

INSPECTION REPORT

NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104706

Headteacher: Miss Christine Byrne McCann

Reporting inspector: Dr David Benstock
20243

Dates of inspection: 2 – 6 December 2002

Inspection number: 249733

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college: Comprehensive

College category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of students: 11-19

Gender of students: Female

College address: Everton Valley
Liverpool

Postcode: L4 4EZ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: T A Westwell

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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20243	David Benstock	Registered inspector		What sort of college is it? The college's results and students' achievements Teaching How well is the college led and managed?
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27984	Alan Whitehall	Team inspector	Science Chemistry P16	
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art and design Music	
10941	Renee Robinson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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2494	Michael Newton	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
17201	Vicki Harray	Team inspector	Physical education Dance	Learning resources
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Notre Dame Catholic College is an 11-19 comprehensive college, voluntary aided, with 1120 female students on roll, of whom 164 are in the sixth form. Numbers have remained consistent and the college is currently oversubscribed. The college has recently been awarded performing arts specialist status. Students are admitted from a range of primary schools but levels of attainment on entry to the college are well below national average. The college is situated on the north side of Liverpool and is within the trusteeship of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The accommodation is on one site, with a complex array of buildings of various ages, ranging from the earliest, which dates back to the original convent college in 1908, to new construction of drama and indoor sports facilities. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. The vast majority of students are white and of U.K. heritage. A small minority are of other minority ethnic background. The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is low. The percentage of students with special educational needs (SEN) is around the national average and the proportion with statements of need is below national average. Socio-economic circumstances for many students are a disadvantage to their learning. The local area census indicates that the percentage of overcrowded households is twice the national average and the percentage of families with experience of higher education is low. Social deprivation is high.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

This is a good, effective and rapidly improving college with a good sixth form. It offers its students a good standard of education. It has many strengths and the strong capacity to address those areas needing improvement. Standards of attainment in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were well below national average but well above national average in schools working in a similar context. In the work seen of current Year 9 students, standards are closer to those expected for their age. Achievements of students from their entry to the college have been good. In Year 11, standards overall in 2002 were below national average but the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades has increased greatly from the previous year, and was close to national average. Standards in 2002 were well above the national average in similar schools. In the work seen currently, standards are close to those expected for the age, and students' achievement from Year 9 to Year 11 is good. Teaching, and the learning that it promotes, is good throughout the college. The college provides a very good level of care for students, resulting in very good attitudes and behaviour. The head teacher is an excellent leader, and is having a great impact on the improvement of the college. The senior managers provide very good leadership and management, which is increasingly being followed in departments. The committed governing body, with clear guidance from some astute and committed leading members, is increasing its awareness of the expectation of its role, and overall provides good support. The college gives good value for money.

What the college does well

- Students achieve well from their entry to the college, owing to good teaching, and standards are rising
- Students show very good attitudes, personal development and relationships, reflecting the Christian ethos in the college
- The support, guidance and care for students, and, in particular, the educational provision to ensure the inclusion of all students, are very good
- Development of the performing arts is becoming established as a significant central feature of the college
- The strong sense of shared commitment, leadership and management of the head teacher and key staff, well supported by the governing body, is leading to rapid improvement
- Provision for special educational needs is very good

What could be improved

- The level of attendance and punctuality
- The involvement and contribution of parents and guardians to the students' education
- Arrangements for grouping students within the curriculum to aid teachers' ability to evaluate the success of learning opportunities
- The extent to which good practice is shared across departments in the use of assessment in planning, measuring achievement and setting individual targets for students
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in subjects including English, mathematics and science

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 February 1997. Overall, there has been good improvement since that time. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen broadly in line with the average, but from work seen these are beginning to improve more rapidly. Results in GCSE have been increasing at a rate above the national trend and in the past year there has been a significant increase. Five key issues for improvement were identified at the last inspection. Very good progress has been made with a new structure to ensure greater flexibility and opportunity within the curriculum, which has had a major impact on GCSE standards. Good improvement has been made with teaching strategies, assessment of student progress and departmental reviews to monitor subject provision. Work is continuing on the links with primary schools, and establishing collaborative efforts to develop literacy and numeracy.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels		D	n/a	

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

Overall results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were close to the national average but well above average compared with similar schools. Over the past few years attainment at GCSE has risen gradually. In 2002 the percentage of students gaining A*-C, has risen significantly from the previous year, becoming close to the national average, following the change in curriculum and options structure in 2000. In 2002, the college exceeded its challenging, published target. Results were close to national average in English, below national average in science, and well below national average in mathematics. Results in 2002 indicated good achievement in English, art, drama, geography, textiles and French. Weaker performance was found in mathematics, design and technology and history. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9, in 2002, the overall attainment for all core subjects was well below national average. In mathematics and science it was well below national average and above national average in English. Students' attainment is well below national average when they join the college in Year 7. Overall, therefore, there has been satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 9, and good achievement in English. Achievement of students with special educational needs is good. There has been an overall trend in performance in Year 9 broadly in line with national average.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Very Good. Students like college and participate fully in activities. They willingly accept the responsibilities available to them and they show excellent respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very Good. Behaviour in lessons and throughout the college is always good and mostly very good. Bullying is extremely rare within the college but when it occurs is dealt with very well. A very good learning environment is created.
Personal development and relationships	Very Good. Students are friendly and polite. Very good relationships exist throughout the college both between students and adults and with other students. Personal development is a priority in the college where many students have initial very low self-esteem.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is improving, is now above the level of most local schools but still well below the national average. Permanent exclusions are very low but fixed term ones are high as a result of the high standards of behaviour demanded.

