

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSTHORPE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122079

Principal: Mr Trevor Arrowsmith

Reporting inspector: Mr Robin Coulthard
11746

Dates of inspection: 16th – 20th September 2002

Inspection number: 249629

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 13 - 18

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Boughton Green Road
Kingsthorpe
Northampton

Postcode: NN2 7HR

Telephone number: 01604 716106

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Fonville

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

The inspection contractor was:

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17237	Andrew Lovett	Team inspector	Mathematics		
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2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design technology Information and communication technology	Information and communication technology	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art	Art	How well is the college led and managed?
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education		
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	Geography	Geography Leisure and tourism	
15075	Bryan Goodman-Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	French	
10391	Valerie du Plerigny	Team inspector	Music	Drama	
10761	Patrick Willan	Team inspector	History	History Sociology	
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education	Biology Physical education	
23487	Patricia Kitley	Team inspector	Special educational needs	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities provided for students?
18072	Joan Stephens	Team inspector		Mathematics	
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector		Chemistry	
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector		Business education	
8076	Terence Bendall	Team inspector			
18663	Philip Burchell	Team inspector			How well does the college care for its students?

10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector			
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Kingsthorpe Community College is a mixed upper comprehensive school in the northern part of Northampton. The students are aged from 13 to 18, and 302 of the 1065 students are in the sixth form. Boys outnumber girls in every year group and their attainment is below that of girls. Some of the higher-attaining students in the catchment area, particularly boys, opt for selective education which is available in the town, and so students' overall attainment on entry to the college is below average. About ten per cent of the students are of non-white ethnic origins. The percentage of students from homes where the first language is not English is above average. No students are at an early stage of learning English. Overall, the students' socio-economic background is average, but most of those who go on to university from the sixth form are the first members of their families to do so. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average, as is the percentage of students who have special educational needs. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties. Twelve students have a statement of special educational need. The college achieved Language College status in 1999, and is working towards an amalgamation to become an 11 to 18 school in 2004.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The college provides a good education. Students' achievement is good in Years 9 to 11, as is the quality of teaching. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average overall because of the below-average attainment at the start of the year. Results at the end of Year 11 are well below average by national comparisons because a third of the students follow a work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and take fewer GCSE examinations. Standards in the sixth form are below average, but sixth form students' achievement is very good, as is the teaching. The principal provides good leadership and is strongly supported by the college leadership team and the governors. Leadership and management are good overall. The main college and the sixth form provide good value for money.

What the college does well

- Students achieve well, and do particularly well at GCSE in English, history, drama, music and physical education.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are very well planned and the good relationships between staff and students encourage the students to learn readily.
- The very good moral development promoted by the college leads to good attitudes and a strong sense of community.
- The college works imaginatively to provide all students with an appropriate curriculum, and makes good provision for students with special educational needs.
- The college is well led and managed.
- The college does very well for students in the sixth form.

What could be improved

- Teaching, though good overall, is not consistently so.
- Standards in information and communication technology, particularly in Year 9 and for the students who do not take the subject at GCSE.
- The college's overall attendance rate, and parents' support of the need for regular attendance.
- Standards in religious education, and students' opportunities for spiritual development in other subjects.

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 November 1996. Since then it has achieved good improvement overall. Good systems for monitoring and improving teaching have led to raised standards. The college has made good headway with raising boys' attainment, for example at GCSE in English literature. The provision for students with special educational needs is now good. The Code of Practice for students with special educational needs is now implemented, and exclusions are recorded and reported properly. Insufficient progress has been made in developing students' skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum. Religious education is still not provided for students from Year 10 onwards, and the requirements for collective worship are not yet met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	E	E	E
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	n/a	D	

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in English in the tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average for secondary schools in 2001. In mathematics and science, results were below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, that is those with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, results were very low in English and well below average in mathematics and science. National results for schools which admit students in Year 9 are not available. The school's trend of improvement is below the national trend, reflecting variations from year to year in the nature of the intake. Comparatively few students gain Level 7 or higher, reflecting the below-average range of attainment on entry to the school.

Some students follow a work-related curriculum during Years 10 and 11, and take fewer GCSE subjects. This lowers the school's overall results. The proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C in 2001 was below the national average, but average in comparison with schools where the students had gained similar results at the end of Year 9. The proportion obtaining five or more A* to G passes was well below the national average, as was the proportion obtaining one or more A* to G. Over the last three years, girls have done better than boys at GCSE. The college fell slightly short of its challenging target of 42 per cent A* to C grades in 2001. Pupils did best in English, drama, history, music and physical education, and least well in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, German and information and communication technology.

At A-level, students' results were below the national average in 2001, reflecting the entry requirements for the sixth form being lower than in most schools. Male students did slightly better than female students. Students achieve very well in relation to their GCSE results. Results were below the average for maintained schools and inline with the average for all post-16 providers.

Current work at this early stage in the Year 9 is average in English, mathematics and science, and below average in the remainder, except for religious education, where standards are well below average. In Year 11, standards are above average in drama, history, French, music and physical

education, and below average in science, design and technology, geography and German, and average in the others. Overall, students achieve well in Years 9 to 11.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Good. Students enjoy school and respond well to the good teaching. Students enjoy their involvement in practical lessons, but some boys find sustained concentration difficult. The imaginative, work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 retains the co-operation of some pupils who might otherwise become disenchanted.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The number of exclusions has fallen.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Very good relationships are a strength of the college and result in a strong sense of community. Students work well in groups. In general, however, students lack the confidence to express personal views at length and to think critically.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. In spite of rigorous efforts by the college, particularly in targeting regular absentees, attendance remains below average, although it has shown some improvement. Unauthorised absence is too high.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 9 to 11. In Year 9 teaching is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages. In drama, music and history it is very good. In other subjects, it is satisfactory, except for information and communication technology and religious education, where it is unsatisfactory. Teachers maintain very good working relationships with students and manage their behaviour very well. Lessons are carefully prepared and they have clear objectives which are made clear to students. Teachers employ a good range of teaching methods. Students participate readily and learn well in practical activities. They respond well to teachers' questioning but many are reluctant to speak at length. Teachers check students' learning effectively at the end of lessons by reviewing the work they have done. Some students find difficulty in learning independently. Overall, they are given too few opportunities to do this, and to use computers in learning activities in most subjects. Despite overall good standards of teaching, there is some inconsistency in provision, which is an area for development.

In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in geography, history, drama and music, and good in English, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education. In other subjects, it is satisfactory. Teachers maintain a clear focus on examination requirements. Students learn well, but some lack confidence and independence. They remain too dependent on the teacher and they do not develop the ability to think critically.

Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, form very good working relationships with students, and use targets and assessment effectively to guide students' work.

The teaching of literacy is well developed. Students learn key words and technical vocabulary in all subjects. Note-taking is proficient and well-practised. Skills in numeracy are developed satisfactorily in mathematics and in other subjects, such as science and geography, where calculations, graphs and the presentation of data are relevant.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The college offers students a suitably broad curriculum, enhanced by a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities. Statutory requirements for information and communication technology and religious education are not met. The work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is a strength in the provision for these students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students' needs are identified carefully, appropriate targets are set and provision is well organised. Work is generally well matched to students' needs in lessons and they receive good support from adults. TRACK and the Learning Support Unit have a positive impact on the quality of provision.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The college makes good provision for these few students.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Moral development is a strength that underpins all the work of the college. Social development is fostered well and cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities for spiritual development are unsatisfactory because the college does too little to develop students' reflection and critical thinking, and to provide a spiritual dimension in lessons. Also, it does not provide a daily collective worship.
How well the college cares for its students	Well. Procedures for child protection and for managing the behaviour of students are very good. Staff are approachable, and students' welfare is monitored well. Good assessment procedures enable students' progress to be checked and targets set for future development.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Good. The principal has introduced some very good systems and initiatives into the college. There is a strong team of senior managers, some of whom are exceptionally good teachers and role models for other teachers. Middle management is good overall, with some very good leaders of subjects and faculties.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The governing body is committed to the school and plays a major part in determining the future direction of the college. Governors are very well informed and have a clear idea of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Most responsibilities are fulfilled well. However the college does not fully meet all statutory requirements.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Steps to monitor what is working well and what needs to be improved have been rigorously drawn-up. The college reviews its work regularly, to ensure that its provision is appropriate for its students. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are good.

The strategic use of resources	Good. Funds are wisely used and linked to the priorities in the college development plan. The college carefully compares what it provides with that available elsewhere locally, and ensures that it gets good value for the money it spends. Resources are generally well used, but computers are not easily accessible to classes in Years 9 to 11, which limits the development of skills in information and communication technology.
Staffing, accommodation and resources	Staffing is unsatisfactory . The college has been unable to recruit the number of specialist teachers it needs in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Accommodation is mostly satisfactory . Recent additions are of high quality, but some rooms are too small for the groups who use them. Resources are satisfactory for most subjects, and the library provides a satisfactory range of resources for students to use independently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like attending college, behave well and make good progress. • Teaching is good and the college has high expectations of its students. • The college is well managed and led, and is approachable when problems occur. • The college helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children do not always receive the right amount of homework. • The college does not always work closely enough with parents and carers, and they are not well enough informed about progress.

Inspectors agreed with all the positive views of parents and carers. In addition, they found that, in general, homework is carefully set and contributes well to students' learning. The college provides regular helpful information about students' progress in reports and at parents' evenings, and maintains good lines of communication with parents and carers. Some parents do not support their children actively enough at the college, for example by condoning unnecessary absence.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM KINGSTHORPE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 302 students, the sixth form is much larger than most, but smaller than at the time of the last inspection. There are slightly more female than male students. Students come mostly from the college's Year 11 students. They study from a choice of 22 A-level subjects and a range of advanced, intermediate and foundation vocational courses. GCSE resits in mathematics and English are also available. Students' attainment on entry to Year 12 is below average. Many are the first from their families to study in a sixth form. About 85 per cent from Year 13 go on to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides its students with a very good education. Overall results are below average compared with other sixth forms, but average compared with all other post-16 providers. Results are better than might be expected from the GCSE grades achieved by many of the students before they begin their courses. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is flexible and provides well for the range of students' needs. Most students finish the courses they take. The curriculum is supplemented by good provision of extra-curricular activities. The sixth form is very well led, and managed efficiently on a day-to-day basis. It gives good value for money.

Strengths

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well in relation to their achievements at GCSE.
- Very good relationships lead to a strong sense of community.
- The use of data for target setting and close monitoring of students' progress is very good.
- Students' very good attitudes mean that they are very well motivated, cooperative and work hard.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.

What could be improved

- The consistency of teaching across the curriculum and the sharing of best practice.
- The use of information and communication technology, which is not planned or effective in all subjects.
- The provision for religious education.
- Routines for checking attendance at lessons, registrations and assemblies, which are not tight enough.

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and students are very cooperative. Current standards are above average and generally students achieve well.
Biology	Satisfactory. Results are below the national average but rising steadily. Marking and written feedback need to provide students with more guidance on how to improve.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Students are achieving as would be expected from their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some is very good. Students enjoy the subject.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Standards are below average, but are gradually improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but students need more chances to work independently.
Business studies	Very Good. Standards are above average and results show considerable value-added from GCSE. Teaching is very good and the curriculum is enlivened by educational visits and visiting speakers and very good opportunities to use computers.
Computer studies	Good. Results were above average in 2001. Teaching is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and provide good individual assistance. The scheme of work is suitably challenging.
Leisure and tourism	Good. Standards in examination results are consistent and rising. Students learn very well because of very good teaching. Teachers know their subject very well and have good understanding of their students' learning needs.
Physical education	Very good. Standards are above the national average. Very good teaching is leading to very good learning, and students achieve very well in relation to their attainment when they start the course.
Art and design	Very good. Students achieve well in relation to their starting points. Teaching is of high quality and leads to very good results. Students enjoy their experience, but make too few educational visits. Computers are insufficiently used.
Drama	Very good. Students make very good progress because of very good teaching. Standards have been above average for several years. Students learn well independently, despite having to use some inappropriate accommodation.
Geography	Good. Results were below average in 2001 but the achievement of current students is good in relation to their prior attainment and standards are average. Good teaching and students' positive attitudes lead to good learning.
History	Very good. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well in relation to their starting points. A good variety of learning experiences helps students develop an appropriate range of skills.

Sociology	Very good. Results in 2001 were well above average. Lessons have clear objectives and good pace and challenge and are clearly focused on examination criteria. Students use a good range of sources for independent research but computers are underused.
English	Very good. As a result of very good teaching, feedback and advice, students achieve very well. Theatre visits enrich the curriculum. The subject is very well led and staff work well together to improve standards
French	Good. Numbers are small but nearly all students pass A-level. Teaching is good and its effectiveness is increased by the availability of good resources and by the quality of the accommodation.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Staff know the students and their needs very well. The support and encouragement received from teachers enables students to tackle sixth form courses successfully. Information from students' past performance is used to set challenging targets and to stimulate their achievement. The college encourages students to have high aspirations. Pastoral support and welfare are strong. Students receive a high standard of advice about courses and careers open to them after A-level.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Organisation and management are very good in the sixth form. The senior staff and governing body fulfil their roles very effectively. Governors are conscientious and committed to the school. They monitor what the college provides very closely and have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not fulfil their statutory responsibility to provide religious education and daily collective worship.

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"> • The range of courses suits their talents and aspirations and that the college has enabled them to settle down well in the sixth form. • Teachers are accessible for help and students are well taught and treated as young adults. • Students are enjoying the sixth form and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are uncertain that the college responds to their personal problems or their views. • They think that the range of activities and enrichments is limited. • Some students do not feel well informed about their progress.

COMPARING PROVISION IN COLLEGES 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. Test results show that the attainment of students when they begin in Year 9, at the age of 13, is below average. In 2001, the results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average overall. Pupils did better in mathematics and science, where their results were below average, than in English. The results were well below average overall and in all three subjects in comparison with those of similar schools, that is with schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. This comparison includes schools who take pupils at the age of 11. Boys outnumber girls significantly in all year groups in the main college. Both girls' and boys' results were below the national average, with boys doing less well than girls in all three subjects. While students' achievement in lessons in Year 9 is good, the college's trend in attainment has been below the national level over the past three years, reflecting the lower levels of attainment of each year's intake. Results at the higher level 6 at the end of Year 9 are very low in English and well below average in mathematics and science, with few students attaining Level 6 or higher. Some potentially higher-attaining students, mostly boys, opt for selective education which is available locally. Results in 2002 were close to the 2001 average. However, national statistics for evaluating this year's results are not yet available.

2. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who gained 5 or more grades A* to C (39%) was below the national average, and the proportion who gained 5 or more grades A* to G (84%) was well below the national average, as was the proportion of students gaining 1 or more grade A* to C. National results have risen over the last five years, whereas the college's overall results have fallen. The school has developed a work-related curriculum for a third of its students in Years 10 and 11. Therefore, on average lower-attaining students take fewer GCSE courses than in most schools and this has lowered the college's overall results.

3. The results for students gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C were average in comparison with those of schools in which the pupils gained similar results at the end of Year 9. Results in 2001 were well below average both for students gaining 5 or more passes at Grades A* to G and 1 or more passes at A* to G.

4. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall against the targets in their individual education plans. Younger students are mainly supported in withdrawal groups and through literacy and numeracy Catch Up programmes. There is very good support that results in a high participation in work for older students following the work related curriculum in science. The students make good progress in English, modern foreign languages, history, geography and physical education because planning and teaching methods are well matched to the students' needs.

5. GCSE results vary considerably between subjects. In 2001, results in English language were close to average, while in the other two core subjects, mathematics and science, results were well below average. Students achieved their best results in drama, French, history, music and physical education. Results in English literature, French and history were also above average. They did worst in art, design and technology, geography, German information and communication technology. Current

work in Years 10 and 11 indicates that students' attainment in mathematics and art. Students' standards in the GCSE course in information and communication technology is now in line with national expectation.

6. The development of literacy skills is an important and continuing focus for the school, particularly as a means of raising the overall levels of attainment of boys. The school strongly promotes literacy through the National Literacy Strategy. Students' achievement in literacy in Year 9 is satisfactory. They develop the use of technical language through using key words in each subject. Standards of presentation are satisfactory. Writing frames are provided in some subjects, such as science, to help students structure their written work. Students do not develop their literacy skills enough through discussion. Most give only brief answers to questions and do not develop their speaking by developing their views at length or challenging those of others. Some students are not familiar enough with formal English in their writing or speaking. Numeracy is developed satisfactorily across the curriculum through the application of the National Numeracy Strategy. Numeracy skills are most consistently developed through science and design and technology. Evidence from a scrutiny of work and lesson observations at this early stage in the school year indicate that overall standards in Year 9 below the national expectation for students of this age.

7. In English, in Year 9, students achieve well. They learn to redraft work to achieve greater accuracy, and higher-attaining students develop a good sense of written style. Few are able to write or talk at length and overall their work lacks depth. As a result of the strong emphasis on the development of literacy, by Year 11 students achieve better-than-expected standards in neatness and spelling, develop more subtlety of expression and show an appreciation and enjoyment of literature. In drama, in Year 9, though standards are below average, students learn to reflect character through gesture and expression. GCSE results are very good. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Students work well collaboratively and can interpret mood and character to a high standard.

8. GCSE results in mathematics in 2001 were below average. A considerable improvement in mathematics recently means, however, that standards are now close to national expectation. Students can solve linear equations and represent data well, although too little application of mathematics means that students have too few opportunities to learn independently. A comparatively high proportion of boys have left in previous years without a GCSE pass in mathematics. This situation has improved now and current standards in Years 10 and 11 are close to average. Students use calculators confidently to solve quadratic equations. An emphasis on developing mathematical skills limits the amount of investigation that students attempt. Students' achievement is now satisfactory.

9. Students' achievement in science in Year 9 is better than in mathematics and matches the national standard. Teachers use good questioning to ascertain students' previous knowledge and develop their understanding in work on metals. A clear understanding of requirements for the end-of-year assessment helped the efficiency of students' learning. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly below the national average. In Years 10 and 11, students acquire good scientific knowledge, and developed their skills in literacy and numeracy well by tabulation and evaluation of evidence. Students developed skills in information and communication technology effectively in science through word-processing and experimental simulation.

10. Attainment in art in Year 9 is below expectation because some of the teaching is by non-specialists and the scope of work in Year 9 does not meet National Curriculum requirements. GCSE results have gradually risen since the last report. They were very low in 2001, but unconfirmed results for 2002 were higher. Standards are average in Years 10 and 11, and students make good progress from their starting points. Drawing is done more confidently than painting. In clay work, students show creativity and imagination.

11. In design and technology, standards are now close to national expectations, but students work only with graphics and resistant materials. Design skills are practised well and students learn an appropriate range of cutting, shaping and joining techniques. Results at GCSE were below the national average, which was an improvement on previous years. Standards are now average in Years 10 and 11, though they have been affected by difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers. Students produce well-designed plans, sometimes with the help of computers. They apply their creative skills well, for example when designing board games.

12. Standards are below average in geography in Year 9. Students lack some basic knowledge, for example of coordinates in map work. Work from last year indicated that they had too few opportunities to improve their subject skills over the year. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average. Girls did better than boys. Work in Years 10 and 11 is close to national expectation. Students' understanding is developing soundly, for example when considering the impact of various factors on migration.

