate the opportunity to attend course conferences. Overall, the curriculum is well balanced but is insufficiently challenging in relation to the applied use of higher order ICT skills for modelling and data analysis purposes.
230. Attitudes are very good. Students are keen to learn and are prepared to persist in improving the quality of their work through re-drafting and refining the content of course work on sporting events and inward investment. Some groups have been merged to ensure viable group sizes and this has affected the interest and motivation of a minority of students interviewed.

231. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Resources are adequate and there is a good range of texts, although students expressed concern at the cumulative cost of purchasing books in this and other subjects. The match of staff to the curriculum is good in terms of the qualifications and experience of staff. The department makes use of a wide range of performance data but has not yet linked this more closely to curriculum planning and developing strategies for raising standards.

History

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

Strengths

- Good relationships with students
- Good subject knowledge and assessment practice supports students' learning
- Raised student achievement in GCE examinations

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that examples of good practice seen through the inspection are spread throughout the department
- Ensure there are sufficient history books in the department and the library to support students' independent learning

232. Results for GCE A Level entries in 2001 were above national averages. This represents a continuing three year trend of significant improvement. It has been broadly sustained in the 2002 A and AS examination results. This indicates good progress in the light of students' prior attainment.
233. Standards in Year 12 are currently in line with national expectations. For example, students were seen confidently feeding back to the class the fruits of their research into different aspects of Civil Rights developments in the USA. Higher attaining students showed a growing awareness of the complexity of these social changes. They noted, for example, that within the black community there were diverse experiences and challenges to segregation taking place side by side. All students in this class revealed a sound grasp of key issues and major developments, confirmed through their written work.
234. Standards of work of students in Year 13 are broadly in line with national expectations. In one lesson, their brief presentations of changing attitudes within the British Empire through the tumult of two world wars showed a good understanding of how different countries were differently affected by their own ambitions in a changed world. In another Year 13 class looking at different perspectives on Stalin's rise to power, higher attaining students confidently challenged each other's interpretations of key sources of evidence about the death of Kirov. All students showed a sound grasp of developments and issues surrounding this event.
235. Overall, teaching is good, and students learn well as a result. Confident subject and syllabus knowledge, and detailed planning, allow teachers to structure and vary learning activities to promote good learning and high standards. Much effective use is made of ICT. For example, students are recommended relevant web sites to extend their individual research activities. Considerable staff time has been spent ensuring that teachers' notes are available for students on the college intranet, although much of this has been to compensate for a shortage of texts to resource the A Level modules studied. Teachers also support students through additional evening sessions.
236. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls, nor of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The department is well managed. Teachers have good understanding of the demands of the examination syllabuses, as seen in the constructive advice they provide through their assessment of students' work.

Psychology

Overall, provision in psychology is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and helps the pace of students' learning.
- Attitudes to learning are very good and this has a positive effect on the standards that students achieve.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are limited and this reduces the students' awareness of applied aspects of the subject.
- There should be a greater emphasis on using information and communication technology to enhance learning in the subject.

237. The sixth form offers opportunities to study psychology as a one year AS level or a two year A Level programme and both options were inspected. Results in the GCE A Level examination for 2001 were below the national average in terms of the proportions of candidates gaining a grade of A to C and the overall A to E pass rate. The numbers of boys taking the exam were relatively low and do not allow for meaningful comparisons between the performance of boys and girls. The 2002 data indicates that results are slightly above the national average when measured by the proportion of students gaining A to C grades which have improved significantly, together with the overall pass rate. Good progress has been made in raising attainment, despite some staffing difficulties. Psychology A Level is an increasingly popular option, but attracts mainly girls. The Department is aware of the gender imbalance but has yet to implement strategies to redress it.

238. Results in the 2002 AS level were close to the national average. The proportion gaining higher grades improved slightly in 2002. These standards represent satisfactory achievement when judged against the attainment of students beginning their sixth form studies. The department should continue to monitor the appropriateness of attainment on entry to ensure that both the AS and A Level programmes match the aptitudes of students.

239. In the work seen, the standards that students achieve are slightly above the national average. At AS level, students are beginning to appreciate that the study of psychology is the sum of its debates and are acquiring knowledge of individual differences and the distinction between biological and other models of abnormality. They cannot yet write extended analyses with confidence but their technical grasp and skills of note-taking and information searching are becoming increasingly refined, for example in work undertaken on anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. A Level students are also developing knowledge and understanding of the nature and causes of aggression and have at least a satisfactory awareness of the research theories which deal with, for example social psychological theories of aggression. They can discuss aspects of the debates on the relationship between behaviour and the media in a considered and relevant way.

240. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, for example in a lesson dealing with the relationship between the media and behaviour. This helps students to learn well. They were given a sound framework for both deepening their knowledge of relevant case study material and also acquiring frameworks for the effective evaluation of field studies. There are limited opportunities to deepen understanding through revision classes and visits to national conferences. At present, guidance does not focus sufficiently on the career paths within psychology and students are not given the opportunity to experience applied aspects of the discipline, for example within education and clinical fields.