Although students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very well developed at the college, and contribute to the good improvement, attendance remains unsatisfactory. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory, despite the college's efforts to improve the situation.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall the teaching is good throughout the college. Teaching was found to be good overall in English, mathematics and science, and there was no significant variation between the years. In mathematics and science, teachers' knowledge was very good and had a strong impact on the learning. In several subjects, for example drama, English, mathematics, ICT, design and technology and dance, the use of day-to-day assessment and data remains to be developed and students are not always clear about their progress. In other areas, such as history, geography and physical education, assessment is more developed. In several subjects, whilst satisfactory, more use could be made of the homework opportunities. Planning is a strong feature in most subjects. Students are well managed which results in positive attitudes and very good behaviour. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. Most departments have strategies in place but aspects such as marking are inconsistent. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, and opportunities are found for development in science and geography, as well as mathematics. Good provision is made to support students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum meets statutory requirement. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in all years. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very Good. Strategies adopted are appropriate and teachers know the needs of students well.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The very few students have good support, although most are able to communicate well in English.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very Good. Provision for moral and social education is very good and results from the clear guidelines and opportunities throughout the teaching. Cultural and spiritual education are good.
How well the college cares for its students	Very Good. The college provides very good care for its students. The pastoral systems ensure that students are well known to staff and there are very good procedures for supporting student care and personal development. Although there is very good medical support available for the students, there is not a dedicated medical room.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, supported by senior staff has a very clear vision for development and is determined to raise standards whilst preserving the emphasis on being a caring community.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are supportive and key members very active, able and knowledgeable of the college. Governors, a number of whom are newly appointed, are developing their roles so that they can be more involved with strategic planning.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good. The college has a clear development plan, with linked plans in departments. Good reviews have been carried out of some subjects and there is a planned programme for all. Use of performance data is being developed across the college.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are very carefully managed, and resources in departments generally good. ICT resources are well deployed.

Accommodation is satisfactory, although many difficulties occur in creating space needed. Insufficient outdoor physical education facilities are available, but provision for drama, for example, is very good. The match of teachers to the need of the curriculum is satisfactory but sometimes difficult to fulfil due to the recruitment problems in the city. The college applies the principles of best value for money very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High expectations of the students by the college• The college is well led and managed• The teaching is good• The progress made by students• The college is easy to approach if they have a problem or question	No significant areas identified

The parents who responded to the questionnaires or came to the meeting were very supportive of the college and the efforts made to keep them informed. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views but considers that the partnership with parents must be further developed to encourage all parents to help the college raise attendance levels. Individual comments made by parents identified the excellent induction to the college, concern about children being able to go outside at break times and at lunchtime and more teaching of practical tasks required to help in everyday life. All of these issues were considered and found to be at least satisfactory.

ANNEX:THE SIXTH FORM

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11-19 comprehensive girls college is located within the main complex with a segregated area, known as the sixth form centre, housing the common room, study areas and the sixth form office. Teaching takes place in specialist rooms around the school where support services are also located. The students are allocated to a tutor group and have a tutor base within the area in which the tutor normally teaches. The sixth form provides a range of subjects at both GCE advanced (A2) and advanced subsidiary (AS) levels as well as a good range of vocational courses. There are currently 164 students on roll with numbers increasing each year. The majority of students in the sixth form have transferred from the main school. The numbers of students on some courses are very small. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective and students receive a very good education. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. The students are well motivated and they make good progress over time. The opportunities for independent learning are not always made available across the range of subjects. The sixth form is well led and managed, giving students appropriate choices of course. In spite of low student numbers in some subjects, the sixth form is cost effective. The pastoral and guidance systems are a strong feature within the sixth form and this enables students both entering and leaving the sixth form to make well-informed choices.

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- Attitudes and relationships are always very good and often excellent
- Very good educational and personal support and guidance for students
- Good leadership, with excellent reflection of the school's aims and values in its work
- Very good assessment procedures

What could be improved

- Consistent opportunities for independent learning
- Student numbers in subjects that currently have few students
- Punctuality of students

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards observed indicate that current AS students are making good progress. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and establish very good relationships with students. Students have limited opportunity for independent learning.
Chemistry	Good. Results in 2002 showed an improvement over those in 2001, which were below national average. The standard of work seen in Year 13 is about average, although the standard of work in Year 12 is not as high.
English literature	Good. Results have improved and teaching is good overall, often very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a thorough approach which ensures that students make good progress.
Business education	Good. Levels of achievement show an upward trend in this developing department. A variety of courses offer opportunities for students of all levels of achievement. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and students' assignments are of good quality.
History	Good. Overall results were about average in recent years, although all candidates achieved pass grades in the 2002 examination. Clear leadership, good teaching and very good attitudes enable students to make good progress.
French	Good. Students learn well in small, well-taught classes. They speak and listen with confidence and understanding, due to their continuous exposure to the language, particularly that of native French speakers. They use computers frequently and effectively for independent study.
Theatre studies	Good. A developing department, which has encountered staffing difficulties, which have impacted on standards. Teaching is good and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Students have limited opportunity for independent learning.
Health and social care	Good. Teaching is consistently good and student attitudes are most positive. Most achieve well and make good use of the opportunities to gain vocational qualifications.
Leisure and tourism	Good. Students achieve well from a modest starting point. Teaching is good and the work of the department is well organised.