13. Standards in history are below expectation in Year 9. However students achieve well when they develop their ability to weigh evidence by comparing the relative positions of different members of society in the eighteenth century. GCSE results were above average in 2001. In Years 10 and 11, students make very good progress as a result of the teachers' very good planning. They research topics well and present findings attractively, sometimes using computers. Their achievement is stimulated by educational visits.

14. Standards in information and communication technology are well below expectation for all except those on the related GCSE course. The use of computers is taught through all subjects of the curriculum to all students, but its planning and use are inadequate across the curriculum. Students carry out too much repetition of basic skills. Computers are insufficiently used for redrafting and research. Access to computers in some subjects is difficult. Students make good progress from a poor baseline in Years 10 and 11. They gain skills using a range of programs. For example, they use databases to store and process information. GCSE results were high in the two preceding years, but fell in to well below average in 2001, due to staffing difficulties.

15. Attainment on entry in French is very low, particularly in writing and awareness of grammar. Students achieve well during Year 9, particularly the girls, in both French and German. The quality of their written work improves and they use simple grammatical structures accurately. GCSE results in 2001 were above average, but no student gained an A or A* grade. By the end of Year 11, students can use basic tenses and write in styles such as letters and dialogues. Higher-attaining students can understand and pronounce French well, but middle- and lower-attaining students have considerable difficulty with pronunciation and grammar in both French and German, partly because some teachers do not use these languages enough to conduct lessons. Students achieve very well in Spanish and Italian, and they make a good oral contribution to lessons.

16. In music, students achieve very well in Year 9. They gain a good grounding in musical theory and suitable experience in performing and composing. Attainment is just below national expectations because of a low allocation of time. GCSE results have improved over three years and were very good in 2001, partly because students are encouraged to develop their individual strengths and interests.

17. Standards are average in Year 9 in physical education. Standards in Year 11 for those students not following the GCSE course are also average. GCSE results have been generally above average, and, in 2001, they were well above average.

18. Standards in religious education are poor. Students' knowledge and understanding are well below expectation when they enter the school. Students achieved satisfactory in the small number of lessons seen, but religious education is not provided above Year 9.

Sixth form

19. The college's A-level results in 2001 were below the national average for maintained schools. Male students' results were average and female students' were below average. In comparison with all providers of post-16 education, the college's results were average, overall and average for both male and female students. There is considerable variation between subjects. In 2001, results were very high in English literature sociology and economics, and above average in computer studies. In communication studies, German, history, mathematics and sports studies results met the national average. They were below average in biology, chemistry, music and general studies, and well below average in geography and psychology. Numbers taking some of these subjects were small for valid comparisons to be made. Numbers taking business studies and physics were very small, but students' results were above average. The college's overall results have risen each year since 1999, but there are as yet no national comparators for the 2002 results. Results in A-level vocational qualifications were above the national average in leisure and tourism and health and social care, and well below average in business education.

20. The college admits students to sixth form courses with lower GCSE grades than is usual for most other sixth forms. The college's overall A-level results have consistently been well above the level predicted from the students' GCSE results. A national survey of 156 schools found that the college did particularly well in enabling its students to do better than their GCSE results predicted. The findings of the inspection confirm that students achieve very well in their time in the sixth form. The standards attained by students currently in Years 12 and 13 are better than the expected levels for the courses followed.

21. In addition to the 15 subjects focused on by the inspection, inspectors sampled lessons in physics, economics, advanced vocational recreation, leisure and travel and tourism, music, performing studies, communication studies and German. Some of these groups are small and levels of attainment reflect the nature of each group from year to year.

22. At the time of the last inspection, above-average results were reported only in English and physics. Results and students' achievement have improved overall since that time. Above-average attainment in this inspection has been reported in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, business studies, computer studies, sociology and physical education. This indicates good overall improvement in students' attainment and achievement.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

23. Students' attitudes to college and to work are good. Most students are happy to do what is asked of them in lessons. They show good levels of interest and enthusiasm when the teaching is well focused on the skills and knowledge they need to develop. They enjoy active involvement in practical lessons, such as art, physical education and music, and with interesting tasks in history and English. Their view is that this is a good college with friendly teachers who take education seriously and want them to succeed, which motivates them to work. Boys want to do well but some find it hard to maintain their concentration in lessons that are uninspiring or are likely to highlight weaknesses in their literacy skills. Even higher-attaining boys find it hard to focus on distant deadlines. They work together well because the college encourages them to co-operate and work constructively in groups. This is reinforced through residential trips in Year 9, programmes of community service in Year 10, social skills development programmes in Year 11, and in lessons such as physical education and drama.

24. Behaviour is generally good. Most students behave very well in and out of lessons. A few occasionally disrupt lessons, spoiling other students' chances of learning. Imaginative efforts to provide a relevant curriculum for students with academic or personal difficulties have helped to improve the attitudes and behaviour of individuals who are likely to achieve poorly or are in danger of being

excluded. As a result, the rate of exclusion has fallen. The college is firmly committed to reducing its exclusion rate further and does all it can to provide support and work tailored to the needs of those who find it hard to accept the codes of conduct and curriculum followed by most students. Although the number of fixed-term exclusions is above average, exclusion is used appropriately. Very good records are kept, which is an improvement on the time of the last inspection. As the college's TRACK system (teaching and rewarding acceptable conduct at Kingsthorpe) is now firmly established, the college has scope for further use of internal exclusion and related sanctions that support its efforts to raise attendance and manage wayward behaviour.

25. Relationships are very good and help to ensure that the community is one where different groups of students are accepted without tensions and prejudice. For example, students work constructively with classmates from ethnic minority backgrounds, and students readily socialise together outside lessons. Differences amongst students reflect their varying degrees of willingness to work, to accept the code of conduct and to try their best. Other background factors, including ethnicity, do not have a significant impact on relationships. This is partly because the college's commitment to including and valuing all students guides all it does.

26. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students are generally considerate of each other, following the good example set by the adults in the college and the priority the college gives to their moral and social development. Their respect for other people's feelings and beliefs is developing steadily, but without the benefit of a full programme of religious education and daily assemblies. This limits the knowledge and understanding that students have of different views of the world and the rich, diverse range of individual experience. Forum, the college's programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, supports students' knowledge and understanding of personal and social issues well, but it does not foster personal reflection and self-awareness. Opportunities are overlooked to help students to develop a sense of curiosity by thinking about their own and other people's lives and beliefs and engaging in stimulating debate. In lessons, chances are missed to foster initiative, personal responsibility and independence, such as by asking students to plan, present and discuss their own work.

27. Attendance is below the national average, and is unsatisfactory. Too many absences result in poor progress, which affects the standards attained by some students. In each year group, a few students are often absent from college without good reason. Their attendance in previous schools was poor and, even when they make a good start in Year 9, they slip back into bad habits in spite of considerable efforts by the college to provide support and an appropriate curriculum for them.

28. The college's innovative range of modified curriculum programmes is designed to support and motivate students who find college difficult. Parents do not always give education a high priority, and so their children do not necessarily value achievement, in spite of all that the college does to stress its benefits and to raise aspirations through its contact with home. For example, the college gives strong support to any student capable of securing university entrance, particularly when no-one from the family has had experience of higher education.

Sixth Form

29. Students are very keen to succeed on their chosen courses. Their attitudes to what the sixth form offers are very positive. In the best lessons, they are highly motivated and willing to have a go, as in a very good English lesson where students were expected to interpret extracts from Chaucer without study guides and translations. Relationships are very good, with strong trust and mutual respect between teachers and students that build confidence about seeking help and aiming high. Students get on very well together, although the geographical spread of the site and small size of the sixth form block make it hard for students on different courses to come together as often as they would like. This has an effect on a few students on vocational and other non-advanced courses. These students miss

out on the example of more confident, independent students in knowing when to seek help and use initiative with work or within the college community.

30. Attendance is generally satisfactory. Students with vigilant tutors are very clear about the impact of absence on achievement. They value the active encouragement from their tutors to reach lessons on time, to organise their workload and to observe coursework deadlines. Students have the attitudes and skills expected to enable them to continue learning in adult life, but with scope for further development of their critical thinking skills and their capacity to work independently.

31. They enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example as sports prefects and members of the college council. They contribute well to the life of the college community through their positive influence on younger students, participation in activities outside lessons and their general work ethic. A few students would welcome a wider range of worthwhile activities outside lessons and better personal and academic support.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. At the time of the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching was judged to be sound, but 16 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory or poor. Since then, teaching has been a strong focus for development and it is now good overall. In the sixth form it is very good. The college acknowledges the beneficial impact on both recruitment of teachers and the standard of teaching that stem from links with the Universities of Leicester and Warwick in connection with the Graduate Teacher Programme and Post Graduate Certificate of Education training.

33. In the inspection, 96 per cent of lessons were satisfactory and better. In Years 9 to 11, nearly a quarter of lessons were very good and excellent, and six per cent were unsatisfactory. Despite the overall good teaching, teachers do not yet adequately share the best practice that exists in the college. The college has made good progress in tackling the underachievement of boys, but acknowledges that this remains an important priority for further development.

34. Teachers develop very good working relationships with their classes. This was an obvious strength during the inspection, even though it took place at an early stage in the school year. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and response. The students' good attitudes dispose them well to learning. As a result, behaviour is good and lessons have a good sense of purpose. Students are well motivated to learn and teachers communicate their own subject enthusiasms well. The good humour of teachers is a strong feature in many lessons.

35. Teachers plan lessons well. Objectives are made clear to pupils at the outset. A good mixture of teacher-led and independent activities, often in pairs or other groupings, is usually incorporated into lessons to maintain students' interest. Lessons often begin with a lively review of previous work. This sets the pace for the lesson and focuses students' attention. Time is carefully organised to enable students to reach the required stage by the end of the lesson. Lessons generally finish with a review of what has been learned, to consolidate students' understanding and to inform the teacher of what needs to be done in the next lesson. However, this proves difficult in design and technology, where the allocation of a single weekly period is too short to set up and complete practical tasks. The low allocation of time in music and drama in Year 9 causes a problem in maintaining continuity of learning, which cannot be completely offset by the very good teaching. In most lessons, time is carefully allocated to different activities to establish a good pace of working. Teachers generally adhere to strict deadlines to ensure that students maintained a good pace of work.

36. Students learn well. They respond well to the good teaching they receive, and are particularly well motivated in practical lessons. For example, students in a Year 11 science class worked in a leisurely

way when planning a scientific method, but made rapid gains in their knowledge when using equipment to test chemical reactions. Their learning became thorough and sustained during the practical work.

37. Students tend to remain dependent on the teacher and, while they learn readily and learn well, they do not develop enough independence in their work. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. However, students are generally reluctant to speak at length in lessons. They do not have the confidence to think critically and challenge views they hear. Teachers do not counteract this enough by challenging students to speak and by organising class debates. Similarly in written work, students are not confident enough in writing Standard English. Teachers' use of questioning does not always deepen students' insights enough and stimulate originality of thought. On occasions, however, questioning is lively and challenging, and stimulates very good learning. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson, purposeful questioning encouraged students to show confidence in deducing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from its context. Chances for developing students' oral skills are missed in the 'Forum' lessons, where students learn personal, health, social and citizenship education. The combining of three classes for many of these sessions reduces opportunities for the development of discussion and for students to share and develop opinions. The large groups inhibit students from expressing their views. For example, in a citizenship lesson, students were told what to think about current world events, rather than being encouraged to develop and share their own views.

38. Teachers make good use of key words and technical language in lessons, with important vocabulary displayed in subject rooms. Opportunities for using information and communication technology are too few and students do not develop the required skills across subjects in Years 9 to 11. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to use the Internet for research. Students not taking GCSE in information and communication technology do not use computers enough, and this impairs their learning generally.

39. Teachers give good individual advice to students in the course of lessons, but marking varies in quality between subjects. Overall it is satisfactory in Year 9. Where marking is good, for example in English, it is linked to clear criteria. As a result, students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their work further. In other subjects, marking is not consistently constructive and sometimes it merely acknowledges that the work has been done. Marking is better overall in Years 10 and 11, where teachers relate what is marked more clearly to GCSE and other examination criteria. Good examples of this were noted in art. More rigorous marking, for example in science, would extend the challenge offered to potentially higher-attaining students.

40. Homework is set carefully and in good time before the end of the lesson and is an appropriate extension of work done in class. Teachers prepare worksheets of good quality, which aid students' learning. Resources for learning are satisfactory and are chosen appropriately by teachers to stimulate students' learning.

41. In about a fifth of the lessons observed, teaching and learning were very good, or occasionally excellent. Where the teaching strengths were all combined in a single lesson, students made excellent gains in learning. For example, in a design and technology lesson in Year 9, students were to design 'pop-up' books. A lively presentation stimulated the students' interest and enthusiasm and established very high expectations for the lesson. Students were reminded of the requirement for accurate measuring and set to work enthusiastically and with suitable materials. The teacher encouraged the students and assisted those who had problems, using lively question and answer to check and extend their understanding. The students worked carefully and met the deadlines for the lesson. The well-planned lesson led to good gains in students' literacy and numeracy, and students produced work at a good rate that was above the standards expected for their stage in the course.

42. While the best teaching practice is not adequately shared amongst staff generally, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in only a small number of lessons. Examples were observed in French and in science, where students' attention was insufficiently focused on the lesson objectives, and the teachers lacked effective strategies for maintaining discipline. The insecure subject knowledge evident in two mathematics lessons taught by non-specialists led to unsatisfactory learning by students. In art, the teacher had limited knowledge of technical drawing, and the slow pace of a lesson failed to enthuse a Year 9 class, resulting in inadequate learning.

43. The use of learning support staff was observed in only a few lessons, because, at this early stage in the term, several new assistants had not received clearance to begin working. However, some very good practice was seen, for example in a Year 11 English lesson. Here the learning support assistant patiently talked through the lesson's objectives with lower-attaining students and helped them to sustain their effort well and to make excellent gains in understanding how persuasive language in a holiday brochure can attract customers.

44. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good and they learn well. Teachers receive detailed information, including targets, for those pupils with an individual educational or behavioural programme. Trained learning support assistants now work closely with subject teachers. This has done much to improve provision for these students since the last inspection. Departments can also use the college's computer network to access more detailed information on the students' needs. Some departments, for example, geography and physical education, make good use of this information to prepare well-targeted resources that support students' learning. When teaching methods or learning materials are not suitably adapted to students needs, as is sometimes the case in science and design and technology in Year 9, and social studies and information and communication technology, students' work is of a lower standard and often left incomplete. The college has identified the use of learning support assistants in classes as an area for further improvement. Pupils are well supported by an experienced team of adults in the Learning Support Unit and TRACK. They show great skill in managing students who cannot cope in some or all lessons. Students work to a strict timetable that is designed to help them return to mainstream lessons. However, a weakness in this provision is that specialist teachers do not always set and explain work at an appropriate level for students with special educational needs.

Sixth form

45. Teaching is very good in the sixth form, where nearly four fifths of lessons were good and better. The proportion of good or better teaching was higher than in many schools. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

46. The particular strengths in teaching were the teachers' subject knowledge, and their effective planning for lessons, linked to very high expectations of students' response and effort. Students develop their skills very effectively and acquire knowledge and understanding at a good rate. Teachers' very good relationships with students stimulate students to work hard. Lessons are clearly related to the requirements of the courses being followed. Students' learning is very good, as are their attitudes and levels of motivation. Teachers give a high level of carefully-targeted individual assistance to students, which enables all to make very good gains in knowledge and understanding from a range of starting points.

47. Key skills in literacy and numeracy and in using computers are taught well. Note-taking is practised regularly in all subjects. Homework includes research and resources are available in school for sixth form students to use information and communication technology for researching and presenting their work.

48. All of the better teaching qualities were present in a Year 12 lesson in health and social care. Students used computers to calculate the nutritional content of various meals. The teacher explained

the lesson's objective very clearly. Extra tasks were included in the planning for higher-attaining students. All were to use computers for calculating and presenting their findings. The teacher's well-paced explanations helped all students, including some who were new to the college, to make very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Students' learning was very good because they concentrated very well and were enabled to work well independently, but received careful assistance when they required it. A very good pace of work was maintained because the teacher set challenging deadlines and reminded the students of them from time to time. A brief review of learning at the end of the lesson confirmed understanding and informed the teacher of what was required for the next lesson. Homework had been carefully set.

49. In teaching that was satisfactory but had weaknesses, sometimes students copied information than researching it independently. Teachers in these lessons tended to accept the students' natural reserve rather than challenge them to be more active, particularly in discussion. Sometimes, because students were reluctant to contribute orally to lessons, the teacher worked harder than the students. In these lessons, the teachers did not stimulate the students enough and they became passive learners. For example, in a general studies lesson in Year 13, the teacher took too strong a lead when students were supposed to be developing their own analytical and thinking skills.

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

50. The college provides a satisfactory curriculum for all of its students, including those with special educational needs, and some of this provision is of a high quality. There are significant strengths in the curricular provision for English, history, music, drama and vocational education. The provision for information and communication technology in Year 9 does not meet statutory requirements because the required skills are not developed across the curriculum. The college has not improved its provision for religious education since the previous inspection, and this still does not meet statutory requirements.

51. The time allocation for subjects is satisfactory except in science, physical education and design and technology. In science, pupils in Years 10 and 11 taking the double award are allocated less time than the national average. The below-average time allocation in physical education has a significant impact on students' progress as some group sizes are too small for full games to be played in lessons. Single periods in design and technology give insufficient time for practical activities to be done well. The time allocated for music and drama is low, and students' learning is slowed by these subjects being taught in rotation which affects the continuity of the work they do. Timetabling arrangements in mathematics, devised in response to staff shortages, mean that nineteen classes in Years 9 to 11 are taught by more than one teacher. This has a detrimental impact on some students' learning, but the college is taking urgent steps to improve the situation. The development of students' literacy skills is good and is furthered in a good range of subjects. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory, but could be developed more systematically across subjects.

52. The curriculum for Year 9 is suitably broad and reflects statutory requirements, with the addition of drama. Students enter college with very different experiences and skills and not all have been taught all subjects since Year 7 by subject specialists. There is limited liaison with middle schools and teaching time is lost at the start of Year 9 while students are assessed. The college does not receive the academic records of a significant minority of students from their middle schools.

53. The college makes every effort to provide equal access to the curriculum for its full range of students. Since the last inspection, it has created an imaginative work-related curriculum to raise the

profile of vocational courses and enable more students to remain in full time education after the age of sixteen. In Years 10 and 11, a good range of options enables students to select GCSEs that include information and communication technology, graphic design, resistant materials, physical education, music, drama, art, dance and four modern foreign languages. However, no food or textiles technology options are offered. Students opting for the work-related curriculum study seven National Curriculum subjects at college and spend one day a week at a local college studying for certification to GNVQ level 2 in a variety of vocational courses. A small number of students are able to follow the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme or Key Skills Certificates in communications, numeracy and information and communication technology. Parents and carers receive clear information and support while choosing appropriate courses, and the college is flexible in allowing changes to be made at the start of Year 10.

54. The college provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and encourages students in all year groups to take part. There is a good range of musical activity, including college productions in association with the drama department, and a range of instrumental and vocal groups. The physical education department provides a wide range of sporting activities to supplement the limited time for physical education in lessons. Individuals and teams compete successfully at local and county level. The annual ski trip and other overseas trips are regularly oversubscribed, and many students take part in residential outdoor activity weeks. Students are able to take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to the Gold Award level. Music and drama students perform to different groups in the community. Local clubs use the college's sporting facilities, and Chinese and Arabic schools take place on the premises at weekends. There are some gaps in enrichment of the curriculum to raise students' aspirations. For example, there are few theatre visits and no visits to galleries to study art. The college does not promote its Language College status through Internet links with similar colleges abroad.