241. Leadership and management are good and there is a suitable vision for the development of the subject. Schemes of work are well articulated overall but need to include planning for the use of information and communication technology. Induction arrangements are satisfactory and the

majority of students interviewed felt they were adequately supported in their studies and welcomed the fact that staff gave freely of their time outside lessons. Most students complete their chosen course. There are no specialist teachers of the subject and this should be kept under review if the department is to make further progress and continue to meet the needs of an increasing number of students who are opting for the subject.

242. Resources are well selected and of good quality and books are up to date. This supports learning well. The library is well used and higher attaining students are making increasing use of relevant web sites for their studies. The funding for the subject is however not sufficient to keep resources up to date given the continuing popularity of psychology in the sixth form.

Sociology

Overall, the provision in sociology is **good**.

Strengths

- Students' achievement from GCSE levels is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Year 13 coursework topics are very interesting to students
- Teachers' marking is regular, detailed and constructive so that students know how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Some students find it difficult to recall theory concepts learnt
- Computers are not easily available for use in lessons
- Students do not read widely enough to enrich their work.

252. Sociology is a popular sixth form option. The course is open to all students with appropriate GCSE grades although sociology is not offered at GCSE level. The A Level sociology results in 2001 were in line with national averages for the proportion of students achieving a pass and A or B grades. In 2002 results improved with all passing but fewer gaining top grades. In the AS examination, results were in line with national average points scores in 2001 with a fifth of students gaining the top A and B grades. In 2002, almost all students passed, with 10 gaining grades A and B, reflecting good improvement due to good teaching. The results, part of an improving trend, were well above the college average and indicate very good achievement over time by female and male students, with results often exceeding teachers' predictions.

253. Standards seen in lessons and work during the inspection were average for Years 12 and 13, in terms of the critical understanding of essential concepts and ability to evaluate. Current Year 12 students have made a good start, and in the two lessons seen, their achievement met average expectations. Their skills of sociological enquiry were developing well in their marked essays on the extent to which gender differences in contemporary UK are socially constructed. Essays showed good integration of personal, social, moral and cultural issues, although weaker students struggled to fully understand the nature versus nurture debate because of insufficient background reading. Male students' Year 12 coursework essays were of a similar quality to females', and, in lessons, there was no evidence that the learning of girls and boys or of different ethnic groups differed. No student had special educational needs or was identified as gifted in the subject.

254. Year 13 course work projects from last year were not available, but current Year 13 students are drafting proposals for an interesting spread of diverse topics such as gender differences in the family, and stereotypes of men's preferences for blonde women. In lessons, students gave good practical examples of factors leading to inequalities in the workplace. Their knowledge of research methods met expectations and most understood the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research. They developed good critical understanding of questionnaire design on measures of poverty but did not make enough use of ICT to draft and present class work or examine statistical data.

255. Teaching and learning of sociology were good overall in the small sample of lessons and course work seen, and students made good progress in consolidating theory and learning new topics. Teachers' good subject knowledge enabled them to explain concepts well, although students tended to rely on teachers to provide topical discussion material, and they did not read widely or use links with the community or work outside college enough. Students made good progress in lessons because teachers planned well for them to discuss challenging issues; this helped them sustain very good attitudes when working individually or in small groups, where they took on the roles of people in other cultures or those affected by absolute or relative poverty and made good progress in analysing the nature of different identities.
256. Teachers' marking of students' homework essays is very thorough and constructive, and using examining board assessment criteria very well to help students improve. Regular targets in lessons, particularly for weaker students would increase the pace of learning in lessons even more. Teachers set appropriate homework tasks to extend work in lessons by library reading and use of ICT for research but not statistical analysis.
257. The subject is well managed by an experienced teacher, and both teachers co-ordinate their areas of expertise very well. Given further stable staffing, the subject has good capacity to improve further.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The provision in English is **good**

Strengths

- Students' achievement is good; they are keen to learn and respond positively to teachers' advice and guidance
- Teachers know their subject very well and have a good understanding of students' needs
- Good resources enable students to research in the library and on the Internet
- Courses are offered in A Level English Literature and English Language and students are able to resit GCSE when required

Areas for improvement

- Some students' current learning is based on a weak foundation in literacy and this affects the standard of their work
- Some classes in Year 12 are too large to ensure full participation of all students in class activities