Other work was sampled through observations of lessons in physics, biology, sociology, geography, music and art. Standards reached were appropriate for the students and the courses being studied. The quality of the teaching was always at least satisfactory and mostly good or very good. The attitudes of the students were very positive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very Good. Students are very well cared for and supported in the sixth form. They receive very good information about progress and advice on how to improve. There is very good guidance on careers and further education. Opportunities for independent learning are not always consistent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very Good. There is excellent reflection of the college's aims in the work of the sixth form, which is committed to equal opportunities. Educational priorities are extremely well supported through the college's financial planning. The leadership team ensures a very good set of

	relationships exists in the sixth form community and that good links with the main school are used to the mutual benefit of all students.
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STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What students feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers are accessible to help with difficulties • Work is thoroughly assessed • They are taught well and are challenged to do their best • They are helped to study independently • Choice of subjects suits their talents and aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support and help with personal problems • The advice about future options • The range of activities available outside the main subjects • Being treated more as adults • The college's response to their views

The statements above are based on the evaluation of the students' questionnaire returns. Students interviewed during the inspection had very supportive views of the college and were in agreement with the positive views obtained through the student questionnaires. In general, however, they disagreed with the areas of concern, although there were concerns about having to stay in college when they had finished lessons when they would prefer to study at home. The inspection team agrees that all the other concerns identified in the questionnaire are being well addressed by the college but do not consider that the support for independent learning is sufficiently consistent.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and students' achievements

1. When students enter the college their attainment in national tests in Year 6, in English, mathematics, and science, is well below national average. A similar profile has been found in previous years. Verbal, quantitative and non-verbal scores in cognitive abilities are also well below national average at the start of Year 7.
2. In the National Curriculum tests in 2002, taken in Year 9, the percentage of students gaining the target Level 5 or higher, was above average in English, but well below average in mathematics and science. The performance of students overall was similarly above average in English and well below in other core subjects. Over the past five years attainment has risen broadly in line with the national trend. English has improved significantly since the previous year but mathematics has declined slightly.
3. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002, compared with schools in a similar social context, was well above average overall, and very high in English. It was well above average in science and above average in mathematics. Compared with schools having a similar percentage of students with the same prior attainment in Year 7, the performance overall was below average. Nevertheless, this represents good progress from the overall attainment in Year 7.
4. In other subjects in 2002, above average teacher assessments were recorded in history, art and design, music and physical education. They were recorded as below average in geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern foreign languages.
5. Attainment in Year 11 in 2002, taking overall account of all students' results, was close to national average. When based on the best eight results in schools nationally, the overall performance was below average. Results in the GCSE examinations indicate that the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grade A*-C was close to the national average and the percentage gaining five or more passes A*-G was also close to the average. The percentage of grades A*-C was close to national average in English, below average in science and well below average in mathematics. Based on total point scores per student, attainment was well above the average for schools with a similar social context.
6. The progress made by students from Year 9 to Year 11 was well above average compared with schools having a similar range of prior attainment. This indicates that students have achieved very well from Year 9 to Year 11. The percentage of students gaining five or more grade A*-C has risen significantly since the previous year and continuously over the past four years. The total GCSE points gained per student has risen continuously and at a rate significantly above the national trend. Subjects where students performed well at GCSE in 2002 include English, art and design, drama, geography and French. Weaker subjects were mathematics, history and design and technology.

7. Standards of written work and work seen in lessons at the end of Year 9 are average and much as would be expected for the age. In the majority of subjects, students achieve well from entry throughout their time in the college. From Year 9 to Year 11, standards are rising more quickly than over the earlier years as students gain self-motivation and study skills.
8. Achievement in design and technology and ICT was satisfactory, but not as good as other subjects at both key stages. Standards in the performing arts are above average overall, and rising due to the emphasis placed on this area of the curriculum and in 2002 students were entered for examinations a year early. Success in this area is having a positive impact on other subjects. Standards in music and drama in Year 11 were noted to be above average. Students with different attainment levels progress equally well since good support is provided for those with lower ability or special educational needs and a good level of challenge is provided for higher-ability students.
9. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Students have good listening skills. Most speak confidently but not at length. Specialist vocabulary is used well in several subjects, such as science and geography. Reading skills are sufficient to cope with the curriculum and in many subjects students use a wide variety of information. Most students write with reasonable fluency and accuracy. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Students are able to apply their skills in several subject areas. Students show a satisfactory level of skill in taking measurements, performing basic calculations, estimating and measuring length, using map references and interpreting graphs. Many students struggle with more detailed algebraic work and statistics.
10. Standards demonstrated in the use of ICT are overall below average, although in many situations, higher quality work is found. In Year 9, students can demonstrate skill in word processing, using toolbars, drawing and organising information. Students in Year 11 have below average skills but many make good progress with basic tasks. Opportunities are provided in many subjects for utilizing ICT but overall the standard of application of ICT is underdeveloped, partly because of lack of access to resources.