55. Careers education is very good. From Year 9, students are made aware of the need to plan for their futures. In Year 10, they undertake a community placement in local schools, or residential homes. Many local employers support work experience in Year 11. Students receive a good level of information about careers and further education from careers advisers from the college and local education authority, the college's careers library and relevant computer programmes.

56. Special programmes have been developed to help students who are disaffected, or have challenging behaviour, to remain in mainstream education. There is, however, room for further development in the way in which subject teachers liaise with staff in these units to provide and mark work to help students catch up and then return to lessons. Gifted and talented students benefit from the good provision for extra-curricular activities, and the college is in the process of identifying these students to provide further for their needs.

57. The college has made good progress in improving the arrangements for students with special educational needs since the last inspection, and the provision is now good. Their individual education plans have improved. Students with a statement of special educational need are given good help by learning support assistants. Additional group support for literacy and numeracy are having a positive impact on learning in Year 9. Insufficient monitoring of timetables takes place to ensure that time is not lost from the same lessons each week when students are withdrawn from classes for individual help in the learning support centre. The college provides the students with very good help with choosing a suitable next step when they leave the college.

58. The college makes good provision for the very few students whose first language is not English. None is at an early stage of language acquisition.

59. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is satisfactory. The course is well planned and includes appropriate elements of sex education and drugs awareness. The college has made a good start to teaching citizenship, following a survey of students' views and an evaluation of what was provided already across the curriculum. A citizen award was introduced in

2001. Values are reinforced through the study of responsibility, respect and community. There is a strong focus on moral development. Year 10 students spend five mornings on community placements. During the inspection week six lessons in PHSDE were observed, in which the quality of teaching ranged from good to unsatisfactory. The style of teaching, where three classes combine, is not conducive to stimulating discussions, and most students do not take an active part in these lessons. At present, 'Forum', the college's programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, supports students' knowledge and understanding of personal and social issues but does not adequately foster personal reflection and self-awareness.

60. The lack of improvement in provision of religious education since the last inspection has limited the developing its provision for students' personal development. Overall, the college's provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory.

61. The college's provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The college acknowledges that spiritual development and the provision of religious education have not been priorities. Although schemes of work are supposed to include opportunities for spiritual development, these are not monitored and are rare in practice. Within personal, social, health and citizenship education programmes such as Forum, staff introduce students to different viewpoints and beliefs, but without ensuring that they have the range of information needed to foster real understanding. This is because students do not have enough general knowledge to reflect on their own or other people's experiences. They lack the critical thinking skills to question what happens in their own or other people's lives. Without high quality religious education, assemblies and awe-inspiring moments in lessons, students have a limited sense of what is special and remarkable in everyday life and about themselves. This is evident in their responses in class.

62. The college's commitment to moral principles, including its welcome for all students, regardless of background, underpins its everyday life and routines strongly. Together with the example set through high quality relationships, this ensures that the college promotes moral development very well so that students are very clear about what is right and wrong, even if they do not always do the right thing. Strong behaviour management, attention to justice and fairness and a determined effort to include and meet the needs of all groups of students, result in a moral code which is a strength of the college. Whatever the standards of behaviour accepted elsewhere, students have no doubt about the college's high standards.

63. The college cultivates students' social development well. It makes very good use of high quality relationships to foster skills such as co-operation and a sense of fair play in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Year 9's residential visit to an outdoor activities centre makes an important contribution to students' social skills and teamwork. Opportunities for students to use initiative, take responsibility and have a meaningful voice in the life of the college are relatively scarce. Few students have any idea what the college council does or whether it is used effectively to consult them. Teaching styles reinforce students' reliance on the teacher rather than encouraging independence and initiative. This is partly because students enter the college in Year 9, so have less time than usual to develop all the skills needed to cope with the increasing demands of the curriculum and changing personal goals.

64. Students are taught to appreciate their own and other cultural traditions within subjects such as art, music, drama, history, and geography. In the main college, little else is done to foster better understanding of how different cultural heritages have contributed to science, technology and the arts and still shape people's lives. So, although the sense of local community is strong, students have less idea of what life offers elsewhere and few chances to visit galleries, theatres, museums and places of interest that might enrich their learning and raise their aspirations. In the sixth form, visits related to what is being studied, such as a trip to Berlin for history students, enrich their knowledge, understanding and personal development very well.

Links with the community

65. The college sees itself very clearly as serving its community and is good at encouraging students to take responsibilities to those who are younger or less privileged quite seriously, through the Year 10 community placement programme and sometimes through work experience. The college takes pride in trying to meet the wide-ranging needs of its students and to provide opportunities for them to develop skills as good citizens. Good efforts are made to work productively with other colleges and colleges in and beyond the area to ensure smooth transition from one phase of education to another and to help individuals who might benefit from work related placements, specific support, or preparation for higher education. Links are used well to develop a relevant curriculum for all groups of students, to guide sixth formers with course choices and encourage able students to consider applying to university. The college's diversity of needs and commitment to inclusion pose a particular challenge, which it strives to meet well using its community effectively. As yet, links with the wider community and those made possible by the Internet are underdeveloped. Groups who make good use of the college site after hours and at weekends are not having any significant impact on students' experiences and achievements.

Sixth form

66. The sixth form curriculum is good and offers a broad range of learning opportunities. The extensive provision comprises over 20 AS and A-level courses and this is complemented by vocational provision at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels. The college also provides GCSE courses in English, mathematics and human biology. However, the college is not providing religious education and in this respect statutory requirements are not met. In order to maintain a breadth of curricular provision, some courses run with fewer students than are generally needed for appropriate group work and discussion at this level. Other groups are large, for example in general studies and English. The imbalance of group sizes can result in inconsistent opportunities for learning within and across subjects.

67. Students in Year 12 value the help they were given when making sixth form choices. Continued support is planned for students with special educational needs who are taking both vocational and A-level courses. The college's continued commitment to wide curricular provision has improved the equality of access for students since the last inspection. This remains a strength of the college and provides students with very good opportunities for progression into the world of work, further and higher education.

68. The personal, social and health education programme now includes citizenship and forms the basis for monthly assemblies and weekly reflection time in tutor groups. Students also have the chance to discuss moral and social issues in general studies and a range of other subjects. Provision for PHSCE is better in the sixth form than in the main college because high quality teaching provides more opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences and to begin to think for themselves. Sixth form students also make more visits to places that extend their cultural awareness.

69. Many students take opportunities to develop personal qualities within the college organisation as sports prefects, or by helping support younger students. The college maintains very good links with other colleges, business and commerce. While some students value the period of community placement in Year 12 as a good opportunity to confirm career choices, some students question its value when it is not directly related to a personal interest. Careers guidance is very good and the college is responsive to students' views and has increased the time it spends on individual interviews.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

70. The college gives high priority students' care, welfare and safety, and has good policies and procedures in place. There have been a number of improvements to systems since the last inspection. The college's philosophy is to integrate fully all aspects of care and curriculum and, therefore, to give

much responsibility to tutors and teachers, who know the students best. This is working well in most areas, and very well in procedures for child protection and behaviour management.

71. Child protection procedures are well established in teachers' practice, comply fully with legislation and are well managed. Strengths are that the policy is clear, comprehensive and well understood by staff. Students know they can talk to, and trust, any member of staff and that appropriate action will follow. Designated teachers in each faculty ensure that complete records are maintained on the child protection register. They liaise with the responsible vice principal and outside agencies as appropriate. Training needs have been well thought out and are effectively met by both college specialists and outside agencies. Newly qualified teachers are inducted well into this and other systems of care.

72. Arrangements for students' health and safety are appropriate and very well managed. The policy and procedures are clear to all and work well in practice. Risk assessment has been carried out at whole-school and department level. The departments with potentially higher risks, such as science, physical education and design technology, have good procedures and records.

73. The very good relationships between students and staff reflect the college's high commitment to, and success at, supporting the personal development of its students. Students see staff as approachable, and much effective personal guidance takes place at an individual and informal level. Formal procedures for supporting students' individual needs and personal development are also good. Since the last inspection the college has introduced a number of changes with the aim of promoting greater integration between academic and pastoral systems. The creation of the new post of director of inclusion and special educational needs coordinator has begun to have a positive impact, with good potential for further development. There are extensive systems for mentoring and counselling in the college and outside support is well used. In addition some sixth formers provide valuable support to more junior students as mentors or in paired reading. Form tutors coordinate the monitoring and advice to students for both academic and personal development. In most cases this works well and so students know their strengths and weaknesses and feel well supported in all aspects of their progress.

74. The college follows best practice in promoting regular attendance. Staff make same-day calls to targeted families whose children are absent, provide rewards for good or improved attendance, and help students to catch up when they return. Staff record and monitor attendance carefully, checking and acting on patterns of absence and lateness. The college plans to introduce a new system of electronic registration to increase the reliability of its data and promptness of action. At present, key staff spend too much time tracking attendance. The college is painstaking in working with students and their families to reduce absences, even with families who are uncooperative.

75. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are kept informed at all stages of the child's education, and many attend meetings and reviews. Records for these students are comprehensive, and information is made available to all teachers. There are clear systems for identifying new areas of concern, and confidential information is handled sensitively. Links with outside agencies are extensive and well documented in students' records. The TRACK unit manager has created a whole college system of credits and debits to manage problem behaviour and reduce re-offending. The special educational needs base, learning support unit and TRACK provide welcoming and supportive environments. Students seen working in them were generally confident, and gaining in independence and social skills. Students' work is valued and displayed.

76. The extensive procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. As the data available about the students on entry is variable in quantity and quality, almost all departments set their own subject tests at the beginning of the autumn term in Year 9 to establish appropriate levels of expectation for all students. The data is used well by teachers for tracking students through their examination courses to ensure that they maintain appropriate levels of achievement.

77. The procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress are good, as are those for the support of personal development. The form tutors and head of year structures, together with the subject teachers and faculty structures, ensure that there are very many opportunities for teachers and students or students to discuss their work, assess the level which they have reached, and to set targets for the next piece of work, or time span. However, the use of these systems to guide curricular planning, and to ensure the systematic and constant support for students' progress shows an unhelpful variation across the college. The assessment and monitoring of students' performance varies from very close monitoring of work, and very good use of target setting, so that the students know exactly how well they are doing and at what level they should be aiming, to religious education, where work is not assessed.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

78. The college's good systems for care, welfare and safety extend to the sixth form. Provision for sixth form students is very well outlined for both students and staff in the clear and comprehensive sixth form handbook, which includes very good staff guidance on how to be an effective teacher and tutor at this level. The college's expectations are made clear on attendance and punctuality and sound advice is given on how to make the transition from AS- to A2 levels. The college's philosophy of inclusiveness and flexibility is consistently applied in the sixth form. For example, some lower-achieving Year 12 students are admitted to Year 13 courses, which is not the case in all schools. Students receive good advice and guidance when choosing sixth form courses, and good guidance is provided when they subject choices for Years 12 and 13 and also for post-18 studies.

79. The same system of giving first responsibility for students to tutors applies in the sixth form. Students feel that, while generally helpful, there are some inconsistencies of application. Some routines, such as attending registrations and assemblies are not regarded as sufficient priorities by all students. Attendance is not formally checked in all lessons.

80. Students value the enthusiasm and commitment of their teachers. Students know that help is always available, but are aware of the need for individual initiative. A minority of students do not make full use of the experiences and high quality support offered.

Assessment

81. The college makes very good use of assessment procedures to set targets for students' development and monitor their progress. GCSE data provides useful evidence on which to base predictions about students' subsequent achievements. The marking of work effective use of the systems for assessment and monitoring in the sixth form, so that students have more security of support, guidance, and feedback as to how well they are doing across their curriculum, and what they need to do next to make the best progress. The management team and the tutors in the sixth form ensure that the situation is monitored regularly, though there is still an inconsistent approach to marking. Overall, assessment procedures and the close monitoring of students' progress are important factors in securing achievement for students that is well above what might be expected from their attainment on entry to the sixth form.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. As at the last inspection, parents interested in their children's education make a good contribution to their achievements by supporting the college's work. Interest is lower than in the past and parental involvement with college is not as great as might be expected in spite of steps taken by the college to work with parents.

83. In general, the very small sample of parents who attended the meeting with inspectors and completed the questionnaire think that the college is doing a good job in supporting their children's achievements. In one or two cases, concerns were expressed about the quality of support for individual students, but inspection evidence shows that the college does all it reasonably can to help students whatever their needs and however great their difficulties. Occasionally, the reluctance of parents to work with the college to try to bring about a positive change in behaviour, attendance, or effort, makes it harder for the college to ensure that the student's progress improves.

84. The college gives regular, good quality information to parents about events and their children's progress. The prospectus and governors' annual report are reviewed regularly to try to ensure that they provide all the required information and that their main messages are clear to parents. Where appropriate, individual staff make telephone calls and home visits to try to build constructive relationships with families so that students' academic and personal progress are encouraged in every possible way. This sometimes includes discussions about a modified curriculum or how to set about applying for a university place. As a result of considerable effort by the college, links with parents are reasonably effective.

85. In spite of the college's best efforts to work with parents, the local culture is one where education is not always valued highly. The challenges of everyday life make it hard for some parents to respond to requests for their co-operation. Others are reluctant to be involved with college life and their children's education. As a result, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is unsatisfactory. This is seen clearly in the above average rates of absence, including truancy, accepted by some families. Some parents are unresponsive to requests from the college and outside agencies, including the education welfare service, to ensure that they come to college regularly and arrive on time.

86. Parents and students are pleased with what the sixth form offers and recognise the benefits of the range of courses offered and the additional opportunities provided by experience of sixth form life.

87. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are kept well informed at all stages of the child's education and many attend meetings and reviews. The learning support unit manager and governor responsible for special educational needs attend parent consultation meetings.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

88. Leadership and management of the college are good. Members of the college leadership team are very clear about what has been achieved in recent years and where further improvements can be made. The principal has shown good leadership skills. In partnership with governors, clear and appropriate aims have been drawn up to steer the college successfully into the next phase of its development. A strong and very effective team of key managers is in post to implement the plans, devise the strategies and to work closely with faculty and subject leaders. Some are very effective role models – as teachers, subject leaders and managers of whole-college initiatives, like for example students' personal development. Raising attainment for all students and continuing to find ways of remedying the underachievement of boys are at the centre of the college development plan, alongside the need to improve attendance. Teamwork is well established and valued. Staff share a commitment to the students and to what the college is striving to achieve.

89. Overall the management of the college is good. Tasks assigned to key staff, have been thoughtfully delegated and go far beyond merely being administrative tasks, which was a criticism of some senior managers' roles at the time of the last inspection.

90. The quality of middle management is good and some subject leaders are very effective indeed. The most successful leaders closely analyse data, monitor students' work, regularly observe teaching

and then work systematically and rigorously to put right what can be improved. A few have been frustrated in their attempts to make improvements by shortages of subject specialist teachers. Leaders of very small departments run the risk of professional isolation, being reluctant to leave teaching groups to attend in-service training and yet needing the opportunity to share ideas with colleagues.

91. The governing body takes the tasks of governance seriously. The governing body is closely following the plans for the reorganisation of secondary education and assessing the impact on the college and local community. Since the last inspection, governors have become more active and are now very closely involved in reviewing the progress the college is making, shaping and budgeting for future priorities. They supported the plans and targets that underpinned the successful bid for Specialist College status but have not been sufficiently probing in their monitoring of the progress in meeting them.

92. The work of the governing body is effective. In many respects governors share a good understanding of how well the college is progressing and are astute in their evaluations. Constructive use is made of assessment data to monitor examination performance and to determine how well students achieve. Governors are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They are kept well informed, although they are not linked with individual subjects and they do not visit lessons. Governors support school events well. While governors fulfil many of their statutory roles well, they have not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education and collective worship are met nor that all elements of the curriculum for information and communication technology are in place.

93. Staff use the information available to them to measure their own professional performance and to analyse how well they have enabled individuals and groups of students to achieve. This aspect of monitoring is used effectively both by subject leaders and by senior managers carrying out annual staff appraisals. The strategy for performance management is very good and undergoing modifications to link it more closely with other monitoring activities. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning rightly identified as a key priority for improvement in the current development plan, does not take place with the frequency and rigor envisaged when the programme was introduced. The quality of observations, the time for reflection and the routine and on-going evaluations of the impact of teaching on students' learning is patchy in some subjects and faculties. The intervention of senior managers, to guide and coach less experienced and skilled colleagues, is needed to ensure the programme is operating as it was intended and results in planned action. Overall monitoring is satisfactory with some considerable strengths as well as some weaknesses.

94. Since the appointment of the current director of inclusion as special needs co-ordinator last year, considerable improvements have been made in raising the profile of whole-college provision for students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented. A team of faculty representatives and learning support assistants has been developed to provide support for teachers and students. The experienced learning support manager has collated a comprehensive guide for support assistants that includes examples of how to monitor students' work. In-service training makes provision for all staff, including the learning support assistants. The governing body and college leadership team have incorporated the college action phase of the new Code of Practice as part of their plan for a fully inclusive college.

95. Resources for learning in the college are satisfactory overall, and have improved since the last inspection, particularly the quality and numbers of computers. Classrooms are generally well equipped. Resources to support learning are good in modern languages, business studies and geography and satisfactory in most other subjects except art, music, where there are insufficient books or computers to meet curriculum requirements. This affects students' standards. The number of computers has increased significantly, but is just below the national average for student numbers. Computers are not easily available to students in mathematics, English and several other subject lessons, though students

use four laptop computers for data logging in science. The learning resource centre provides a small but attractive area for quiet study, open reference and internet research on several computers. Staff are very helpful, and stocks of books are satisfactory. The small careers library is well stocked with material related to employment and university applications. Resources outside college are well used, including the nearby University

96. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, showing some improvement from the last inspection, particularly for English, drama, modern languages and science. Special needs staff now have a base. Sports facilities are good, although the sports hall is small for the number of students. Although student numbers have dropped in the past two years, several teaching rooms are too small for larger class sizes. The number of computer rooms has increased, but ventilation is unsatisfactory. The small size of the rooms means that whole classes cannot be accommodated at once and this limits the development of students' computer skills. Most areas of the college are well enhanced by good displays that support effective learning. The site is well-maintained and safe, but the design of the college with many separate buildings on the site produces unpleasant conditions in bad weather. The limited accommodation for music and drama and the lack of soundproofing limit students' learning in these areas. The college plans to increase accommodation for the library and information and communication technology as funds permit.

97. Financial management is very good overall, with some notable strengths, particularly in the maintenance of financial systems, where very good use is made of information and communication technology to monitor budgets and to produce analysis, reports and projections. All aspects of the development plan are costed and evaluated by the college leadership team and by the finance committee of the governing body, which plays a very effective role in this aspect of school management. Specific grants are used well. Use of Language College funds was satisfactory in the case of the capital grant. However, progress towards achieving all of its targets has been impaired by problems in recruiting staff. The principles and practice of best value are very well established throughout the school in the purchasing of goods and services and, for example, in the way that the school compares itself to others and evaluates the impact of sixth form courses against expenditure.