258. A Level results in 2001 were good in both English literature and English language. Nearly half of the students gained grade A or B in literature and all passed. In 2002, with much larger numbers, over one third gained grade A or B in literature and all passed. A Level language results have fluctuated, but the trend is one of improvement. AS results in 2002 were good in both literature and language and most students have now embarked on the full A Level course. More female than male students take literature and language but there is no difference in their results. Over the past four years, results have improved significantly. Most students start advanced studies in Year 12 with a good foundation at GCSE, though some students enter the course with an English grade that is below average.
259. The standards of work seen were good. Most students are self-assured in debate and explanation, though students, particularly in larger classes, can remain passive learners unless challenged. Students make very good use of the library and Internet facilities for their research and wider

reading. In this, they have ease of access and receive very good help from the librarians and technical staff. Reading skills are well developed, supported by very good teaching in interpreting and evaluating literary texts. Lower attaining students are clear about character and plot but some struggle with impact and effect. Higher attaining students explore texts in more detail, ably drawing out implication and subtlety. Most students reach good standards in extended critical writing and in their personal response, but only students with a confident grasp of the style of literary criticism gain the higher grades. For example, in the study of Ian McEwan's, *Enduring Love*, all students' work showed empathy and good understanding as a result of sensitive teaching of the novel, but only the higher attainers presented their writing with any critical edge.

260. The achievement of AS and A Level students is good. Students of all abilities make good progress during Year 12 and this progress continues into Year 13. Students become more confident in their reading and writing. They appreciate knowing how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. They respond very well to teacher guidance and support and are self critical of their work. Those who start the course from an average or below average level at GCSE English find the demands of advanced study very challenging. Students who have not previously gained a secure knowledge of the terms used in English and have weaknesses in basic literacy skills, find it hard work to step back to relearn or consolidate, and a slow process. Weaker students lack enough support with note-taking and basic organisation of their files.
261. Attitudes to the subject are good. Students are keen to succeed. They collaborate well and show respect for each other's opinions and work. Most take an increasing responsibility for their own learning. They value the efforts teachers make on their behalf and the high quality visits and activities outside the class that teachers organise.
262. Teaching is good and more often the lessons observed were very good. The teachers' good knowledge of literature leads students to understand the wider contextual influences on literary texts. The enjoyment and commitment of the teachers to the subject is a strong motivator for the students. Creative lesson approaches by teachers act as an excellent stimulus to learning. For example, the sensitive introduction to Margaret Atwood's poem, *This is a Photograph of Me*, involved a Year 12 class in silent personal reflection. From this, they produced high quality work. Teachers plan work thoroughly, though they sometimes do too much and then limit opportunities for students to use their initiative. Marking of work is usually detailed and encouraging. It is most helpful when it identifies the strengths of a piece of work and includes specific targets for the individual student. Teachers carefully monitor students' progress and have strategies in place to ensure that no one falls behind.
263. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Objectives and plans are clear. Administration is thorough and efficient. Staff work closely as a team. There is a strong commitment for each student to succeed. All examination results are carefully analysed and discussion takes place on how they can be improved. The department has been instrumental in developing and supporting a new media studies A Level course. This is now established with two staff qualified in media but, with large groups, it is still reliant on teachers from the English department to teach it. It is a subject growing rapidly in popularity and extends the range of provision available to students in the 6th form.

French

Overall the provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good or better.
- Teachers' linguistic skills are very good.
- The accommodation and resources are good.
- Cultural awareness is well integrated into the schemes of work
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Make more use of information communication technology to enhance learning
- Improve students' speaking skills
- Increase the number of students who opt to take languages in the sixth form

264. Most students who opt for French in the sixth form have gained either a grade A or B at GCSE. The results at A Level over the past four years have produced a good spread of grades ranging from A to E and in 2001 all students taking French gained a pass grade. Most of the students since 1998 have been female. The small number of entries make it difficult to compare results with national standards, but overall most students achieve well in the subject. Year 12 students have good listening skills and can understand lessons conducted by a native speaker of the language speaking at normal speed. In a Year 12 lesson most students were able to talk at a basic level about the underlying principles of the French educational system, when supported appropriately. In a Year 13 lesson students had a good knowledge of general and specialist vocabulary relating to environmental issues and had good listening and reading comprehension skills. Their awareness of grammar is good, but their speaking skills are less well developed. The course work showed a good progression from Year 12 to Year 13 when students are producing a wide range of accurate written work, including essays on French regions, the influence of television, healthy living and hunting.
265. The teaching of French in the sixth form is good or better. Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good. The teachers work well together and have a common approach to teaching and assessment which helps students to learn effectively. Teachers prepare lessons very well and the lesson aims are made clear to students. Teachers speak almost all the time in French which improves students' listening and speaking skills. The scheme of work is good and the topics covered motivate students to learn. Some use is made of information communication technology to enhance learning, but these opportunities need to be exploited more often.
266. Lessons are varied and conducted at a brisk pace, which motivates students to work hard to succeed. Grammatical patterns are presented and practised systematically, which helps students to fill the gaps in their knowledge. Good use is made of a wide range of teaching resources. Lessons are challenging with the result that students work effectively and with enthusiasm. Teachers frequently praise students for their work and correct mistakes sensitively which creates a very fertile atmosphere for learning. Relationships are very good and students are attentive and hard working. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.