Sixth form

11. National data for GCE advanced level for 2002 is not yet available. Overall attainment in 2001, as measured by the average point score for students entered in GCE A levels or AS levels, was below average. However, some groups are small and the attainment within them varies greatly. Taking into account vocational qualifications, the attainment was much closer to the national average.
12. In 2001, subjects in which students performed well were English, geography and communication studies. Overall, the percentage of students gaining at least a pass grade was high. Results in 2002 have improved and reflect a steady improvement each year. Achievement in vocational courses for the GNVQ, especially health and social care, has been good. In 2002 all students gained at least a pass and a minority gained merit or distinction. Performance in advanced vocational qualifications in business education and travel and tourism was good.
13. Highest performing subjects in GCE Advanced level in 2002 were English and geography. Other subjects where students gained a satisfactory range of grades included physics, sociology and chemistry.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Students have very positive attitudes to college and to learning. They arrive at college in an orderly manner and are all very well behaved. They are, however, not all punctual. They are very well mannered and show courtesy to staff, visitors and to each other – this includes movement around the college when, despite the inevitable congestion due to the design of the building, there are no inappropriate attitudes. Their attitudes in lessons are largely very good and students concentrate well and work hard. These very good and often excellent attitudes are consistent with the ethos of the college. The college has a rewards and a celebration scheme in place to encourage students to maintain and develop further their positive attitudes. A strength of the college is the excellent respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others that is evident amongst both staff and students. Students' attitudes have improved since the last inspection.
15. Attendance for 2000/2001 was well below the national average but unauthorised absence was also well below the national average. The attendance figures have been increasing during recent years and the figure for 2001/2002 shows further improvement. Whilst the figures are still unsatisfactory, there is clear evidence that they are significantly better than most other secondary schools in the area. Registration is carried out efficiently at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Procedures are secure and data is well recorded, analysed and monitored. Punctuality at the start of the day and at lessons is frequently a problem, often due to the building layout and no planned movement time allowed within the timetable. There have been 80 fixed-term and one permanent exclusion during the last year, which is relatively high for a college of this type but reflects the college's determination to demand high standards. Whilst attendance is still unsatisfactory compared to the national average, there has been some improvement since the time of the last inspection.
16. The overall level of behaviour is very good which is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Both around the college, including breaks and lunchtime, and in most lessons, the behaviour is very good and sometimes excellent. In the isolated lesson seen where behaviour was unsatisfactory there were a large number of 'statemented' students with no support present. No bullying or other oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. The college has a student support centre on site to support students with behavioural difficulties.
17. Students form very good relationships with one another and with their teachers, resulting in a good working ethos in lessons. These very good relationships have a positive effect on learning as students support each other very well. Students are supportive of the tutor system and of the very effective learning mentor scheme where very close relationships are developed, providing effective individual contact and guidance. They show excellent respect for each other and this is encouraged through the college ethos and by the citizenship/personal, social and health education programme. Students are encouraged to reflect on their actions. There is no evidence of sexism or racism in the college, which is working as a harmonious community, but students are aware of what to do if it does occur.
18. Opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility are very good with examples such as the college council, class responsibilities and duties, sports captains etc. There are many opportunities for students to be involved in activities both during and after college, which include clubs closely linked to academic subjects as well as sporting and social activities. Students have good access to college facilities throughout the day. The atmosphere of trust and respect between the students and college enables students to have good access to facilities at break times with only minimal supervision required. The clear ethos of the college and the very good learning

environment demonstrate that students understand the impact of their actions and that they should respect others.

19. Through the good relationships, the tutor guidance and effective citizenship provision, the students' personal development is well supported. Students are mature and sensible.

Sixth form

20. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and welcome the recognition of their more senior status. The majority are very happy to have a uniform, about which they had been consulted, although it was identified as a reason why some of their friends had left the sixth form early. A significant strength is the contribution of the learning mentor to the pastoral support of the students. There are very good systems in place to give guidance on key skills and the development of learning techniques but within lessons there are not consistent opportunities for independent learning. Students show an interest in college life, a pride in their work and are well motivated.
21. The college is clearly an integral part of the Catholic community and students are committed to serving in the wider community and a good number of them benefit from helping students in the main part of the college – the buddy system being a good example where they support younger students. There are good opportunities for personal development through the extensive enrichment programmes. Students show a good sense of pursuing more long-term career objectives and direction. They make good use of the facilities offered by the college and join in the activities available to them.
22. There are no behavioural problems in the sixth form. All students choose to attend and clearly want to learn. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and is clearly helped by incentives available to students. At the start of the day and in many lessons there are many students who arrive late and this reduces the time available to them for both learning and pastoral support. Students are required to register twice a day and have to remain in college when they do not have lessons – this was an area of concern by some students who felt that they could study better at home at the end of the day if they did not have a scheduled lesson in the afternoon. Some teaching groups in the sixth form are very small, especially in Year 13 where students have moved elsewhere after completing GCE advanced subsidiary or vocational courses. The college has a target to improve retention of students and increase group size.
23. Sixth form students demonstrate the very good relationships and excellent respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others that have been built up in the main college. Personal development is well addressed in the sixth form where students are encouraged to be aware of the skills they will need in future careers and courses. Relationships are very good in lessons and learning directly benefits from the positive attitudes of well-motivated students. In general, there is total commitment from the students. The college is preparing students well for future life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Overall, the quality of teaching in Years 7 – 11 is good, and leads to good learning overall. Learning is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 and is leading to significant improvements in standards in many subjects. This has been developed through implementation of a more accessible curriculum, renewed motivation in vocational courses and the establishment of the performing arts status of the college.
25. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and continues to improve because of the clear commitment of the college staff and excellent leadership. At the time of the last inspection some significant weaknesses were identified in teaching style, the ability of teachers to recognise the potential of students and an over preponderance of teacher-directed work. All of these aspects have now been addressed well.
26. All lessons observed in the main college during the inspection were at least satisfactory, 70 per cent were good or better, and 28 per cent were very good or excellent. A similar pattern was found with students' learning.
27. Teaching is consistently good across all subjects but is particularly notable in art and design and English. The provision for special educational needs leads to teaching which is often very good for those students. Higher quality learning is found for example in art and design, because students are keen and enthusiastic about the subject and show particular strength of independence in learning in this area.
28. Teachers' planning is a strength and contributes significantly in most subjects to the range of activity in lessons. Provision for the spectrum of attainment so that work is matched to student's ability is good. Planning is particularly effective in the performing arts, but is also strong in history, geography, ICT, and art and design.
29. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught at least satisfactorily in most subjects. Good literacy development in speaking and listening occurs, for example, in drama and also history. Opportunities are missed, however, for example where the use of number could have more emphasis in order to develop numeracy.
30. Teachers manage the students well. They express clear expectations in terms of work and behaviour. Most teachers have the skills needed to interest and motivate students, which overall leads to very good behaviour. Where such skills are not yet sufficiently established students' attitudes can slip. Expectations of demanding standards are a strong feature in most lessons and students respond well to the challenge. However, in a minority of subjects, in particular mathematics and physical education, there is a lack of sufficient expectation of work to be appropriate for the capability of students. Time is used well, leading to lessons having a brisk pace. Lack of attendance and also unsatisfactory punctuality has a marked effect on progress over a period of time. This affects not only the individuals concerned, but also others in the class. Resources are normally more than adequate to ensure variety of activity in lessons, opportunities for group work, and aids to support the learning. ICT resources are used satisfactorily across the curriculum, but opportunities for more regular and extensive use are not taken in several subjects including English, mathematics and science.