98. Overall, staffing is satisfactory. Teaching staff are well matched to their subject classes except in mathematics and design and technology, where non-specialist teachers are used and classes are sometimes split between teachers. This sometimes affects the continuity of students' learning. Higher-attaining Year 11 students have insufficient time to complete the syllabus in mathematics. Difficulties in recruiting subject managers in mathematics and design and technology remain, affecting overall co-ordination and monitoring, although in science and modern languages, the staffing situation has improved over the last two years so that the majority of staff deployed are both specialists and experienced, with no split class teaching required. This has improved learning and standards. There is no religious education specialist, and, in art, there are insufficient specialist teachers to meet curriculum requirements. In English, drama and humanities, staff expertise and allocation to classes are very good, and visiting music teachers are well deployed. The number of special needs staff is limited, and similar to that on the last inspection. Staffing training is well planned, and closely linked to college development needs. Newly qualified and graduate trainee teachers are well supported by colleagues.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a clear focus on students making the most of their opportunities and abilities, clear direction and effective strategic planning. Performance targets are set and results are closely analysed to guide future staff training and professional development. Senior staff carry out their roles very well and provide advice and guidance of high quality to colleagues and students. Sixth form finance is managed very well.

100. Governors keenly follow the effectiveness of the sixth form and whether it operates within its budget. They are proud of the sixth form and value the way students act as positive role models to younger students. Statutory obligations with regard to collective worship and the sixth form requirement of the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education are not met. Overall the governing body meets its responsibilities well.

101. A recent programme of monitoring looked closely at teaching and learning and successfully highlighted areas where improvements could be made and in-service training could be focused. Monitoring and evaluation of the sixth form are effective.

102. In the sixth form there is good financial management and cost effectiveness, and managers have coped logically with the transition to the new funding regime and its associated problems.

Resources staffing and accommodation

103. Resources for learning and accommodation in the sixth form are generally satisfactory. Staffing is good as there is a good match between teachers and the needs of the sixth form curriculum. All subjects are taught by qualified specialists. Students with special educational needs on vocational courses receive good learning support. Classrooms are mostly well equipped but some are cramped for the larger classes, such as general studies. Sixth form students have too little access to the specialist drama accommodation and the scope of their work is limited when non-specialist accommodation has to be used. Resources are satisfactory overall to support learning, but unsatisfactory in art because students have insufficient access to books, computer software and other materials. The sixth form block provides a central base of good quality, which has been extensively refurbished since the last inspection, but the common room is too small to permit appropriate socialising. Sixth form students have good access to computers for private study. Access to computers is difficult in some subjects. Students make good use of the computers in the learning resources area.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

104. To raise standards further, the principal and governors should:

- (1) in the context of overall good teaching, improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning by:
 - i) sharing the best practice in teaching more widely amongst staff, (*paragraphs 128, 132, 133, 137, 150, 166, 211*)
 - ii) developing further the teaching methods and lesson content that will raise the attainment of boys, (*paragraphs 1, 6, 23, 33, 88, 108, 113, 116, 124, 126, 153, 161, 163, 184, 194*)
 - iii) providing more opportunities for students to develop independence in their work, (*paragraphs 115, 125, 154, 163, 211*)
 - iv) marking students' work more constructively so that they know what to do to improve, (*paragraphs 128, 138, 150, 167, 191, 204, 212*)
 - v) improve students' fluency and confidence in using Standard English in oral and written work, (*paragraphs 108, 110, 113, 150*)
- (2) improve the provision for students to develop their skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum (*paragraphs 144, 146, 149, 156, 165, 174, 175, 179, 182, 183, 185, 195, 211*)
- (3) improve attendance further by continually reinforcing with students and their parents the urgency and advantage of maintaining good attendance (*27, 74, 83, 88, 166*)
- (4) raise standards in religious education and provide better opportunities for students' spiritual development, by:
 - i) providing religious education lessons for students in Years 10 and 11, which is a statutory requirement, (*paragraphs 18, 26, 50, 60, 61, 77, 92, 98, 210, 213*)
 - ii) giving students more opportunities to gain an understanding of the spiritual element in the other subjects they study, (*61, 148*)
 - iii) providing a daily collective act of worship, which is a statutory requirement. (*paragraph 92*)

In addition, the governors may wish to include the following minor issues in their development plan:

- i) monitor and support the non-specialist staff who teach in mathematics more effectively, while securing suitably qualified teachers to fill the posts (*paragraphs 131, 132*)

Sixth form

105. In the context of overall very good teaching, improve the consistency of teaching and learning across the sixth form by:

- i) providing opportunities for students to develop a wider range of writing, and to extend their skills in discussion, (*paragraphs 224, 261, 299, 302, 305*)
 - ii) enabling students to cultivate more independence in their work, (*paragraphs 235, 237, 254, 257, 286, 303*)
 - iii) where possible, organising group sizes so that skills in discussion can be more easily developed, (*paragraphs 261, 281, 302*)
 - iv) adopting a consistent approach to marking that provides students with clear advice on how they may improve their work, (*paragraphs 138, 167, 212, 225, 251*)
 - v) as funds become available, improving accommodation for those subjects where present provision limits the scope of what can be attempted. (*paragraphs 248, 289*)
- (2) Extend the use of information and communication technology within subjects. (*paragraphs 218, 238, 272, 294, 306*)

In addition, the governors may wish to include the following issues in their action plan:

- (i) Provide statutory religious education for all students (*paragraphs 66, 100*)

- (ii) Monitor attendance at lessons, registrations and assemblies more efficiently.
(paragraph 79)

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	140
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 9 - 11							
Number	6	26	59	42	6	1	0
Percentage	5	18	42	29	5	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	17	24	12	0	0	0
Percentage	6	30	42	22	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

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	763	302
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	88	0

Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	12	1
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	218	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	28

Student 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	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	9.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	4.5

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	141	123	264

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	82	89
	Girls	72	74	75
	Total	127	156	164
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	48 (51)	59 (62)	62 (56)
	National	64 (63)	66(65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	6 (14)	34 (35)	27 (21)
	National	31 (31)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	96	94
	Girls	77	86	77
	Total	126	182	171
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	48 (45)	69 (63)	65 (53)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	19 (16)	37 (32)	33 (19)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	180	137	317

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	56	142	162
	Girls	68	124	132
	Total	124	266	294
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	39 (26)	84 (91)	93 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	31.2 (30.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	52	68

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	52	68	120
	Average point score per candidate	15.3 (14.5)	17.5 (17.8)	16.5 (16.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		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	52	68	120	12	31	33
	Average point score per candidate	14.2	13.8	13.9	5	12	9.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.5

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

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last college year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
723	63	1
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	1	0
2	0	0
11	3	0
0	0	0
9	1	0
4	0	0

Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

39
2
13
0

12	0
0	0
8	0
0	0

The table refers to students of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.5

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	730.5

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.2
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	3,688,163
Total expenditure	3,898,285
Expenditure per student	3,317
Balance brought forward from previous year	229,743
Balance carried forward to next year	19,621

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	25.09
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	18.22
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1021
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	23	74	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in college.	40	57	3	0	0
Behaviour in the college is good.	22	57	6	9	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	43	29	14	3
The teaching is good.	21	70	6	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	34	9	14	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	57	31	3	6	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	31	9	3	0
The college works closely with parents.	27	45	9	16	3
The college is well led and managed.	34	45	3	9	9
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	40	9	5	3
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	46	11	9	3

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- 2001 GCSE results were above the national average in both English and English literature.
- Teaching is good and students learn well because teachers manage and organise classes very well and so lessons are calm, purposeful and productive.
- As a result of very good leadership, the department is clearly focused on raising students' standards.
- The accommodation for English is very good, and provides a welcoming and stimulating environment.

Areas for development

- Boys' results, which are lower than might be expected.
- Students' contributions to class discussion and their standard of formal, written English.
- Teachers' questioning does not challenge students enough to produce originality in thought and expression.

106. On entry in Year 9 students' attainment in reading and writing is below average, as are their general skills in literacy. Results in the 2001 national tests in English, taken at the end of Year 9, were well below the national average. They were low compared to colleges with a similar intake of students. The proportion of students gaining higher grades was low. The English results were not as good as those in mathematics and science. Whilst generally accurate, teacher assessments were over-generous at Level 6. The 2002 results showed a significant improvement, especially by girls. National comparisons are not yet available but English results closely matched those in maths and science and the overall trend is one of improvement.

107. In 2001, the GCSE results in English language and in English literature were above national averages and the best for six years. Boys did better in English literature than in most of their other subjects, as did girls in both English language and literature. Higher-attaining students did particularly well at the higher grades in English literature, and the A* to G pass rate was higher than the national average in both subjects. Results in 2002 were not as good, though they matched the average in other subjects.

108. Standards attained by students by the end of Year 9 are close to the national average. This reflects good achievement during Year 9. Girls achieve better than boys. Students learn to organise and redraft written work, although average-attaining students, especially boys, do not pay enough attention to accuracy and presentation. Overall, standards of written formal English are too low. Higher-attaining students develop a good sense of style and the ability to use tone, structure and sentence variety to create effects. Few students are able to write extended essays where facts have to be weighed, opinions balanced, and judgements reached. Most have sound reading skills and so they can read and understand quite complex text, but few can see suggestions or implied meanings. Whilst confident in conversation and paired work, students generally speak too quietly, briefly and colloquially in whole-class discussion and so valuable ideas are not shared and analysed.

109. In Years 10 and 11, students also achieve well, and standards of work are close to the national average. Lower-attaining students write lively English, often more neatly and with better control of spelling than could reasonably be expected, reflecting the strong emphasis on literacy skills in the

teaching. Average-attaining students sometimes lose the focus of a title during the course of an essay, but show appreciation and enjoyment when writing about literature. Higher-attaining students explore issues in literature texts with confidence, redrafting to improve expression rather than just to correct errors.

110. Many students remain too quiet in class discussion and, when they do speak, do not use the technical language which they have learnt. Their ability to question or challenge ideas, and to propose alternative viewpoints, is very limited. For example, only a few students in a Year 11 class studying poems from other cultures could understand how a hurricane in England could be both 'fearful' (because of its power) and 'reassuring' (because it recalled for the poet memories of familiar previous experience in another country). Students with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers are very aware of the need to modify work, which they explain fully, to give frequent and encouraging comment, but not to reduce expectations or accept inferior work. Similar thoughtfulness enabled students with English as an additional language to take a full and confident part in class discussion, indicating that they have made good progress.

111. Learning is good because of the consistently good teaching. Teaching in the lessons observed was very good overall. Lessons were satisfactory or better, and more than half were very good or excellent. In all the lessons, students understood what they were studying, and how they should proceed. Teachers made very clear the key concepts and vocabulary very clear. In several effective poetry lessons, students had opportunities to gain understanding of the beliefs, influence and richness of other cultures. They gained insights into the language of poets and the feelings they were expressing. Students are attentive and diligent both in lessons and with examination coursework because teachers plan and organise lessons well, and set regular and relevant homework, which includes Internet research. Teachers manage students' behaviour very well, using their knowledge of them and their very good relationship with them to benefit learning. In some lessons, undemanding starter activities led to a slow pace of learning. In most lessons the concluding review was not searching enough to indicate precisely what has been learnt, and what the next stage of learning might be.

112. Teachers use a good range of methods. Classes studying a module of work on the sinking of the 'Titanic' made excellent progress because they had a good grasp of background historical and social issues. They learned media technical terms with which to analyse techniques used in the film version, and the teacher's brisk questioning encouraged them to explain or justify what they said. Teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge for students of all abilities, the majority of whom respond very well. In a lesson on persuasive language, a Year 11 class of lower-attaining students proposed and used imaginative words, such as 'incredible', 'breathtaking' and 'spectacular', because the teacher enthused them with the idea of how powerful words could be.

113. Sometimes, teachers do not probe and explore students' ideas sufficiently by asking supplementary questions to elicit additional information, evidence, or justification. As a result, some students are not original and insightful in their views. This leads to pedestrian ideas and written style in essays. Some students, especially older boys, are allowed to give vague and colloquial answers in class discussion, which can lead to superficial and lazy thinking. Standards in both spoken and written Standard English are low.

114. All students benefit from the very good assessment procedures, including regular and helpful marking, which keep them informed about their standards, progress, and areas for improvement. Whilst behaviour is generally very good, some teachers do not correct early enough the small amount of inattention which distracts some students.

115. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is better and results have improved. Students' attitudes remain good. The majority of students are very keen to work and learn, but remain reliant on the teacher. Few are independent or original thinkers. English

teachers share a commitment and determination to raise students' standards whilst sustaining the quality of relationships which exists in all lessons. This stems from the very good leadership of the director of English and the very good management of all staff with responsibilities within the department. The department maintains a consistency of approach, particularly in its expectation of high standards from students. Examination trends are carefully analysed and the quality of teaching and marking regularly checked to maintain high standards of provision. The new English block, where most lessons are taught, is excellent and the overall accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment, which both teachers and students appreciate.

Key skills across the curriculum: literacy

116. Students' literacy skills are below national average when they come to the college in Year 9. Part of a key issue in the previous inspection report was to improve boys' literacy skills as part a strategy to raise their attainment.

117. Literacy approaches are very well embedded into English teaching and there is good understanding and practice across the college as a whole. Following evaluation of the issue, the college prioritised reading, and ensuring that students understood and developed the key skills needed to develop literacy. Three focus areas have been agreed: an emphasis on subject specific key words; technical vocabulary to be used, learnt and tested; and writing frames to be developed in all subject areas. Good progress has been made. For example, students in music are expected to learn and use technical vocabulary. Terminology, such as vowels pronouns and adjectives are fully explained in modern foreign languages, where students are also taught to deduce the meaning of what they are reading rather than focusing on translating it. History makes good use of reading material to look for bias, and students are encouraged to pause and reflect on both actual and implied meaning. In history and geography, paired and group discussion are very well used, and there is much emphasis on the appropriateness and accuracy of written course work. Well-devised frameworks frequently help lower-attaining students in science make good progress. In design and technology, literacy is planned for in a general sense, but the use and development of literacy in lessons is inconsistent. In art, there are few books, and key words are not systematically taught and reinforced. There is at present, however, no system for monitoring the success of literacy teaching strategies.

118. The library is welcoming and well-organised and provides a satisfactory support for literacy. Access has improved since the previous inspection and the stock of books has improved from poor to satisfactory. Both students and teachers are becoming more aware of the library as a central resource for information and research.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Examination results are consistently well above the national average.
- Very good teaching and very good teacher/student relationships encourage students to understand the skills they need to develop.
- Large, often original, productions and events give students very good opportunities to take part in public performances.

Areas for development

- The time for drama in Year 9, which is limited and so restricts the development of students' practical skills and confidence.
- The uptake at GCSE, which is much lower than that found nationally.
- Teachers' awareness of the attitudes of the minority of students who become inattentive or mischievous.

119. On entry to Year 9, students have below-average skills in drama. Drama is taught as a separate subject in Year 9, but the time allocated to it is low. As a consequence, the curriculum for drama is unsatisfactory and this affects the standards attained and the take-up for drama at GCSE. GCSE results in 2001 were amongst the best in the college. They were well above the national average, continuing a trend of improvement. As has been the case for some years, all students entered gained at least a grade E. Against the college trend, results in 2002 showed only a slight decline. Many more girls than boys choose drama as an option.

120. Standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils gain only a basic grounding in the skills and conventions of drama. Nonetheless, very good teaching ensures that students achieve very well within the limited time allocated. When working in groups, they experience, but have little opportunity to explore, the skills of negotiation and compromise. They learn to recognize and use techniques such as 'freeze frame' and 'thought tracking'. Higher-attaining students begin to show poise and good timing when they are acting. In a very good Year 9 lesson, with the theme of 'symbols and gestures', students achieved a high degree of expressiveness. They developed well the use of body language and facial expression to suggest an imagined character. Higher-attaining students were able to suggest complex motives behind the character.

121. The standards attained by students at present in Year 11 are above the national average, showing very good achievement during the GCSE course. Most work independently, and support each other in group work. Average- and higher-attaining students show initiative and take responsibility, being able to work for lengthy periods without direct supervision. Lower-attaining students have good ideas but have limited confidence in their ability to convey them.

122. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and student's learning are very good. Teachers are especially adept at explaining tasks and techniques precisely, whilst leaving room for students to plan their own interpretations. A well-paced lesson saw students enthusiastically working in groups on a sequence of tasks which required interpretation and discussion. Expectations, both of work and behaviour, are high. Class discussion is very effectively used to generate both ideas and a sense of group loyalty and responsibility. In smaller groups, students learn to value and use a range of ideas and approaches, modelling this variety on the different strategies used by teachers. Teachers are adept at integrating students' ideas with their own planning, as in a GCSE lesson where music and candlelight stimulated responses to suggest mood and atmosphere. A minority of younger students can be over-exuberant in Year 9, or inattentive on the GCSE course. Their standard of work deteriorates and occasionally teachers lack awareness of them or allow too much leeway. Generally, however, relationships and working atmosphere are very good. Students of varying levels of attainment work well together. Demanding questioning by the teacher about how ideas might be represented stimulated a high standard of discussion and a careful weighing of alternatives when students used poems about shanty towns and poverty as a stimulus in Year 11. Teachers are aware of students' individual personalities and learning needs. Students with special educational needs are well supported, and make very good progress.

123. There has been good improvement since the very positive report. Strengths, such as a wide range of teaching strategies and the good level of cooperation of the students, remain. The quality of teaching and the standards reached at GCSE have improved, and the very good drama hall is now more regularly available. There are good resources for sound and lighting. The department is well managed. Students respond enthusiastically to regular opportunities for performing in public.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers structure lessons well and give clear explanations.
- Working relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Information about student's attainment is used well to set appropriately challenging work.
- The National Strategy is being implemented effectively.

Areas for development

- The range of teaching styles, particularly to give students more opportunities for using and applying mathematics.
- Marking, which should be more constructive and help students to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- The availability of specialist teachers for mathematics.

124. In the 2001 national tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9, the percentage of students reaching Level 5 and Level 6 was below national average and well below that of similar schools. Teacher assessments were too generous in 2001. However, they were more accurate in the preceding years, and again in 2002. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. Results in mathematics have declined in relation to the national average over the last three years. However, the results for 2002 show a significant improvement.

125. On the evidence of the work of students and the lessons observed, standards in Year 9 are now close to national expectation and students' achievement is satisfactory at all levels of attainment. Work covers most of the content of the National Curriculum well. For example, students know how to solve linear equations correctly and how to collate data and represent it in a variety of charts. Higher-attaining students have learned how to use the charts to compare two sets of data and comment on the differences. Students with special educational needs or English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Insufficient emphasis is given to using and applying mathematics, and, as a result, students of all levels of attainment have too few opportunities to learn independently. Standards of numeracy are in line with the national expectation.

126. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the percentage of A* to C grades was well below the national average. Between 1999 and 2001, results fell significantly. However the results for 2002 show a small recovery. Students did less well in mathematics than in most other subjects. The proportion of students who do not gain grade G or better has remained high throughout the period, especially for boys. The performance of boys and girls in attaining an A* to C grade is similar. In 2001, few students gained A* or A grades. However this improved substantially in 2002. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

127. On the evidence of students' work and lessons observed, standards in Year 11 are now average. Average-attaining students make good progress through algebraic topics and are able to solve simple quadratic equations. They work confidently with loci and bearings. Higher-attaining students can

analyse the properties of quadratic equations and progress from solving simple trigonometric problems to more complex 360° trigonometry. Work covers all the required areas, although students are given too few opportunities to use and apply their mathematics. As a consequence, their ability to solve extended problems is weak.

128. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Specialist teachers of mathematics show good subject knowledge and are well versed in the requirements of the examinations. Teaching is best in Year 9, where half of the lessons observed were good. The National Strategy has been introduced successfully and provides a solid structure for all lessons. Each lesson starts with a good quality mental activity that focuses students and creates an atmosphere of pace and expectation. Where teaching was good, teachers gave clear explanations of mathematical skills and checked students' understanding with brisk question and answer sessions. In Years 10 and 11, good use is made of technology to support teaching, for example in the use of graphic calculators to study quadratic equations. Most lessons followed a similar pattern and teachers used a limited range of teaching methods. The emphasis is on students completing mathematical procedures successfully. Students lack sufficient opportunities to learn in different ways or to investigate mathematically. The result is that many students can perform the required skill but do not understand why it works or where else it could be applied. Teachers mark books regularly but do not provide students with feedback that sets targets and encourages improvement.

129. Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers from all subjects have undertaken training and faculties have analysed their contribution to numeracy. Provision is not yet fully planned. However, there are varied examples of numeracy in action across the curriculum. In music, a student worked with time signatures to build rap rhythms in eleven-eight and five-four time. In physical education, a teacher used the concept of surface area to explain how it was best to hit a ball with a hockey stick. The use of numeracy is satisfactory in subjects such as science, geography and design and technology, where calculation and measurement are regularly used.

130. Behaviour is good in mathematics. Students' attitudes are positive, they are keen to do well, and enjoy interacting with teachers and answering questions. Occasionally, when students' behaviour is unacceptable, teachers handle the situation well and minimise any disruption.

131. Staffing is poor. There are too few specialist teachers, and non-specialists fill the gap. Two-thirds of groups have only three taught lessons a week, the fourth given over to private study. This is impacting adversely on students' progress.

132. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The National Strategy has been implemented well. There is a strong team ethos in the faculty. The analysis of performance data is very good. However the quality of teaching is not monitored sufficiently and too low a priority is placed on supporting non-specialists and inexperienced colleagues and on developing teaching methodology.

133. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Results have gone down and the quality of teaching has declined. However, there has been progress over the last eighteen months and, providing the identified issues are tackled, the foundations exist for further improvement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Results in the national test in Year 9 rose significantly in 2002.
- Some good and very good teaching is enabling students over the whole range of attainment to learn effectively.
- Students display good attitudes to work, cooperate well and are developing good laboratory skills.
- Science is well managed and teachers and technicians work well as a team.
- Provision for science has undergone good improvement recently.

Weaknesses

- GCSE results, which remain below average.
- Some inconsistency in teaching means that students' achievement is not consistently high.

134. In 2001, the last year for which national data are available, test results in Year 9 were below the national average and well below those in similar colleges. However, in 2002 there was a significant improvement, from 62 per cent to 70 per cent at Level 5 and above. Although figures are not yet available to allow national comparisons to be made, the attainment of students in Year 9 has risen to a level which in previous years would have matched the national average.

135. In 2001, GCSE results in science were significantly below both national averages and results in their other subjects. Results for 2002 were similar to those of 2001.

136. The Year 9 work seen reached national expectations and, since the cohort entered the college with below average attainment, this amounts to good achievement. The Year 11 students' work is of below-average standard. However, coursework in science investigation on osmosis and electrolysis showed that higher-attaining students in top sets had high attainment, with some attaining very high standards. Similarly, students with special educational needs in Year 10 and 11 lessons on digestion, human variation and heat transfer were making good progress. Overall achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. No difference was observed in the performance of boys and girls, and minority ethnic students did as well as their peers.

137. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good lessons. The inconsistency in the quality of teaching indicated a need for a wider dissemination of the good practice that exists. The small amount of unsatisfactory and barely satisfactory teaching was linked to the unsatisfactory quality of work seen in some of the work samples. Pupils' achievement is therefore satisfactory overall, and much of it is good. The majority of the lessons observed in Year 9 were taught well. Students' prior knowledge and skills were taken into account. Good questioning established a good pace of learning, for example in work on metals. Effective investigative work included planned opportunities for students to make their own predictions and select their own variables, which they were able to do. Less successful teaching tended to ignore the students' level of skills and resulted in tasks at an inappropriate level for some students. This reduced the pace and effectiveness of students' learning.

138. The teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 was in general good and led to effective learning. The evidence of weaker teaching in Years 10 and 11 came from last year's work samples. This has been partially tackled by staffing changes but some deficiencies remain in planning and marking, so that overall teaching is deemed to be only satisfactory. However, there are examples of good and very good practice.

139. The teaching of scientific investigation resulted in good learning of scientific knowledge, for example, on Faraday's Law, and experimental skills, such as measurement, tabulation and evaluation of experimental design. This work was a good contribution to both numeracy and literacy since the students wrote up their investigations independently. Good opportunities are provided for developing

skills in information and communication technology through word-processing, graphics and useful experimental simulation. This open-ended work provides an appropriate challenge for higher-attaining students.

140. Teaching in the sets which contained lower-attaining students was consistently good or very good. Students with special educational needs were fully involved in the work because of teaching that was well planned and provided good support to help students develop their literacy. As a result, students learned well and achieved success in tasks such as matching functions of the digestive system, graphing variation in human eye and hair colour and measuring heat absorption by different surfaces.

141. In nearly all the lessons observed, students' behaviour and attitude to work were good. They cooperated well and remained attentive even in cramped laboratories. The pace of work was good because teachers managed well the behaviour of the few disruptive students, provided work at a suitable level and gave extra support to those who needed it.

142. Assessment is sound overall. Teachers monitoring students' performance well and use the information to set targets, to group students and choose appropriate schemes of work. However, teachers are inconsistent in their use of assessment procedures. These include careful scrutiny of students' work as the basis for providing support and encouragement and extending the depth of thought of higher-attaining students.

143. In Years 10 and 11, the allocation of time for students taking the double science award is below average, which adversely affects the standards that students attain.

144. The department works well as a team and departmental management is good. The department has already improved standards and has identified the areas where further action is necessary. The technicians make a good contribution to the management and development of resources and to curriculum improvement such as the developing the use of data logging in information and communication technology. The curriculum has been improved over the past year and departmental administration, provision of GCSE targets and monitoring of added value is good. Accommodation and resources are adequate, although sometimes teachers have to change laboratories for some aspects of practical work. Health and safety practice is good, other than the accommodation in the chemical store. All staff are suitably qualified and training is provided for technicians as well as teachers. The newly-qualified teacher is well supported and already playing a good role in the department. The contribution of the department to literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall and better than that in the hands of the best teachers. Information and communication technology is making a good contribution to administration and production of teaching materials. The use of computers in lessons is not fully developed, although it has improved with extension of data logging and its use in coursework.

145. In the last report, teaching in science was said to be unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory, with much good practice. Recent changes in curriculum, assessment and information and communication technology have resulted in a good overall improvement in provision since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning leads to good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results have improved since the last inspection.
- In Years 10 and 11, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and examination requirements.

Areas for development

- Students' achievement in Year 9, which is below expectation because teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Students' opportunities to use computers.

146. When students enter the college in Year 9 they have had widely differing previous experiences in art. Overall, most are attaining below the standards expected for their age. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that standards remain below national expectation. The sample of work provided by the college confirmed these assessments. The work shows that a significant proportion of students did not make enough progress in Year 9, sometimes repeating work they had already covered. The standards of work seen during the inspection were below expectations. In part this was because, despite very good departmental documentation, teachers were unfamiliar with the National Curriculum requirements and what to expect of students at this age. The scheme of work in Year 9 is narrow and does not meet requirements. Although the curriculum plan indicates that students will have access to computers later in the school year, there is no evidence of this from last year's work.

147. GCSE results have improved greatly and show a rising trend since the last inspection. They were very low 1999, below average in 2000 and 2001, but similar to the unconfirmed national average in the most recent results for 2002. Fewer boys than girls attained the highest grades, as is the case nationally. The overall number of students opting for the course and being entered for the examination has fallen since the last inspection.

148. The work provided by the college showed that, from a low starting point in Year 10, students' achievement is good. They gain confidence, are willing to try out ideas and explore themes and the work in their sketchbooks is of good quality. Students show more confidence in drawing than in other elements of the course, such as painting. However, students rely too heavily on secondary source material. Opportunities to see artists' work, in the community or in galleries and in museums, had not been provided in the course. This aspect of students' spiritual and cultural development remains underdeveloped.

149. The work of students currently on GCSE courses mirrors the rising trend of previous years. Students expressed their ideas with imagination and creativity, for example when using air-dried clay to build the detail of facial features in their interpretation of a given theme. There are no opportunities to use computers in lessons and there are insufficient books in the department to support the development of students' critical analysis and reading.

150. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Year 9 and students' achievement is generally satisfactory. However, some teaching is unsatisfactory because not all teachers have a full understanding of the National Curriculum assessment levels, which leads to some low expectations. Consequently, there is underachievement in some classes. The sample of work from the previous year was poorly marked and students had not received the information they needed to help them improve. The teaching of basic skills is sound, but teachers do not develop students speaking well enough by requiring extended answers when checking students' understanding of key words and concepts. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was consistently good. Teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding of GCSE examination requirements contributed greatly to improved results. Work is well matched to students' starting points, and all, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

151. Leadership and management of art are sound overall. Some very successful measures have recently been taken to improve standards in examinations. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. The documentation is very thorough. It provides very good guidance for curriculum planning and National Curriculum assessment, and for strengthening the work of the department. The director of art has had too few opportunities to take the necessary steps to raise standards in Year 9.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching throughout the subject is good and students learn well in individual lessons.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing difficulties and short lessons reduce students' overall achievement over time.
- The range of design and technology subjects offered is too narrow.
- Assessment procedures at the end of Year 9.

152. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well below those reported nationally, but current work indicates that standards are now closer to the national expectation. Students enter the college with limited experience of designing and making, but they achieve well in Year 9. Although the range of design and technology subjects is limited to resistant materials and graphics, students develop their knowledge of materials well, and experience the design process in projects such as 'the promotional clock' and the 'pop-up card'. Students carry out research, use their knowledge to develop new ideas and produce individual design solutions, which are made and evaluated. Coursework is well structured and enables students of differing levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, to produce an appropriate range of design-related work. Folders are well organised and include some work which has been produced using computers. The work of higher-attaining students contains good research and well developed ideas. Practical work enables students to experience working with a number of resilient materials. They use an appropriate range of cutting, shaping and joining techniques and finished models are of a good standard.

153. The percentage of A* to C grades in GCSE examinations has been consistently well below the national average but the percentage of A* to G is closer to the national average. In 2001, results improved but were still below the national average. Girls continued to do better than boys but the boys were closer to their national average than the girls. Both boys and girls gained lower grades in their design and technology subjects than in their other GCSE subjects. The sample of recent coursework, for storage units and board games, indicates that standards are now average overall. Higher-attaining students produce substantial folders that contain the research, analysis and development of design ideas. Their work is well presented, often including good drawings and computer-generated material. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. However, lack of continuity in teaching, due to staff changes, has affected students' coursework and the standards achieved.

154. Teaching is good overall, and this includes some very good and excellent teaching in Year 9. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and use a range of effective teaching methods. In most lessons, teachers include elements of literacy by emphasising the use of technical words. In the better lessons, students effectively practise writing, speaking and listening skills. Teachers are establishing good working procedures through effective management of students and good support of individuals in lessons. As a result of good teaching, students acquire knowledge and skills at a good pace, and, in the better lessons, they use their prior knowledge well to support their design work. Most lessons are carefully structured and this limits the opportunities for more independent learning. However, as students develop more skills and knowledge, they are able to apply these creatively, for example in developing new board games in Year 11. Students with special educational needs are well supported.

155. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and students settle to work quickly in most lessons. The support given by teachers is recognised by students and results in good working relationships between teachers and students.

156. There are good schemes of work for graphics and resistant materials, but no opportunity to experience either food or textiles technology. The timetabling of the GCSE short courses into separate single lessons is inefficient for practical subjects. The use of computers to support design and technology work has increased but there are insufficient opportunities for this in Years 9 to 11. Some teachers include opportunities for students to consider the moral, social and cultural effects of technology within the task set, but, overall, these aspects are not a sufficiently planned part of the work.

157. Students' work is accurately assessed in Years 10 and 11, and this, together with good individual support in lessons, keeps students well informed about their progress, and enables them to improve their work.

158. Leadership and management of the department are good. Effective use is made of data to evaluate the subject's performance and this, together with a strong collaborative spirit within the department, is enabling resources to be used well to move towards the targets set for the subject. Although some monitoring of teaching takes place, more could be done to share good teaching practice. The strong commitment to improve standards within the department is being adversely affected at present by continuing staffing difficulties.

159. The department has maintained many of the good features identified in the last report, in spite of continuing staffing and recruitment problems. Although standards remain low, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good.
- Geography makes an important contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and enhance students' learning.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to their work.

Areas for development

- Students' attainment in Years 10 and 11, and particularly that of boys.
- The development of subject-specific skills, and the use of computers.
- Marking, which sometimes lacks thoroughness and does not tell students how to improve.
- Students' intellectual curiosity and independence.

160. In 2001, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed students' attainment to be below national expectations, with less than half reaching the expected standard. The proportion of students attaining the higher National Curriculum levels was very low. The difference in the attainment of boys and girls was less than found nationally. There has been little change in standards over the past three years. Students' standards on entry to the college are below expectation. Their achievement of students at the end of Year 9 is therefore satisfactory.

161. GCSE examinations were not taken in geography at the time of the last inspection. In 2001, the proportion of students who attained grades A* to C was below the national average. While the results of girls were close to the national average, the attainment of boys was well below that of boys

nationally. Girls outperform boys by a wider margin than nationally. The proportion of students achieving grades in the range A* to G was in line with the national figure, with all boys achieving at least a pass grade. Students did less well in geography than most other subjects in the college. Overall, students' achievement in Years 10 and 11, relative to their starting point, is satisfactory.

162. The work of students in Year 9 seen during the inspection and the evidence of lessons observed confirmed the teacher assessments. Overall, standards are below the national expectation. Students' proficiency in geographical skills is inconsistent and this has an impact on their achievement. For example, when Year 9 students plotted the track of a hurricane the teacher had to spend much of the lesson familiarising students with the use of co-ordinates. In the work of Year 9 students completed last year there were too few opportunities for them to improve their subject skills in their study of places and themes. In lessons observed, students were able to recall factual knowledge in response to questioning, and used technical language appropriately. Higher-attaining students understood such processes as convection and insulation, and could use these in describing the formation of hurricanes.

163. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve satisfactorily, but the current standard of work of students, and particularly that of some boys, is below national expectations. In their written and oral work, students in Years 10 and 11 use geographical terms accurately, for example in a lesson on population change when they described characteristics of countries at different stages of development. The frequent use of concept mapping develops students' ability to recognise links and appreciate the impact of variables on, for example, migration. Higher-attaining students show a good awareness of the impact of physical aspects of geography on people, but other students do not fully appreciate this. Students respond well to the challenge of decision-making tasks, as seen when Year 11 students played the 'Trade Game'; they were able to take responsibility for their learning and showed initiative. However, the previously-completed work shows that they have had too few opportunities to work independently.

164. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Teachers receive very good information. As a result, they are able to give good support and match the level of work to students' specific needs. In this way, they are able to ensure that all are included in the learning experiences. At the time of the inspection, teaching assistants had yet to be deployed.

165. A very strong emphasis is placed upon the development of students' literacy skills and this benefits students at all stages. Some very good opportunities are provided for students to practise and apply their numerical skills. Students are encouraged to make use of their information and communication technology skills, as seen when Year 10 students applied their understanding of global warming and acid rain when producing explanatory pamphlets for younger students. However, such opportunities are limited because of the difficulty in gaining access to computers.

166. Overall, the teaching observed was good, although. In Years 10 and 11, it was very good and has positive impact on students' attainment and achievement. Teaching in Year 9 was not as effective, partly because the students were not attuned to the high expectations of the college in terms of their attitudes and behaviour. Opportunities to practise atlas skills were missed when the teacher told students the location of important points and was too directive. Whilst this maintained order, it resulted in a passive approach to learning with limited opportunities for students to show initiative. Specialist teachers have very secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. In all lessons, teachers demonstrated very good classroom and student management. Relationships were very good. Thorough planning ensured that tasks met the needs of students who, as a result, were able to sustain their concentration and complete a considerable amount of work during lessons. Students were aware of lessons' objectives, and questioning at the beginning and end of each lesson checked their understanding, linking the work with that done previously. This very good continuity is often disrupted by the poor attendance of students. The contribution made to

the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is a further strength. Homework is set regularly.

167. Students respond to the good teaching with interest and, at times, enthusiasm. The marking of work is often thorough, but not consistently so. More information needs to be shared with students so that they know what they should do to improve. The monitoring of students' progress is improving as reliable data is used increasingly to set targets.

168. The recently-appointed director of geography provides good leadership and manages the department effectively. His heavy teaching load creates difficulties in ensuring that all policies are implemented consistently, and limits opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning. Resources and accommodation are good. The response of the department to the areas for development included in the previous report was unsatisfactory until recently, and positive action is now being taken. The department has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and students encourage students to learn well.
- Recent GCSE results have shown a significant improvement.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good; this and their planning together lead to a very good standard of teaching.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Area for development

- The use of information and communication technology to develop students' learning.

169. The GCSE results in 2001 were above the national and the college averages. This represents very good achievement relative to the students' prior attainment. Results for teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2001 were below national expectations, but in line with college results. Results in 2002 were much higher, but national figures are not yet available with which to compare them. Students in Year 9 in 2002 were assessed overall as below national expectations.

170. Year 9 students' attainment is below national expectations when they join the college. However, the specialist teachers are having a positive impact on students' learning and their achievement in Year 9 is very good. Students answered questions well. For example, higher-attaining students could clearly explain where a yeoman farmer might stand in the hierarchy of an eighteenth century village. Through role-play, all students in this lesson showed a very good understanding of how a citizen's function determined his or her place in society. Students were predominantly well behaved and enjoyed their active involvement in their learning.

171. Students in Year 11 are attaining above national expectations and they achieve very well. For example, higher-attaining students in Year 11 in their study of 'Crime and Punishment' were able to give thoughtful explanations of the lack of perceived need for a police force in Ancient Rome, despite the strong desire for order. Through carefully-chosen resources, and a well-paced lesson, all students in this mixed-ability class were able to gather and note key issues in Ancient Rome. The sample of students' work included personal studies on Ireland, and the local study of Kirby Hall. These were outstanding; well organised, well presented, and benefiting from the use of information and communication technology. Students made good use of the experience gained from their visit to Kirby Hall. A small group of students from the work-related option group, researching information to establish why Adolf Hitler is a significant figure in history, were working well towards their Entry Certificate examination, gathering information about him and deciding if it was significant.

172. The teaching observed was very good overall, and some was excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They plan well together, and lessons have clear objectives and suitable tasks. Teachers' maintain good discipline which enables students to maintain a good pace of learning. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well. A strength of the department is the planning for the full range of ability, with an appropriate choice of materials and texts to meet the learning needs of all students. The clear emphasis on literacy encourages students to organise their extended writing efficiently and spell key words correctly. Students' work is carefully marked. Good provision is made for gifted and talented students, for example through the personal studies in Year 10.