31. Students with special educational needs learn well and make good progress due to the good teaching, where teachers know the students' needs extremely well. Learning support staff are used well to help a wide range of students with exceptional patience and care. Learning mentors are used well to provide additional support to individuals.
32. Assessment is used well in some subjects but less so in others. It is excellent in art and design, where very clear feedback is provided to students on their progress. It is very good in the teaching of French and ensures, for example, that careful records are kept of strengths and weaknesses in the use of the language. Students are very clear in these subjects about their attainment and progress. However, the use of assessment is inconsistent. The quality of marking is variable, not always providing sufficient feedback to students on how to improve. Data is not always used fully enough to track individual progress or adjust the planning of work. Students in the weaker subjects in this respect do not have a clear enough knowledge of their own learning.
33. Homework is generally satisfactory and is used regularly to provide practice and consolidation of classwork. Good use of homework to carry out independent research or apply knowledge to problem solving is found in science, history and French. Homework is also used well in the performing arts of music and drama, and students with special educational needs receive appropriately supportive tasks. In other subjects homework is less productive, not always clearly extending learning.
34. Students with special educational needs learn well since the teaching method takes good account of the individual education plan. A very good learning support unit is provided to help those who find sometimes that individual support is needed to be able to settle and focus on study. Teaching of personal, social and health education is very good. Opportunities are provided through the timetable and most aspects of moral and social education are covered very well. Spiritual development is good and is promoted through the ethos of the college, curriculum subjects, assembly and religious education.
35. Students speaking English as an additional language have good support when needed and learn well with others. No students are in the early stage of language acquisition and the language is not normally a barrier to learning. However, help is provided during lunchtime through the provision for special educational needs and many students receive help from teachers on an individual basis.

Sixth form

36. The quality of teaching in the sixth form overall is very similar to that in the main college. Good teaching results in good learning. An important strength is the quality of relationships that enable good questioning and discussion. In the vocational subjects such as health and social care and leisure and tourism, the teaching method encourages independence and self-motivation. In some subject areas, insufficient attention is given to developing independent learning.
37. Assessment in these areas is often very good and provides a clear record of progress, identifies underachievement, and provides clear feedback. The use of data for curriculum planning or matching progress against national targets is being developed.
38. Expectations of the work needed to achieve the highest grades are also inconsistent. Good practice in history and chemistry, for example, enables data to be used well to identify weakness in learning. Students are often unclear in many subjects as to where

their strengths in learning are consolidated and where more time and energy need to be applied.

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

Main college

39. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. The statutory curriculum is in place with good provision being made for the recent requirement to teach citizenship. There is a clear curriculum policy with an emphasis on providing students with a learning programme suited to the needs of each individual. The college has a strong commitment to this aim and is largely successful in achieving it. This year it has appropriately modified its curriculum to reflect its newly acquired performing arts status. An ability banding system is in place across year groups. Students are allocated to an ability band for all subjects, which can have a disadvantageous impact on students' learning for subjects such as art and music. Since the last inspection students have been given greater choice in their options for Years 10 and 11, including the opportunity to follow vocational and work related courses where this is appropriate. Overall, opportunities have improved, particularly in the range of extra-curricular activities.
40. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum opportunities are good. All statutory requirements are met. Good allocations of time are given to English and mathematics, particularly in Year 7, reflecting the college's aim of improving standards of literacy and numeracy. Similarly, there is a focus on developing ICT skills in these years. However, these allocations, together with the addition of drama and dance, do mean that the allocation of time for design and technology, history, geography and modern foreign languages is less than might be found in other schools. All students study either French or Spanish but there is no opportunity to study two languages. Currently physical education is unable to provide the range of activities required by the National Curriculum, because of the lack of outdoor space.
41. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. In addition to the requirements for students to study English, mathematics, science, design and technology, PE and religious education, the college provides an appropriately balanced range of courses from which students can choose. Students and their parents are carefully guided into appropriate choices. In addition to a conventional range of GCSEs, students have access to vocational courses leading to the GNVQ. Some students, mainly those with special educational needs, are officially relieved of the requirement to study a modern foreign language in order that they can have additional English and mathematics lessons. Some are also relieved of design and technology to pursue a work-related course that enables them to gain additional work experience beyond that provided for all girls during Year 10. All students in Year 10 are now required to follow either a drama or music course, reflecting the college's newly acquired status. Some girls find this choice too limited.
42. The curricular provision made by the college for the students' personal and social development is very good. The programme is very well written and clearly has its roots in the college's overall aim, namely to make a significant contribution to the personal growth of all students. In covering a most broad and comprehensive range of features, proper attention is given to sex, health and drugs education, to careers and guidance, including an entitlement to work experience, and most recently to the college's response to meeting the requirements for citizenship. Overall the quality of teaching is

good. A suitable range of teaching styles ensures that the variety of experiences in different years on different topics is engaging and in some lessons allows students to express their own views. For example, students in Year 11 were given the opportunity to reflect on their thoughts relating to 'Christmas spending' and this enabled them to rehearse their point of view in preparation for group discussions on the topic. The overall response from students is most positive and they behave well in all years and listen with respect to the views of others. This is clearly a strength of the college.