173. The department is very well led and managed. The recently-appointed director of history has had a major impact on students' achievement and raising standards. Policies are clear, and translate effectively into practice, for example for students with special educational needs, and for literacy. The teachers have collaborated effectively to devise suitable schemes of work, and they work well together to ensure consistently good standards of teaching and learning.

174. Some good opportunities occur for students to use information and communication technology in history, but the department's contribution to the cross-curricular teaching of these skills is inadequate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students have attained good results at GCSE for the last four years.
- The schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 are well planned and taught.
- Planning for the use of computers has improved recently in some subjects and the number of computers has increased.

Areas for development

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and coverage of National Curriculum requirements in Years 9 to 11.
- The planning and monitoring of provision for students in Year 9 to use computers across the curriculum.
- Assessment procedures for non-examination students in Years 9 to 11.
- Access to the available computer resources.

175. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been well below those reported nationally. Current work indicates that the standards for both boys and girls are still well below national expectations. Students join the college with limited experience and low attainment in the use of computers and their achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 9. Students are currently using basic word

processing in English, history and geography, and 'winlogo' in mathematics, and are able to produce posters and carry out research using the Internet. Students, therefore, develop some knowledge and skills in using word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and control. However, planned programmes for the teaching of information and communication technology through other subjects do not cover all aspects of the National Curriculum adequately, and what is planned is not fully taught. This has had a negative impact on the standards students attain.

176. The proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in GCSE fell to well below the national average in 2001. A shortage of suitably qualified teachers had affected the teaching of these students. However, results for the previous two years and 2002 are at or above the national average. The results for both boys and girls in 2001 were well below their respective national averages and students did worse in information and communication technology than in their other GCSE subjects. However, the pattern of results in the two previous years and in the provisional results for 2002 show that boys have attained much higher standards than girls and well above the national average for boys.

177. Standards amongst students taking GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 are now average. Current work indicates that students are developing knowledge and skills in the use of different computer programmes to solve specified problems. With good support from teachers, most students are able to analyse problems and develop solutions which can be tested and evaluated. The annotation of work in the Year 10 travel project indicates good levels of understanding and enables the principles of database work to be applied in students' individual work. Although most students join examination courses with limited skills in information and communication technology, all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least satisfactorily, and for most achievement is good.

178. Students not taking GCSE or GNVQ examination courses experience information and communication technology as part of key skills programmes. Students carry out set exercises to develop basic skills. Standards achieved by the end of the courses are in line with course expectations. However, standards observed at this early stage in Year 10 are well below expectation for their age because the students finished Year 9 with a low level of basic skills.

179. The use of computers in other subjects is improving but remains unsatisfactory overall. Most departments include some elements of computer work. Very little evidence of the use of computers was seen during the inspection but students occasionally use them to support their work in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology, music, science, history and geography. However, few subjects are actually teaching all of their planned programmes because access to computer rooms of sufficient size and with sufficient computers for whole classes is difficult.

180. Most students like using computers and show both positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Students follow instructions well and most concentrate well. However, when not closely supervised, some students drift off task and waste time. Relationships with teachers and fellow students are good. As students develop their skills and confidence, they become more independent learners and this has a positive effect on their personal development.

181. No teaching of Year 9 was seen during the inspection. The limited evidence of work carried out in previous years in other subjects, indicates that learning is unsatisfactory because most computer work is a repetition of basic skills. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching of GCSE in information and communication technology is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used well in supporting individual students. A good range of appropriate teaching methods is used and, because time is used efficiently, most students show good levels of concentration and work at a sound pace. Most students acquire knowledge quickly, from a low base, and are soon able to apply their skills in a variety of contexts. Students are well informed about the quality of their work and this enables all groups of students, including those with special needs, to understand what they have to do to improve their work.

182. The present arrangements for teaching information and communication technology in Year 9 are unsatisfactory. The planned teaching of computer-related work in other subjects is not always taking place and planning does not ensure that the required skills are learned systematically. Consequently, students' achievement is unsatisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the provision for GCSE, GNVQ and key skills is good. However, the provision for use of computers in other subjects is inadequate and does not ensure that those students who are not taking certificated courses have access to the required range of skills. The monitoring of provision for students not taking accredited courses is poor.

183. There has been good improvement in provision for students taking GCSE in information and communication technology, but provision for other students is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are therefore unsatisfactory, as is the overall improvement since the last report.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in Year 9 Teachers use their linguistic skills well in class to stimulate students' progress.
- The modern languages teachers
- Very good accommodation and resources
- Good departmental documentation and schemes of work for all languages
- The good programme of extracurricular activities and trips abroad

Areas for development

- Marking, to make it more informative of the quality of students' work.
- Results in GCSE German.

184. Students' attainment in French on entry to the college in Year 9 is very low, particularly in terms of their writing and awareness of grammar. Only one sixth of the students achieved half marks or above in the French reading and writing achievement test administered at the beginning of this term. In 2001, however, the teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were that over two fifths of students reached the expected standard. The girls did much better than the boys. These results indicate that standards in French rise significantly during Year 9. Students in Year 9 are achieving well relative to their starting point. The standard overall is below average at the end of Year 9. Students begin German in Year 9 and achieve well. The girls outperform the boys. Many students are writing dialogues and short letters containing a range of simple structures. Most students were observed to be making a good start in German.

185. GCSE results in French in 2001 were above average overall when compared with the national results, but no students attained A* or A grades. The students did well in relation to their starting point in Year 10. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Provisional results in French in 2002 are well below the national average, however. In 2002 girls again did much better than boys. GCSE results in German in 2001 were well below average. There was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. In 2002, GCSE results in German are even lower. Girls did better than boys.

186. The work seen during the inspection reflected the 2001 GCSE French results. Students achieve well in French in relation to their attainment on entry into Year 10. The work in their books in Year 11 shows that many students gradually develop their writing skills and use a range of basic tenses and simple structures correctly in dialogues, letters and compositions. The standards observed in the French Certificate of Achievement classes ranged from the ability to communicate effectively in specific transactional situations, like asking the way, to very weak communication skills.

187. The standards observed in some Year 11 German classes were below average. Most students in the Year 11 second set were unable to understand a simple recording about directions in town, pronunciation was generally poor, and knowledge of grammar was weak. In the Year 11 top set in German students' pronunciation was generally good and they performed in line with national expectations. The written work of many higher-attaining students in German was in line with national expectations. The work of most lower-attaining students mainly consisted of lists of vocabulary and copied sentences.

188. Speaking and listening skills in Italian are good and an examination of students' written work in Year 11 showed above-average standards. Spelling is good, and students use a range of basic grammatical structures in a variety of letters and compositions. In Years 10 and 11, the students who have chosen to study Italian achieve very well to reach GCSE standard in just five terms.

189. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 in GCSE Spanish is above average. The small number of Year 11 students have good reading and listening comprehension skills and speak confidently with good pronunciation. They are very good at deducing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from the context. They write quite extended compositions containing verbs in the present and past tenses.

190. The teaching and learning of French and German are good. Teachers are good linguists and have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements, even though three teachers are unqualified. They expect students to work well and behave appropriately. They always clarify the aims of lessons and usually write them up on the board and refer to them during and at the end of the lesson to ensure that students understand what has been covered. Most lessons practise listening, speaking, reading and writing. Homework is used very effectively to consolidate learning and extend students' knowledge. Teachers consistently develop students' literacy skills by focusing their attention on language patterns and the need for accurate spelling. This is raising standards because students are becoming more aware of how language functions generally.

191. Nearly all students participate well in lessons and settle down quickly to do written or reading tasks. They listen carefully to listening texts to pick out details. A few boys in some German classes are not attentive and do not complete work satisfactorily. The teaching and learning in one French Certificate of Achievement class was good, but, in another class, students' learning was unsatisfactory and their motivation and attitude were poor. In some French and German lessons, the teachers do not use the foreign language enough as a normal means of communication. Teachers mark students' work regularly, but too little use is made of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades other than in the end of module tests. There are no graded portfolios of students' work to guide teachers in setting and checking standards of work.

192. The teaching and learning in Spanish and Italian are very good. Lessons are very well planned and the aims of lessons are communicated clearly to the students. The teachers speak in Italian or Spanish for most of the time, which helps to develop students' listening and speaking skills. The lessons in Spanish and Italian are very challenging. Students with special educational needs are supported very well in Spanish. Every effort is made in both languages to include all students in all aspects of the work. Students are very well motivated and keen to contribute orally in lessons. The work rate of all students is very good.

193. Modern foreign languages is managed well, although there is no director of faculty at the moment. Departmental documentation and schemes of work are very good and the language teachers work very well together. The high turnover of staff over recent years has been well managed to minimise the impact on students' work. Staffing problems have meant that the college is currently not meeting all the targets required as a result of having Language College status. Accommodation and resources are very good. Effective use is made of the library, which has an adequate number of books, magazines and CD-ROMS to enable students to work independently. There is good programme of

extracurricular activities and trips abroad, which enhances the linguistic skills of students who take part.

194. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved considerably, and Italian and Spanish have been successfully introduced. Teamwork within the department ensures a coordinated approach to teaching and assessment of students' work and progress. The performance of some boys is still too low, however, and GCSE results in German have fallen. Although good opportunities for using information and communication technology are included in the schemes of work, in reality, students make little use of computers in lessons.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well, especially in composition.
- Very good teaching ensures that students are enthused by the subject and work hard.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and encourage them to use their initiative and develop as independent learners.
- Good assessment procedures ensure that the students know what they need to do next to improve.
- Music provides good opportunities for using information and communication technology.

Areas for development

- The accommodation, which is cramped for some groups and has inadequate soundproofing.

195. The majority of students have a very limited range of skills and knowledge when they come into the college, and standards are well below average. They have little musical knowledge or practical skills, but they have good aural memories. During Year 9, they rapidly acquire a very good grounding in the basic elements. By the end of the year, they play keyboards, they compose and perform at a standard which is below average. This shows very good achievement. Students who already learn an instrument, or who take up the opportunity to learn one during their first year in college achieve very well. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection, when the underachievement of potentially higher-attaining students was an issue.

196. Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and attain above average GCSE results. The results over the last three years show consistently improving standards, and the signs are that this trend will continue. All students gained at A* to C passes in the 2002 examinations. At the beginning of the course, students learn to understand the link between sounds and visual images on screen, and something of the purpose of film music or soundtrack. They quickly learn how to construct a storyboard and brief soundtracks. By the end of Year 11, students are composing and scoring, using traditional methods and the Cubase program. They are adept at building up and recording layers of sound for their compositions, and they have a secure knowledge of a very wide range of musical genres. They compose in a good range of styles and musical forms, such as a flute piece with tabla accompaniment intended for performance at Divali.

197. The standard of teaching is very good overall and sometimes excellent. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and practical skills. They provide very good opportunities for students to use computers for composing and performing and arranging their music. They have high expectations of students, and provide a very high standard of individual feedback and advice. The very good assessment procedures enable students to know what they have to do to improve their work. Students learn enthusiastically because they are encouraged to make the most of their individual musical

strengths. The teachers also give generously of their time, which enables the students to feel valued. Students respond very positively to this approach, behave very well, work hard, and take care of equipment. Students appreciate the good range of extracurricular provision and enthusiastically take part in groups such the steel band, the pop choir and the brass ensemble.

198. The department is very well led. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in size and lacks adequate soundproofing. As a result music lessons impinge on other nearby activities. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The range and availability of extra-curricular activities.
- The leadership and management of the department.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the students lead to high levels of participation.

Areas for development

- Opportunities for students to show responsibility in leading aspects of warm up and evaluating each other's work.
- Procedures for assessing written work.
- Core curriculum in Years 10 and 11, to include the new National Curriculum areas.
- Constructive marking of written work, so that the students know what they need to do to improve in future.

199. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 give a higher level than this. Students take part mainly in games, but also in a range of physical activities, including swimming and a health-related fitness programme.

200. Students enter the college with skills in line with national expectations. For example, in hockey they are able to control a ball, are aware of safety aspects and use a range of stick movements. Students are able to evaluate the work of their peers but they are too rarely asked to do so and they do not do it spontaneously. Students use technical terminology accurately in lessons. Students' achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory, although the low allocation of time for physical education limits the number of students who attain highly. There is no significant difference between the standards of girls and boys.

201. Standards in the core course at the end of Year 11 are also average. Students in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop the activities of Year 9. In most cases, these develop into full games, but the small numbers in some classes limit some of the group activities. The area of the new National Curriculum covering the roles of coach and official are not yet being covered.

202. Standards in the GCSE course were well above the national average in 2001, with students doing significantly better in physical education than their other subjects. The provisional results in 2002 also show indications of being above the national average. Boys are at or above the national average but girls gain exceptional results, with over ninety per cent gaining grades A* to C in the last two years. Students following the GCSE course show a higher level of practical skill than those in the core course. The rate of improvement in the core course in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory but it is very good in the GCSE course.

203. Behaviour in physical education is very good as are students' attitudes. Levels of participation in lessons are high, as are levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. In all lessons, the students work well, in pairs and in groups. The very good relationships between staff and students, and between

students, enable the students to feel confident in trying out new ideas, and also contribute to the very high uptake of the subject at examination level.

204. Overall the teaching of physical education is good, with some lessons being very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. There is no significant difference in teaching between the year groups. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Strengths of the teaching are the teacher/student relationships and the clear lesson objectives that, with well-structured development, build progressively on the skills of students. In the best lessons more challenging activities were given to students with more ability, enabling them to develop at a faster rate, and additional help was given to students with weaker skills. Weaker aspects in teaching were too few opportunities for students to exercise responsibility, for example, by leading a class warm-up, and a lack of opportunities to evaluate each other's work. In the GCSE course, the students are carefully monitored, with regular testing, to encourage them to reach their target grade. However, some written work is just ticked rather than annotated with advice on how the work could be improved.

205. The curriculum fulfils the National Curriculum requirements, and is further enhanced by the excellent provision of extra-curricular activities. The outdoor activities week, although not officially part of the physical education curriculum, provides another very worthwhile opportunity for students to enhance their physical development. Students can also follow the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Students have the opportunity to participate in match as member of tutor group and college teams. The range of facilities for physical education is very good, although some renovation is required and the small changing rooms become congested at the change of lessons. All groups of students are catered for and make similar progress; students with special educational needs are supported well, for example by the provision of suitable individual fitness programmes. Information and communication technology is developing satisfactorily in the examination courses.

206. Assessment procedures have recently been developed to reflect course requirements. However, these procedures do not yet ensure that students fully understand the level at which they are working and what they need to do to raise the standard of their work further.

207. Leadership and management of the department are good. All members of the department share the vision for improvement and provide good role models for students as team members. The schemes of work are under revision and need to incorporate some wider aspects of the National Curriculum. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, and the positive aspects of the last report have been maintained. This represents good progress and the department has a very good base from which to improve further.

208. Dance is a relatively new GCSE subject in the college. As yet there are no examination results to comment upon and the numbers studying the subject are small. Teaching was good in the one lesson seen, with the teacher showing appropriate expectations of the pupils. Relationships were good and students were achieving above-average standards in their practical work. Written work showed that students could analyse dance movements well.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The Year 9 scheme of work and individual lessons are carefully planned.
- Good relationships are evident between Year 9 teachers and students.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the co-ordinator of Year 9 religious education.

Areas for development

- Meeting statutory obligations to provide religious education for all students.
- Staff expertise in teaching religious education.
- The implementation of the Local Agreed Syllabus.
- Resources for teaching religious education.

209. Students join the college with knowledge, skills and understanding which are well below average, particularly in terms of their knowledge and understanding of major world religions. Overall, in relation to work seen in the classroom and from the scrutiny of students' written work, standards at the end of Year 9 are well below the expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

210. Students' achievement over time is poor and is hampered by the lack of continuity in provision for religious education. Students are aware that religious education is taught for only one year and is not an examination subject. There is considerable underachievement by high-attaining students, which is particularly noticeable when comparing their work in religious education with that in history and geography. Students have no depth to their knowledge and very limited understanding. For example, written work on Islam included good, accurate facts on Ramadan but no appreciation of why Muslims fast. The progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory because individual teachers know and provide for their needs.

211. Although there are pockets of good teaching, overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. All teaching is by non-specialists, who lack subject-specific knowledge but enrich the teaching by using information from their own specialist area. Resources are poor, which limits the learning opportunities that can be provided at present. Most lessons are teacher-led with too few opportunities for independent study, encouraging many students to be passive learners. There is too little use of information and communication technology in religious education. Lesson plans, are very thorough and include attention to literacy. A strength of teaching is the good relationships between teachers and students. Through the study of different religious beliefs and practices, some students in Year 9 gain a satisfactory appreciation of other cultures.

212. There is no overall head of religious education. Leadership of Year 9 religious education is enthusiastic and there is a shared commitment to improvement of the subject. However, there is no monitoring or evaluation of teaching or assessment of students' achievement. Marking currently gives students too little guidance on how to improve. Leadership and management of religious education are poor.

213. Religious education has declined since the last inspection and improvement is poor. The college is failing in its statutory duties to provide religious education for all students and to fulfill the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus. There is no development plan for religious education and it is at present unclear how the development of religious education is to occur. By not providing religious education for most students, the college is neglecting an important means of developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	1	100	62	100	15	4.0	1.5
Other Social studies	4	50	74	-	11	0.5	1.5
General Studies	1	100	77	-	19	1.0	1.9

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	11	82	87	27	43	5.1	5.8
Biology	16	69	88	25	34	4.0	5.3
Chemistry	6	83	90	17	43	4.0	5.9
Physics	3	100	88	100	40	9.3	5.7
Design and Technology	4	100	91	50	30	6.5	5.4
Business Studies	1	100	92	-	32	6.0	5.5
Economics	2	92	89	50	36	6.7	5.5
Business (Post 16 VQ)	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.0	10.5
Computer Studies	26	92	86	15	23	4.9	4.6
PE Studies	11	91	92	27	25	4.6	5.1
Leisure and Tourism (Post 16 VQ)	17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.3	10.1
Health and Social Care (Post 16 VQ)	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.8
Art and Design	4	100	96	50	46	6.5	6.6
Music	5	100	93	20	35	4.8	5.7
Drama	3	100	99	-	38	5.3	6.6
Geography	32	59	92	3	38	2.6	5.7
History	19	100	88	26	35	5.1	5.5
Sociology	12	100	86	58	35	7.3	5.3
Other Social Studies	39	64	87	8	34	2.8	5.3
English Literature	10	100	95	50	37	6.8	5.9
French	4	100	89	25	38	4.5	5.6
German	6	100	91	33	40	5.7	5.8

Communication Studies	11	73	93	36	31	5.3	5.5
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

214. The focus was on mathematics, biology, chemistry and psychology, but physics was also sampled. In physics, examination results were well above average in 2001. One lesson was observed which was good. Students were given good opportunities to learn independently and collaboratively. They were also given good opportunities to use information and communication technology to support their learning.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Staff have very good subject knowledge and examination experience.
- Students are hardworking and cooperative, and they enjoy the subject.
- Marking is thorough and tells the students how they can improve their work.
- A formal schedule of exercises provides structured practice for A-level students and ongoing assessment information for their teachers.

Areas for development

- The use of information and communication technology to enhance students' learning.

215. A-level students take three modules of pure mathematics and three modules from mechanics and statistics. There are currently around 30 Year 12 students working towards AS and A-levels, a very large increase on the previous two years, with a greatly improved proportion of female students. A well-attended GCSE course caters well for students who did not reach grade C in Year 11. GNVQ students have an opportunity to develop their skills in the application of number.