43. Careful thought has been given to enabling students with special educational needs to access the full curriculum and provision for them is very good. Across the college these students are placed in small, specific classes and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science they are generally taught by a special needs teacher with the help of a learning support assistant. In other subjects teachers take account of the needs of these students in the work they set and good use is made of students' individual education plans. In Years 10 and 11 students are guided into appropriate courses. Many follow a vocational course and, some, the very good work-related course.
44. Many departments now have a clear policy concerning the development of literacy and take this into account in their planning. In most departments, key words are displayed. Some teachers mark rigorously, paying attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation, but there is not yet a consistent approach to marking across the college. There has been a noticeable emphasis in some departments on developing styles of teaching and learning that were initially linked with the National Literacy Strategy. Students arriving in Year 7 with weak literacy are given extra help in their English lessons, following the Progress Units. The effectiveness of this arrangement will need to be carefully monitored and evaluated.
45. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has been rewritten to comply with the numeracy framework. Mathematics lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 commence with short mental arithmetic sessions and finish with reviews of progress towards stated objectives. Catch-up lessons are not provided as a separate entity but the Springboard 7 materials are used extensively within the lower band classes.
46. Students speaking English as an additional language follow the same curriculum as other students, but many feel they need further support. Some are given extra help during lunchtime or after college by the co-ordinator for special educational needs, who is purchasing appropriate textbooks so that they can follow individual programmes. Many are helped to improve in aspects of literacy through individual help from their English teachers, who have a clear knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. The college has endeavoured to respond on an individual basis to these students' needs, but the recent increase in numbers in Years 7 and 8 may mean that a more formal structure will have to be put in place.
47. The college has developed an extended day facilitated by New Opportunities Funding and other monies, in order to provide additional learning and extra-curricular opportunities for all students. A wide range of activities takes place before college, at lunchtime and after college. A number are related to performing arts and sport, and others make specific provision for gifted and talented students. There are also a number of subject clubs, homework and revision groups, and some more general groups. Other activities, such as the special coursework classes and mentoring for specific groups, take place at weekends. Careful records are kept of attendance at

these activities and over 90 per cent of girls benefit from participation in at least one activity.

48. Many long-standing as well as recently forged links with the local and wider community also enhance learning. Representatives from industry, local government and the church are regular visitors to the college. During inspection a representative from the local Trading Standards Office was supporting the work of Year 9 in a citizenship lesson. Teaching and learning, in a number of subjects, is extended through fieldwork, study trips and visits to local employers. Links with the key contributory primary schools are good and help students in their transition from primary to secondary education. Curricular links are also developing well.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

49. Overall the college makes very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although there is no comprehensive policy covering this aspect of the curriculum, nor is it explicitly part of departmental planning, it is clearly in the forefront of the college's work, as is evident from, for example, the vision statement or the personal development curriculum.
50. Provision for girls' spiritual development is good. The history, tradition, overall ambience and ethos of the college make a significant contribution to the spiritual development of its students. Staff and students treat each other with genuine courtesy and assemblies include prayers and opportunities for reflection. In English, students are frequently invited to reflect on poetry, Shakespeare and their own lives, and in a lesson on Chaucer "Gospel values" were identified and discussed in some detail. In art, the sense of creativity enables potentially disaffected students to experience success and enhances their sense of self-worth. Consideration for all may be shown by availability of the learning mentors' room at lunchtime for the Muslim students who are observing Ramadan.
51. Provision for moral development is very good; the college as a whole has a calm and orderly atmosphere and teachers serve as very effective role models in the conduct of lessons. In history, consideration of topics such as the Holocaust, the treatment of the indigenous North Americans, and the trench warfare of the First World War provide many opportunities for confronting moral issues. In geography, students encounter moral issues in learning about the rural urban fringe conflict, population growth and the environment. The college as a whole, as well as through the PSHE programme and the work of a number of departments such as science, plays an important part in addressing social issues, such as drug awareness and alcohol.
52. The provision for social development is also very good. Paired and group work is a common feature in lessons, while the range of extra-curricular activities also makes a significant contribution. The resource centre is open to students from early in the morning to five in the evening and provides a selection of newspapers and television news broadcasts. The college council and the buddy system provide very good opportunities for students to accept and exercise responsibility. The majority of subjects make good or very good contributions in this area, although mathematics is an exception.
53. The provision for cultural development is good. In drama, students are able to explore and empathise with the feelings of the combatants in the Bosnian war, while in art cultural identities from all round the world are used as stimuli. In modern foreign languages two assistants from France and Spain provide contact with other cultures

but the annual trips to those countries referred to in the last report no longer take place owing to a change of staff. Catholicism is naturally firmly embedded in the college but there is scope for the more effective preparation of students for life in a multicultural society.