216. In 2001, the A-level pass rate was high. However, the take-up of the subject is low. One candidate obtained an AS pass in 2001. The A-level entry for 2002 was well below what would be expected in a college of this size.

217. Current standards are above average overall. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' files ranged from very good to satisfactory. Year 12 pure mathematics students made average progress in their work on combining polynomials, building on their earlier study of algebra. The highest-attaining of these students could have achieved more. In Year 13, very good work was seen where calculus was applied to problems involving probability density functions.

218. Teaching and learning are generally good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Their guidance to students on examination demands is based upon considerable experience. Mathematical language is used with precision. Teaching and learning take place largely through exposition and practice, with some good discussion. In a Year 12 A-level mechanics lesson the teacher skilfully drew contributions from the students, developing their understanding of vectors. In a GCSE lesson, students were encouraged to contribute their own ideas on how statistical diagrams can mislead. The teacher's good management of the discussion enhanced the students' learning. However the pace of some lessons is not sufficient for the highest-attaining students. Although information and communication technology is available, it is too little used.

219. Students are confident, articulate and very positive in discussion about the study of mathematics. They enjoy the subject and are very appreciative of their teachers. Their very good attitudes are evident in lessons, where students are cooperative and diligent.

220. Provision for teaching the key skill of application of number is well developed and successful. Most GNVQ students have a double lesson each week. The remainder, and other Year 12 students lacking a GCSE mathematics at grade C, have a single lesson each week. Good examples of numeracy across the curriculum were observed in A-level classes in chemistry and physics. Students demonstrated a wide range of numerate skill including the use of graphs, equations and formulae, ratio, rounding to a specified accuracy and index number notation.

221. Sixth form mathematics is well managed by the temporary head of faculty. Organisation of the provision is good, although A-level teaching time has been reduced from six to five periods per week this year. A strength for A-level students is the schedule of exercises that keep students on target and assist teachers in monitoring progress. The department will have to minimise any adverse effects on students' learning resulting from the reduction of teaching time for sixth form mathematics this year.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision for biology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- New teaching strategies have begun to improve students' work.
- Revision classes provide good support for students.
- Teachers work well as a team to achieve consistent standards.

Areas for development

- Teachers' encouragement of students to give fuller answers in discussions.
- More detailed marking for students not attaining the higher grades, to provide specific ways in which their work can be improved.
- Encouraging a wider variety of written skills and devising a way of checking students' notes.

222. A-level results over the last three years have been below the national average. In 2002, overall grades are higher, but it is not yet possible to make comparisons with results nationally. Results in the AS course in 2001 were low, with over one-third of the candidates being unclassified. However, a larger proportion of students gained pass grades in 2002. With the exception of the 2001 AS results, results in 2000, 2001 and 2002 show that attainment measured against the prior attainment of students was satisfactory, with little difference between their results in biology and their other subjects. The current number of students continuing from the AS examination to the A2 level is low.

223. The standard of work in the current Year 12, who are only one week into their course, meets course expectations. Students were observed analysing the complex structure of sugars and starches, and using a flow diagram to test unknown substances. The standard of work of Year 13 students is mixed but overall below average. Students have a satisfactory understanding of basic environmental issues and understand how to collect information but have much weaker skills in analysing data. Weak graphical skills impede some students in recording information.

224. The range of written work is too narrow. Much is in the form note-taking. The quantity of work completed by the students is good but it is not organised in a way that aids revision. The range of skills used is limited. Highlighting, subtitling, annotation of notes and the use of techniques, such as spider diagrams, are rarely seen. There is insufficient use of structured questions to follow up the work and ensure consolidation of understanding and learning.

225. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; in one lesson seen, teaching was very good. Teachers' relationships with the students are good. Teachers' good subject knowledge helps to develop the student understanding and teachers provide useful supplementary knowledge. Sometimes the teacher dominates lessons excessively, providing and developing answers rather than drawing information from the students. Students contribute too little orally and have too few opportunities to hypothesise. Students' achieve satisfactorily. They work steadily and complete the work requested of them in lessons. They appreciate the availability of staff to help them and value the teachers' helpful oral feedback and detailed guidance on their level of attainment and what was needed to raise it to the next level. However, marking and written feedback provide students with too little information about how they may progress to the next level of attainment. A closer monitoring of students' progress in tests has recently been introduced. Teachers have not been in the habit of marking students' notes. Use is made of past test papers and these are marked, but there is little evidence of students using these as for revision. A good new procedures is that students will re-sit a paper when poor marks are obtained, with a closer monitoring of the level attained.

226. The teacher responsible for the subject has been in post for less than a year, and the leadership of the department is satisfactory. The teachers work well as team. Plans to achieve greater consistency across groups have been introduced as part of the strategies to raise students' attainment, but is too soon to see the full impact of these. Parents are now informed more frequently about students' progress. The standards in A-level biology were below expectation at the last inspection. Satisfactory improvement has been made since then.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Although results have varied from year to year, all students achieved a pass grade in 2001 and 2002.
- Good relationships between teachers and students and some very good teaching ensure that students learn confidently and share ideas freely.
- Students enjoy chemistry, in particular the practical side of the subject.

Weaknesses

- The opportunities to use information and communication technology.
- The quality of teaching varies and the pace in some practical lessons.
- Adapting work to meet the needs of lower-attaining students.

227. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were below the national average. Over the last three years results have varied, but, in the 1999 and 2000 examinations female students did better than male students, achieving above-average results. Since the last inspection, results have improved overall, with all students passing in both 2001 and 2002.

228. The standards achieved by current Year 13 students are close to the expectations for this stage of the year. All students achieved a pass grade at AS level in 2001. In lessons seen, students worked with enthusiasm and confidence, but the level of understanding varied. Higher-attaining students understood the purpose of an experiment - to determine the order of a chemical reaction. Lower-attaining students knew that they would treat the results more quantitatively than they had done at GCSE but were not sure how. They were confident that the teacher would explain during the next session. The pace of the practical session would have been brisker if the students had had a supplementary task whilst waiting for results. Their written work showed a similar spread of ability. Higher-attaining students could write well and explain their work clearly, applying theory to new

situations. Some lower-attaining students had difficulties with spelling, whilst others could not apply theory to their results.

229. Students in Year 12 are just beginning their course, but are achieving in line with their previous attainment. They clearly enjoyed their work and were confident in discussion, using ideas from GCSE and applying them well to new work on solubility and formulae of compounds.

230. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good lessons observed during the inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the very good lessons, learning objectives were shared clearly with students and checked at intervals by searching questions which tested students' understanding. Such lessons were well planned to integrate theory with practical work. Less dynamic lessons, although satisfactory, did not enable the students to understand the work as thoroughly.

231. Students learn satisfactorily. They are attentive and are able to discuss their work. They appreciate the opportunity to do their own practical work and enjoy working with other keen students. Although some find the ideas challenging, they feel well supported by their teachers.

232. The newly-appointed head of department has wisely carried on with current policies and syllabus and is organising the subject well. He understands his role well and is committed to building and improving on current achievements. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Results at A-level have improved in 2002.
- Teachers are very committed, have a thorough knowledge of the syllabus and prepare materials well.
- Activities are carefully chosen to maintain students' interest and motivation.
- Organisation of students' work including coursework .
- Psychology is a popular subject, students' attitudes are positive and relationships are good.

Weaknesses

- Standards in AS level, which are well below expectations.
- Students' opportunities for working independently.

233. Results in 2001 were well below the national average. However, results for 2002, were significantly higher and in line with students' achievement at GCSE.

234. Results at AS level remain well below expectations. The average score in 2001 was just above an E grade and 43 per cent of students failed to reach a pass grade. There was no significant difference between male students and female students, except that more female students choose psychology. The ethnic minority students who are included in psychology classes perform as well as their peers.

235. Standards on entry to the sixth form are below average because students are accepted with lower GCSE grades than in many schools. The previous work available for scrutiny was well organised and presented, but there was too little independent work. Coursework from last year indicates that students' achievement was satisfactory, but their overall attainment was below average.

236. The standard of teaching is satisfactory overall. The teacher is very hard working and committed, has produced extensive printed resources, which are closely connected to the syllabus. Students feel that the guidance they are given is good and they respond with very well presented notes that contribute well to their learning. However, note taking is an unsuitable way of learning about some

topics in Year 13, such as theories of attraction, since it reduces important ideas to superficial statements. These over-simplifications do not challenge higher-attaining students sufficiently. Students are sometimes asked to evaluate theories, but have not been taught the prerequisite skills.

237. Practical activities, such as a brief survey on memory, contribute positively to students' enjoyment and motivation. However, no calculators were available to make sense of the results of this activity, so there was no opportunity to evaluate them. Thus, a good opportunity was missed to develop the topic into meaningful independent work which would enable students to develop the higher-level skills.

238. The use of key words and in the production of course work contribute to students' development of literacy. Satisfactory opportunities occur for developing skills in information and communication technology. Resources are satisfactory, but an increased use of videos, computers and calculators would allow more searching investigation to take place.

239. The main strength in psychology is the students' positive attitudes. Relationships are good. Psychology, with 50 students in Year 12 and 20 in Year 13, is one of the college's most popular subjects. Students are well supported and they take obvious care with their work. Notes are unmarked, which allows some mistakes to pass uncorrected, for example in the statistical module. Procedures for assessment are satisfactory; course work is well marked and students understand what is necessary to gain high marks.

240. There is only one teacher of psychology, which is part of the vocational faculty. The teacher is qualified in psychology, but not yet a qualified teacher. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. In the last report, results at A-level in psychology and students' attainment were below average. There have been recent improvements both in assessment and A2 results. Improvement in provision since then is sound.

Engineering, design and manufacturing.

241. In 2001, the majority of the small numbers of students taking A-level in design and technology gained A or B grades, but only three quarters of the large number taking AS level gained a pass grade, and these were all at the lower grades. In the one lesson observed, teaching was good. Students carried out individual research using computers. Standards were in line with the course expectations. Students are positive about the support they receive, and are working towards agreed targets. Last year's low results were caused by staffing problems which affected students' achievement in their coursework.

BUSINESS

242. The focus was on advanced vocational (AVCE) business studies, but advanced level economics was also sampled. In A-level economics, results were above the national average. One lesson was observed where good teaching led to students developing skills as independent learners. A helpful range of resources including web sites, such as "Biz Ed", was provided to develop students understanding. The subject knowledge of teacher and students was very good, and current examples from the real world of business were used to enhance students' learning.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Relationships between the teacher and students are very productive.
- The course builds sequentially on students' knowledge and skills, making very good use of situations from the real world of business.
- Students achieve results that are well above what might be expected from their overall GCSE results.
- Constructive guidance and feedback are given on students' coursework, enabling them to make very good progress.
- Students have very good opportunities to use information and communication technology for imaginatively presenting their work.

Areas for development

- The size and quality of accommodation for business learning, which limits opportunities to create a businesslike environment.

243. Standards are above average in AVCE business. Students begin Year 12 with no previous experience of business education, and sometimes with lower GCSE results than would normally gain admission to the A-level course. Despite these disadvantages, students make very good progress through the course and gain results that are above the national average. In 2001, the results in the GNVQ advanced business examination of almost all students were above what might have been predicted from their overall GCSE results, by one or two grades. Provisional results for 2002 are also good.

244. Students' response to the subject is very good. In one business lesson observed, students responded well to opportunities to relate their recent work experience to the theoretical aspects of the lesson. Students are given opportunities to evaluate their teaching, and are very positive. Students have responsible attitudes and are well motivated, and appreciate the efforts of staff to help them.

245. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In one lesson observed, there was a clear structure and positive working atmosphere throughout. Both teacher and students demonstrated very good levels of subject knowledge. There was excellent use of real-world, relevant examples, which often built on students' past experience. For example in a lesson on 'customer service', a student who worked in "Waitrose" compared her experience with the theoretical model being described. The teacher's theoretical input skilfully prepared students for the next lesson so that they would gain significant benefit from their visit to a building society to investigate customer service.

246. Work is marked regularly and rigorously, and students receive very constructive feedback. The very good use of data analysis enables students' progress to be monitored and suitably challenging targets set. Students' work shows very good application of theoretical concepts to the organisations studied.

247. A very good induction course enables students to make very good progress from the outset, despite their lack of previous experience of business education. The scheme of work develops students' skills and knowledge thoroughly and progressively, and work is clearly focused on the exam requirements. Students in Year 12, who are only a little way into their course, were introduced to research skills very effectively through a link with the University of Northampton. The university librarian introduced them to the extensive resources of the university library, to which they have access. This excellent resource gives students a great advantage towards becoming independent learners. Visiting speakers and educational visits provide very good opportunities for students to extend their studies. Very good opportunities are provided for students to use information and communication technology for presenting their work.

248. One teacher, who also has other responsibilities within the vocational education faculty, teaches the business course and manages the subject very well. The size and quality of accommodation for business learning limit opportunities to create an appropriately businesslike environment.

Information and communication technology

Overall, provision for information and communication technology in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- Students gain results that are above average.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and they teach lessons well.
- Good planning, both of schemes of work and of individual lessons.
- Staff work well as a team and the subject is well led and managed.

Areas for development

- Occasionally, the pace of teaching could be increased to ensure that students are always fully engaged in productive work.

249. Results in 2001 were above average. In the A-level computer studies course almost half of those entered gained grades A* to C. Results in the AS course were also good, as were those for the GNVQ course where over two-thirds gained a pass. However, the provisional results for 2002 show some decline from these standards.

250. Standards of work seen in lessons are average and appropriate, given the age, ability and previous experience of the students. In the Year 12 GNVQ course, students were involved in completing assessment tasks to allow teachers to assess the knowledge and skills that the students possessed at the start of the course. Students responded well to these tasks and the majority were able to demonstrate a good level of understanding of the use of spreadsheets. In A-level computer studies, students in Year 13 were able to apply previous learning to the lesson topic and made good progress in their understanding of the use of normalisation in the construction of an efficient database.

251. Teaching is good in both Years 12 and 13 and students learn well as a result. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are able to assist students at an appropriate level. At times the pace of lessons was slow and some students were not always engaged in productive work. There is a need for more frequent marking of students' work folders to ensure that the students have accurate and complete notes to support their learning.

252. Students are enthusiastic. In the GNVQ classes the majority of students worked well to apply previous learning of how to carry out calculations using a spreadsheet. Where students lacked prior knowledge, most tried hard to work things out for themselves. In A-level computer studies, students listened carefully and some responded well to questions from the teacher. Their answers indicated a clear understanding of the subject matter covered in the lesson. Teachers have a very positive working relationship with the students.

253. Information and communication technology in the sixth form is managed effectively. The staff work well as a team and have produce appropriately challenging schemes of work. They have also produced a good range of materials to support their teaching, including the assessment tasks used for the new GNVQ students. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

254. The focus was on physical education and leisure and tourism, but the advanced vocational courses leisure and recreation and travel and tourism were sampled. The GNVQ intermediate course

in leisure and tourism was sampled. Results in this course in 2001 were below the national average. Students who completed the course did well in relation to their GCSE results. One lesson was observed. During this satisfactory lesson, students developed an understanding of the types of facilities within the catering and accommodation component of the course. Progress was slow as the group was still forming and individuals were adjusting to the expectations of the department. They found great difficulty in working independently, but all were successful in collecting the data that they were to analyse in the next lesson.

Physical Education

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement by students.
- Rising standards mean that virtually all students now reach or exceed their target grade.
- Excellent relationships amongst the staff and students lead to a high level of enthusiasm for the subject.
- The level of support given to the students.

Areas for development

- Strategies to enable male students to attain the higher grades.
- Weaker students' oral answers, and their organisational and note taking skills.

255. In the last three years the A-level physical education results have moved from well below the national average in 1999 to above in 2000 and in line with the national average in 2001. Although the national data for the comparison of the 2002 results is not yet available, these results are very good since all students obtained pass grades, half obtaining the higher grades of A and B. AS results are similarly high. The attainment of female students is better than male students, with more female students obtaining the higher grades. Virtually all students reached or exceed their target grade and this represents very good achievement.

256. The work of students currently in Year 13 is above course expectations. They are able to consider the short and long term effects of sport on the body, using the relevant technical terminology. Higher-attaining students give thorough answers that reveal a good depth of knowledge. They are also able to discuss how personality and pressure affect performance in a sporting activity. They apply that knowledge to their own situation, linking personality traits both to different sporting activities and, at their own suggestion, to positions within a team game. The expectation is that students will use the correct technical terminology in all situations, and they do. Most students use a good variety of techniques in their written work, such as annotated diagrams and notes, highlighting, spider diagrams and graphs, which gives them a valuable resource for revision.

257. Year12 students, who have only just started their course, are currently rather hesitant in expressing their ideas and have yet to develop the independent learning skills displayed by students in Year 13. This was noticeable in a session when they were collecting evidence for analysing practical skills. Groups were expected to organise activities to show good and weak skills but took a long time to do this.

258. Students' response to the work is excellent. They are fully involved and appreciate the support that is available to them. There is a very high uptake from AS to A2 level. All students following the course participate in extra-curricular sporting activities and a number act as sports prefects, supporting extra-curricular activities and organising inter-tutor group matches in the main college. A high proportion represent the college and area as team members and individually in a good range of sporting activities.

259. Overall the teaching of physical education is very good. The most effective teaching involves high expectations by both teacher and students, links the work closely to the examination requirements and uses a variety of active methods. Teachers ensure that the students clearly understand the aim of the lesson. A weaker aspect is when a student answers a question but the teacher completes or develops the answer, as was the case occasionally with lower-attaining students. The careful marking of work supports the very good teaching. Students receive constructive comments that clearly state what is needed to raise the work to the next level. However, the general notes made by the students are not currently checked or marked. A consequence of this is that the some lower-attaining students have some incorrect information on which they will base subsequent work and revision.

260. The leadership and management structure of the department is very good. The practice of staff using their differing skills to teach different modules uses staff strengths very effectively. Assessment procedures are good; students are given an individual target grade, based on their GCSE results and other tests. The department has made rapid strides in improving the examination results of students over the last three years and this indicates very good improvement since the last inspection.

Leisure and tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results are above average and students achieve very well.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach very well
- The positive attitudes of students and very good relationships contribute positively to the quality of students' work.
- Schemes of work present the students with topics that are interesting.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development

- Some teaching groups are too small, which limits the scope for discussion and working together.

261. The inspection covered the AVCE double and single courses in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism. Some groups are very small, even though groups are taught together, where appropriate. This limits the scope for discussion and working together for the students. Most students who start the course complete the second year.

262. The AVCE courses have been developed since the previous inspection when results in this area were good. In 2001, both the proportions of students passing the examinations and those achieving the grades A or B were higher than the national average. This represents good attainment and very good

achievement as students have a range of prior attainment, most having GCSE scores below the average usually required for entry to sixth forms.

263. The students have a good knowledge and understanding of the modules covered. They use technical terms appropriately and with accuracy and are challenged to apply their knowledge and understanding. Their written work is of a high standard; the development of literacy skills is a priority in the teaching. Indeed, students are well prepared in all three key skill areas; they make good progress with numerical skills and use these extensively in the work for their portfolios. They are encouraged to make full use of their developing information communication technology skills and have good access to stations, though there is no specialist teacher available. The standards attained, evident in the previously completed work and during lessons observed, are above national expectations. Students are achieving very well in comparison with their attainment when they started the course.

264. Students in Year 12 have made good progress in the short time they have followed the course as teachers provide good support in easing the transition from GCSE.