Sixth form

54. As part of the curriculum, students in Year 12 are allocated two hours each week to study key skills. Students who have good grades in English and mathematics are encouraged to study ICT as a specific key skill subject, whilst those who did not obtain good grades in mathematics or English are encouraged to study to resit these examinations.
55. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is good, and has improved since the previous inspection, notably in the breadth and range of courses currently provided. The college makes good use of an extended day in order to find time to offer a very wide range of more than 25 academic and vocational courses. In addition to AS/A Level, Advanced Vocational and Intermediate GNVQ qualifications, students also have opportunities to resit GCSE English, mathematics and science, should they need to secure their key skills. Alternatively, they have courses in key skills in communication, application of number and ICT to Level 3. All students have one lesson of religious education, and have one lesson following a personal development programme, planned into the timetable cycle. This incorporates a strong programme of careers advice, together with support and guidance for students' applications for higher education.
56. The college's philosophy is to provide a readily accessible sixth form that caters for all students who wish to continue their education and it is increasingly successful in implementing this. The quality of information and advice about subjects and combinations of courses is good. Students are monitored carefully and have regular contact with their tutor who reviews their individual learning programme and sets fresh targets each half term.
57. A consequence of providing this very wide range of courses matched to students' aptitudes and abilities is that some have only a small number of takers. Although this can limit meaningful debate and restrict opportunities for students to share ideas effectively, the college works hard to ensure that students' preferences are available. It has, for example, introduced the Student Apprenticeship Scheme in direct response to a group of students who, having completed an intermediate GNVQ course, wished to stay on in the sixth form but were not sufficiently qualified to continue to a VCE course.
58. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities available for students as well as opportunities to support younger students and develop leadership skills. The buddy system and mentoring of younger students in literacy and numeracy is highly valued. The sixth form students also set a good example in their work for charitable causes.
59. Students in the sixth form are very supportive of the college and the opportunities it provides. They consider that it is very well led and that they receive very good support and guidance about working methods in the sixth form and about choice of subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Main college

60. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are very good and are a strength of the college. The child protection officer is fully trained and all the staff are given appropriate training to ensure that they are aware of procedures. The system is secure. The college is often involved with child protection issues and many of the attendance problems are associated with these families - the college's attendance analysis shows that excluding these students from the data would increase the attendance figures to be similar to the national average. There are a small number of 'looked after' children at the college and these receive appropriate support. Staff within the college are all aware of who the child protection officer is but she is not directly named in procedures.
61. The college has a very good approach to health and safety, with responsibilities well defined. Health and safety inspections, risk assessments and fire safety requirements are all well addressed. Whilst the health and safety issues are all dealt with very effectively within the college, the governors are not themselves fully involved in supporting the college by participating in the site inspections. The college building presents many health and safety challenges because of the 'internal' rooms, several floor levels and varying width corridors. All the main elements of health and safety are clearly being enforced. The college provides good first aid facilities through trained staff but does not have a room used exclusively for medical purposes. Routine medical matters are dealt with by trained 'firstaid' staff who keep clear records of any treatments. The nurse visits the college on a regular basis. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required.
62. The welfare of the students is underpinned by an effective pastoral system, which ensures close tutor/student relationships. Whilst students transfer to the college from several primary schools with a wide range of backgrounds, there are very good systems in place for induction which fully involve both students and parents. The head of Year 7 has good links with the primary schools and is able to maintain these links by continuing each year as the year head. To provide continuity for students they will have the same head of year in Years 8 and 9, and then in Years 10 and 11. The pastoral system within the college is strong, led through the senior leadership team and well supported by heads of year and the learning mentors. The whole system is well monitored through regular pastoral group meetings. Through the pastoral system students are given very good guidance on dealing with college life. There is good supervision of activities throughout the day and although students are allowed out of college at lunchtime this is only if parents have agreed and signed the 'planners' to confirm agreement.
63. The college monitors attendance very closely and has very good relationships with the educational welfare service, which provides good support. Attendance of students at schools in the area is very poor compared with national averages but improvements over the last few years have enabled the college to compare favourably to most local schools. The college has very good procedures for monitoring attendance with detailed analysis carried out. The college contacts parents on the first day of absence and the education welfare service will also do evening contact and transport students to college from home. A significant feature of the college is the number of students who have extremely low attendance and whilst the college and support services work hard to take action there is a long delay with prosecutions, which often negates effectiveness. Students are rewarded for both good attendance and for good behaviour. Both the

behaviour and the anti-bullying policy are very effective. The college's clear guidelines and expectations of behaviour are well known and are adhered to.

64. Students' personal development is very well monitored through the direct contact of student and tutor and information provided from class teachers on areas of excellence or concern. Students with learning needs are monitored closely through the special needs department. The morning and afternoon registration periods provide daily contact between tutor and student but the punctuality and limited time available restrict the effectiveness as opportunities to further develop close relationships. Personal development is well supported by the citizenship/personal, social and health education programme, which is allocated one period each week.

Assessment

65. The college as a whole has effective procedures in place to monitor the academic performance of students and to set targets for each student in all subjects they take. Since the previous inspection a review of existing procedures has resulted in good quality assessment systems for students in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Though limited in detail, the college assessment policy sets out the principles under which assessment procedures operate.
66. Baselines of attainment, from which progress is measured and value added calculated, are established when students enter the college at the beginning of Year 7. Formal assessments, such as end of unit tests and internal examinations, provide the basis for the setting and review of challenging targets linked to the levels of the National Curriculum or GCSE examination grades. These are communicated to students and to parents after each review. Senior staff, heads of year and form tutors regularly monitor progress towards these targets and take appropriate action to recognise success and redress underachievement. Targets for all subjects in Years 7 to 9, however, are based on those for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and are not sufficiently subject specific, as are subject-specific targets set for students in Years 10 and 11. Increasingly college databases carry information which, when available to all staff, will make possible even closer monitoring of the progress made by each student.
67. Alongside these procedures, the college analyses the results obtained by students in external tests and examinations well. This analysis provides detailed information for subject departments and the whole college on the performance of students against local and national levels. It is effectively used to calculate the value added to students' attainment and to monitor trends over a period of years. The use of this information, though satisfactory overall is, not consistently used by all departments to inform teaching and curriculum planning.
68. Subject departments operate individual procedures for the marking and assessment of homework and classwork but policies are often brief and lack detail. Although these different systems are, in some departments, effective and are understood by students, variable approaches confuse some students and make the comparison of performance across and between departments unreliable. The use of measures of self-assessment by some departments helps students to understand what they need to do to improve but often they do not have sufficient information to help them to know what they must do to reach the next level or grade. Records of marks kept by teachers are good but departments do not yet monitor the attainment of different groups of students.
69. Since the last inspection, improved assessment and monitoring procedures have contributed significantly to rising levels of attainment in the college.