265. The teaching observed was good or better and, when the evidence of previously-completed work is taken into account, it is very good overall. The teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge were evident in lessons and contributed to the very positive response of students. Teachers are fully aware of course requirements and have adapted to the changed demands of the revised courses. They have appropriately high expectations and students rise well to this challenge. Teachers exploit students' interests well. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, a comment on the success of the local football team led to a review of the financial stability of sporting clubs, and very good use was made of the time available. Students are encouraged to learn for themselves and a strong emphasis is placed upon the acquisition of the skills necessary for this.

266. Students are aware of their progress as the objectives of lessons are made clear, and their understanding checked at the end. Procedures for marking students' work and assessing their progress are effective. Students receive much advice as to how they may improve their standards. Teachers know their students well and are aware of their needs from the very thorough records of their progress that are maintained. They provide support so that the less confident are able to contribute constructively to class discussions. This was clear when Year 12 students, who had investigated the attractions of cities, such as Bristol and Manchester, reported their findings to the group.

267. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. They find the course rewarding and enjoy the learning experiences. Relationships between teachers and students and within groups are a particular strength. The good accommodation allows the use of a good range of teaching methods and activities. Very good use is made of the wide range of resources available, many of which have been generated within the department or gleaned from the leisure industry.

268. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The teachers work very well together; they are experienced, enthusiastic and committed to development. Drawn from a number of faculties, they contribute a good range of complementary strengths to the subject. The scheme of work is very good. The topics covered are varied and interesting for the students, and lesson planning is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Health and social care

269. One lesson in the advanced vocational health and social care was sampled. In this very good lesson students made very good use of computers to calculate and compare the nutritional value of several meals. Students achieved very well because the teaching was sensitively paced and the teacher was aware of the students needs. Planning took good account of the range of ability in the group.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

270. The focus was on art and design and drama. However, lessons in music and performing studies were sampled. Provision for both these subjects is very good. In music, where numbers are small, results vary depending on the nature of each year group. Teaching is very good and students achieve well. Students work well, independently developing their practical skills in lessons and through the very good opportunities for extra-curricular music activities. In the performing studies course, students encounter worthwhile opportunities for developing skills in music, dance and drama. Teaching is very good.

Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' enthusiasm and commitment to the course contribute well to their personal development
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the course and the quality of advice and guidance given to students is reflected in students' good achievement.

Areas for development

- Resources are inadequate, including access to computers and visits to local and national galleries
- The range of teaching styles needed to consolidate students' learning effectively.

271. Numbers opting for art courses are small and comparisons with national standards and are therefore inappropriate. Most students begin the AS course with average or above average grades in art at GCSE. In line with the college's policy of 'open access', occasionally students join sixth form courses with little or no experience of the subject beyond Year 9. Students entered for AS and A-level examinations in recent years generally gain A to C grades and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

272. Based on the small amount of work covered so far, students' current work confirms this overall picture. Only one student is following the A-level course at present and this is taught with the AS course. Year 12 students were very new to the course. In lessons observed during the inspection, they researched various themes, artists and styles of work. Many worked independently in the library, using books and computers to find information and follow lines of enquiry suggested by the teacher. The lack of study resources in the department severely limits the opportunities for research and leads to an inefficient use of time.

273. Teaching and learning are good. The strength of the teaching is teachers' knowledge of the subject and the examination modules and assessment criteria. These are used very effectively to shape coursework and guide individual students' research and practical work. Students are asked to explain and present their findings in limited ways, and do not make enough use of interactive computer-generated materials or individual or group presentations. This limits the consolidation of students' understanding of difficult concepts and their consolidation of basic skills. Students are keen to learn to and do well.

274. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The subject leader has a very good understanding of what could be done to improve results and the achievements of individual students. More planned opportunities to see exhibitions, and meet with artists and craft workers, would greatly strengthen the overall provision and make a significant contribution to students' cultural and spiritual development. The numbers opting for art and design courses are low, given the size of the sixth form and compared with colleges nationally. Weaknesses in provision in Year 9, resulting in fewer students

opting for GCSE courses, make recruitment onto sixth form courses difficult. Because the guidance students are given is good, however, most students finish the course. There is an established record of students successfully progressing onto art courses in higher education.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average, and have remained so in recent years.
- Teaching is very good and makes rigorous intellectual demands on students
- A wide-ranging curriculum challenges the students and provides opportunities for studying the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of the topics covered.
- Students are encouraged to develop the skills of independent learning.
- Assessment is effectively used to inform students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Drama makes a very strong contribution to the extra-curricular life of the college through plays, shows and workshops.

Area for development

- The accommodation for drama, which holds back students' learning

275. As a result of good results at GCSE, students join the sixth form with above-average knowledge, skills and understanding in drama. They achieve very well during Years 12 and 13. Results at A-level have been above average over the last three years, and are continuing to improve. This represents significant improvement in the results since the last inspection, when two-thirds of pupils, compared with the current three-quarters of pupils, gained grades A to C. Provisional results for 2002 are very high. Year 13 students will take A-level in performance studies, rather than drama in 2003, a course which integrates drama, music and dance.

276. At the beginning of the course, students are introduced to a wide range of dramatic experiences. They rise well to the rigorous challenges and enjoy the activities. They show sensitivity and determination, for example when exploring roles concerned with the funeral of a child. Students in Year 12 were heard, during the inspection, to have an informed discussion whether they preferred Brecht's or Stanislavski's approach to characterisation in the theatre. They were enabled to do this after studying and contrasting the theatrical styles of these playwrights, an activity which they had obviously found intriguing.

277. The quality of teaching is consistently very good, and the students respond very positively to this. Each student is valued individually, and lesson planning takes careful account of the range of strengths and abilities in the groups. The strengths of the teaching are the teacher's enthusiasm and wide subject knowledge, the demanding and challenging style of teaching and the very effective use of assessment procedures. In response to the high standard of teaching, the students display a mature and considered approach to their work, they take responsibility for their own learning, they work hard. They respond very positively to the teacher's very high expectations and they derive both fun and self-fulfilment from lessons. In a lesson which touched on Arthaud and the theatre of cruelty, the students chanted a nonsense rhyme, and were astounded and taken aback by the menace which they could achieve by doing this together in unison, and in the half-dark.

278. The management of the department is very good. It provides an extensive range of curricular opportunities, and expects that the students will use all available opportunities for their research into the subject, and that they will apply themselves to the business of stagecraft for their own productions. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and productions is staged, involving substantial numbers of

students. The drama prefects make important contributions to these extra-curricular productions. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HUMANITIES

History

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between students and teachers encourage students to achieve highly.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and assessment procedures to develop students' learning.
- Students' results in examinations are high.
- The curriculum is enriched by activities such as a visit to Berlin.

Areas for development.

- The time allocated to history this year.

279. A-level results in 2001 were average. Provisional results for 2002 indicate a 100 per cent pass rate. The AS results in 2002 were average.

280. Current standards in Year 12 are in line with course expectations and students are making a good start to developing appropriate historical skills and are achieving very well in relation to their starting points. Students were able, shortly after the beginning of the course, to analyse Conservative political dominance in the late nineteenth century. Another class concluded a session on German unification by showing a thorough knowledge of the relevant factors. Higher-attaining students were able to outline articulately the shape of the argument of their forthcoming essay, explaining why they emphasised one factor above others.

281. Current standards of work in Year 13 also remain in line with course expectations. Year 13 students are building on their achievements in last year's AS course, and are achieving very well. Given sources of evidence by the teacher about Germany's progress through two industrial revolutions, they were able to expand on their inferences from the text source, confidently drawing on their Year 12 learning. They went on to mark and evaluate their responses as a group, demonstrating a confidence in their own powers of self-evaluation, and a productive relationship with their teacher.

282. Overall, the teaching seen was very good, and students made very good progress in lessons. The teacher's confident knowledge of the subject syllabus, and detailed planning, resulted in a good range of learning activities. Teachers' detailed understanding of the demands of the examination criteria, and very good assessment procedures, lead to very constructive advice for students on how to develop their work. Students are recommended relevant web sites to extend their research. A small, but carefully chosen, selection of books in the library gives them further opportunities satisfactory opportunities for investigating topics.

283. The department is very well managed. The high quality of teaching and learning is a direct result of the teachers' very good subject knowledge, and their commitment to using effective methods to develop students' interest and enthusiasm. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of geography are very good.

Areas for development

- Results at AS and A-level.
- Students' skills in independent learning.
- The size of the groups to avoid problems of staffing and learning.

284. The inspection covered the AS and A-level courses. Over recent years students' results have been well below the national average. In 2001, a very much smaller proportion of A-level students achieved the higher grades, A and B, than reported nationally. The proportion of students achieving grades in the range A to E, was well below the national average. Results in the AS level examinations were similarly low. However, unconfirmed figures for 2002 show a significant improvement in both examinations. For example, all students gained a grade in the range A to E at A2 level. Results are following a rising trend.

285. The work seen in lessons and in students' folders confirms this improvement. The overall standard of work of students currently in Year 13 is close to course expectations. The higher-attaining students are working at A-level commensurate with their ability, as in a Year 13 lesson where two such students made very good progress as they investigated destructive and constructive plate margins. Students' work reflects the relative neglect of subject skills in earlier years. For example, essay work contains few maps. Students have a sound factual knowledge and use terms appropriately and with accuracy in written and oral work. The majority of students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at GCSE level. The essays written at the end of Year 12 are considerably more lucid, the description that characterised students' earlier work being replaced by a clearer focus on what is required and more analysis. This was evident in their review of the usefulness of the 'Demographic Transition Model'. Teachers provide useful frameworks to support the development of essay skills. As well as a continued emphasis on literacy, students have frequent opportunities to develop their numerical skills as they apply measures to changes in aspects of human and physical geography. However, the appreciation of process and the interrelationships between human and physical aspects are less well developed in the work of lower-attaining students than is expected at this stage.

286. In lessons, students worked conscientiously and with interest. A significant proportion of students experience difficulties in coping with independent learning as, in the past, they have been given insufficient opportunities to practise the necessary skills. Students respond well to the good teaching. Year 12 students showed real interest as they mapped the relationships between different concepts they had encountered at GCSE level. For example, they made good progress and built-up complicated networks of links between factors influencing population density. Teachers take great care to ease students' transition to more advanced study.

287. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are carefully planned and learning objectives made clear to the students. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they have adapted well to the changed demands of the revised examinations. Students were motivated by the very enthusiastic exposition, rich in examples and supported with a good range of resources. They responded positively to the high expectations of the teachers.

288. Overall, students are very satisfied with the courses and enjoy their work. They have high respect for the expertise of their teachers, find them easily approachable and value the quality of individual support provided. Their progress is checked and essay work is marked very carefully with

clear annotations and including an estimated grade. The department is planning to use data more rigorously to set individual targets for students and raise their attainment further.

289. The geography department is managed well within the humanities faculty. The recently-appointed director of geography provides effective leadership, and the teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improvement. They contribute a good blend of experience and ideas. Demands of the timetable leave teachers with insufficient time for planning, and for monitoring teaching. The separate sixth form teaching room provides good accommodation, but is rather small for the larger groups. Very good textbooks have been purchased recently and all students have the resources necessary to work independently. A satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to sustained success in examinations.
- Students are strongly motivated by the very good student/teacher relationships.
- Very good teacher subject expertise enables students to receive carefully focused individual support.

Areas for development

- The opportunities for students to use information and communication technology

290. Results in the A-level examination for 2001 were well above the national average. Results in sociology have been amongst the college's best for several years and students do very well in relation to their levels of attainment when they start the course. Provisional results for 2002 have sustained this level of performance. The current Year 13 students met their target grades at AS level. Students make very good progress in sociology over the two years. They benefit greatly from the experience and enthusiasm of the teacher of subject.

291. Although only a short time into their course, students in Year 12 showed they were making a good start. With reference to case studies and significant ideas in the study of sociology, students discussed significant aspects of British society, and recollections of their own childhood games. This led to growing awareness of terms such as 'primary and secondary socialisation', and the meaning of 'culture'. The students were beginning to move, with the help of the teacher, from concrete examples from their own lives to recognise some significant concepts that guide sociological enquiry.

292. Standards of work in Year 13 are above course expectations. Year 13 students show good knowledge and understanding of the demands of their coursework. For example they showed a good understanding of the need for clarity and relevance in establishing the context of their research. The neat files of the sample of work from this group showed good evidence of effective independent learning as they put theory into the practice in field research. They demonstrated a sound grasp of major theoretical perspectives and significant case studies, from which they drew to inform their rationale and context paragraphs.

293. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was overall very good. The teacher structured lessons carefully around clear ideas and objectives. There were good pace and challenge, leading through students' discussion to a clear finishing point, which reinforced their previous learning. The impact of teaching can be seen in the well-informed and organised work in the students' files in Year 13. In one lesson, the teacher's knowledge of the examination criteria ensured a very clear and focused introduction to the coursework study. There were no differences in standards attained by male students and female students, nor by students of minority ethnic origin.

294. The department is very well led. The head of department has an excellent understanding of syllabus and examination demands. As a result, the guidance for students is very clear. The students use a range of department texts, articles and recommended web sites to support their independent research. However, the information and communication technology are not used enough, for example in presentation, including the graphical representation of data.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

295. The focus was on English and French, but communication studies and German were sampled. In communication studies examination results were average in 2001, indicating good progress from GCSE. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Students were beginning to understand important ideas about non-verbal communication and language because good teaching linked their observations to theory and technical vocabulary. The teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm, and the students' attentiveness were strengths of the lesson.

German

296. Most students who take German gain a pass grade and achieve well in relation to their starting points. One lesson in Year 12 was observed and the teaching was good. The teacher had good subject knowledge and very good linguistic competence. The lesson was entirely in German, which helped develop students' listening and speaking skills. Attainment is low. Students had large gaps in their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and their speaking skills were very basic, but they were well motivated and achieved well in relation to their abilities.

Communication studies

297. Results were average in 2001, indicating good achievement in relation to students' starting points. One Year 12 lesson was observed. Students were beginning to understand key vocabulary and important ideas about language and non-verbal communication. The teacher's subject knowledge was good, and the students were attentive and responsive.

English

Overall, provision for English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results are well above the national average and have risen consistently in recent years.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students are well motivated and learn enthusiastically.
- The subject is very well led.

Areas for development

- Students' wider reading.
- The opportunities for discussion, particularly in relation to group size.

298. The English department offers AS and A2 courses in English literature and communication studies. GCSE English is offered as a re-sit course, mainly for students on GNVQ courses, who wish to improve their grades. There is a high take up on courses and most students complete their courses. Female students outnumber male.

299. Standards achieved in AS and A-level examinations in English literature are high. Standards seen at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Results at A-level in 2001 were well above the national average. There is an improving trend in results overall and in the percentage of students gaining the higher grades A to C. Students do very well, considering their qualifications on entry, although their standards in writing and grammar remain comparatively low.

300. The observation of work during the inspection confirms these standards. In the lessons seen, students' confidence in exploring ideas develops well. All offer views based on careful reading, and respond to characters and sentiments at a literary level. Year 12 students express their ideas clearly and are willing to ask questions, engage in lively discussion and work collaboratively as they develop skills from GCSE. This was clearly illustrated in the progress they made making meaning from Chaucer's 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue'. By Year 13, they are able to analyse a writer's technique and purpose. For example, they linked the theme of love to a wider social context in sections of Keats's poem, 'Isabella: Pot of Basil'.

301. Students' files show the progressive development of work from notes on texts studied to extended critical writing. Appropriate homework assignments consolidate material discussed in lessons. The introduction of literary terms helps less confident students to write in a more formal, critical style. This is illustrated in the appropriate use of critical vocabulary to contrast the godless societies in novels by Hemingway and FitzGerald. Reading skills are well developed and there is good use of text, for example to show the impact and effect of language on the audience when Hamlet refers to Gertrude as first 'madam' then 'woman'. Higher-attaining students show a well-developed awareness of the way in which structure and language shape meaning, and are able to sustain an in-depth analysis of literary texts.

302. Students achieve well because very good teaching is focused clearly on assessment objectives. Teachers know their subject very well and have a good understanding of students' learning needs. Induction into sixth form work is carefully structured. Teachers' questioning skills extend students' critical thinking skills well. Time is well used to move learning forward through well-focused discussions, for example when students shared work in small groups to consolidate their understanding of the status of women in chapter 2 of 'The Handmaid's Tale' by Margaret Atwood. There is prompt and constructive evaluation of students' ideas in discussions, writing and individual tutorials. The high standard of teachers' feedback encourages students to improve their work, and standards have risen. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy the subject. There are very good relations between staff and students. Staff communicate their enthusiasm very successfully to students which is an important motivating factor. Group sizes vary, and, where they are small, this limits the scope for lively discussions.

303. The library supports students' work effectively. There is ready access to the Internet to support research. However, a wider range of non-fiction books is needed to support recent changes in the syllabus. There is an extensive fiction collection to extend students' reading further. Some students find it a challenge to read the set texts independently, and this is an area for continued development. Courses are enriched by trips to the theatre, and students attend annual revision conferences which they find invigorating and motivating.

304. The leadership and management of English are very good. The teachers work closely together and there is a shared commitment to improve standards. Very effective monitoring of teaching and results is used to bring about improvements. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

French

Overall, the provision for French is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good partly as a result of the very good relationships.
- Teachers' linguistic skills are very good.
- The accommodation and resources are very good.
- Teachers develop students' cultural awareness effectively.

Areas for development

- The use of information communication technology to enhance learning.
- Students' writing skills and knowledge of grammar.

305. The number of examination entries is too low for valid comparison of results with those gained nationally. However, nearly all students who took French in the past four years gained a pass grade, with a good number gaining the higher grades. Most of the students since 1998 have been female students. Many students who take French do not have high GCSE grades on entry to the course, and so they achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. In lessons, Year 13 students' speaking, reading and listening skills were in line with national expectations. They could confidently discuss the role of women in society at a simple level and could quickly skim and scan a selection of texts on the topic and answer the teacher's questions with reasonable fluency. An examination of their course work revealed, however, that their written work is of a low standard and their knowledge of grammatical structures is weak. The Year 12 students express themselves simply in some basic situations and understand lessons conducted in French by native speakers of the language, but their knowledge of the grammar of French is very weak and their range of vocabulary is very limited.

306. The teaching of French in the sixth form is good. Teachers' subject knowledge and linguistic skills are very good. The teachers work collaboratively and have a common approach to teaching and assessment, which helps student to learn effectively. Teachers prepare lessons well and the lesson aims are made clear to students. Teachers provide students with good strategies to develop reading skills, which enable students quickly to extract the key points from a text. The scheme of work is good and it identifies when and how information communication technology can be beneficially used, but these opportunities are not provided regularly enough.

307. Lessons are varied and the activities, materials and good use of humour motivate students to succeed. Year 12 students enjoyed a lesson on French gestures and this helped to develop their awareness of French culture. A very systematic approach was adopted for teaching grammatical patterns, which helped students to fill the gaps in their knowledge. Good use is made of home-produced resources, which motivate students by relating to their own interests and needs. Lessons have a good pace and activities are generally challenging, with the result that students work quickly and effectively. Teachers frequently praise students for their efforts and correct mistakes constructively, which helps them to make good progress.

308. Relationships are very good. Students are committed, attentive and enthusiastic. They ask for clarification when they do not understand, which enables them to progress well. The accommodation and resources are very good. The library provides a good resource to support for independent learning. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.