Sixth form

70. Sixth form advice and guidance is very good. There is a very strong and well-trained pastoral team who are fully involved in the management aspects of the sixth form. They are very well supported by the learning mentor who has very good, close links to all students. Students are very supportive of the care and guidance provision in the sixth form and there are clearly very good relationships in existence. Staff are caring and dedicated. The formal programme of advice and guidance they receive is very good incorporating a specific guidance lesson each week and appropriate guidance within the subjects. Time on a Friday morning is allocated to key skills provision, which is clearly focussed on the individual needs of students. The maturity of the students and the very good relationships provide opportunities for informal guidance and support throughout the day.
71. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. All students have to register at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Students have a record card to confirm attendance at each lesson and this, together with formal registers, enables effective analysis. Procedures for encouraging punctuality are not effective and students arrive late at many lessons, reducing the time available for learning.

Sixth form assessment

72. Assessment of students' progress within the sixth form is very good, although there are variations within subjects. The procedures are clear and well established. Students have targets and are given grades to identify the levels at which they are working, as well as target grades. Where there are concerns, students are given individual learning plans, targets and 'how to improve' action plans. Both students and parents are involved in the process, which takes place every half term, and students all stated they were very well informed about their progress. The strengths of the system are the ease with which concerns can be identified by tutors and the systems available to provide guidance. The use of the assessment data to provide guidance to individual students is very good and its use in guiding curriculum planning is good.

Advice, support and guidance

73. The advice and information available to students on future careers and education is very good. The resource centre contains the necessary documentation with guidance available from sixth form staff supplemented by the learning mentor who has careers experience as well as the external Connexions service. Students consider that the college staff provide very good advice on courses to study, both in the sixth form and at university.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

74. Parents' views of the college are very good. Although only a small proportion of parents returned the questionnaires and attended the parents' meeting, they were all very supportive and there are no areas where a significant number of parents had any concerns. There is general satisfaction amongst parents and students with the sixth form and the provision it offers.
75. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the high expectations within the college, which is well led and managed and where teaching is good. Parents are very pleased that their children make good progress at the college and they feel very comfortable

about approaching the college if they have any problems or concerns. There were several individual comments from parents. Some were positive, such as the excellent induction to the college. Others with areas of concern, such as children being able to leave college at lunch time and a requirement for there to be more teaching of practical tasks to help in everyday life; there were suggestions for the college to provide additional facilities such as its own college buses. The concerns were all considered and investigated during the inspection and the inspection team considers that these are all answered within the earlier sections of the report or are currently being addressed adequately by the college.

76. Communication with parents is considered to be good. The college produces regular newsletters supported by letters on specific topics as required. The college prospectuses for both new students and for the sixth form are well presented and informative – the content meets requirements. The governors' annual report to parents, 2002 does not fully meet requirements as it does not contain information on student destinations and is not circulated to all parents. The students' annual reports are considered to be satisfactory, containing data and individual comments for each subject; they meet statutory requirements for reporting. It is considered that they could be improved in format to be a document students could take pride in and that the quality could be improved by ensuring best practices are incorporated across all the subjects. The reported information is supplemented by regular meetings for parents, ensuring good information about progress.
77. There is not a parent-teacher association, although most parents are involved with the Catholic community of which the college is an integral part. The college has strong links with the local community and very good partnerships with other local educational establishments. Some parents play an active role within the college, for example as governors, but the numbers are very limited. Most parents do support their children's education by completing the 'planners' as required and also supporting the home/college agreement. A significant number of parents do not or are not able to support the college with its aims and the number of parents who do not encourage attendance and punctuality reflects this. Parents attend meetings in the college to discuss progress as well as any problems if they occur; there are good opportunities for parents of students with special educational needs to be fully involved with decisions taken about their children.
78. Whilst the college works well in partnership with many parents, the overall partnership requires further development to facilitate involvement of all parents and make them more willing and able to support their children's education.
79. Students in the sixth form are very supportive of the college and the opportunities it provides. They consider that it is very well led and that they receive very good support and guidance about working methods in the sixth form and about choice of subjects.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

80. The quality of leadership and management of the college is very good. The leadership of the head teacher is excellent and has been instrumental in moving the college towards key targets, resulting in significant improvements in the attainment of students.
81. The leadership team have a very clear, shared vision of the educational direction for the college development and between them have a high level of ability and team spirit. They have clear responsibilities that relate to stages of the curriculum and therefore a broad overview of needs and priorities.

82. Middle managers, heads of departments and those with significant responsibility are providing good leadership and are all totally committed to raising achievement. The management of high focus aspects such as special educational needs is very good. The development of the college performing arts specialist status is good but is hindered by the difficulty in the recruitment of high calibre staff to take specific responsibility within the faculty.
83. The college has a very clear purpose, which is expressed through its aims and reflects the Christian foundation. The aims and values expressed in the college prospectus totally underpin the work of the college. It is as a result of this, that students have such high personal qualities and, for example, there is a total commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity and experience. A very clear sense of respect for others builds the climate of mutual care and support.
84. The governing body is very supportive and ensures that the educational direction is in line with the fundamental aims of the college. Governors give time and energy, despite having other commitments. A few key members are very involved and are able to provide the essential critical friendship that enables strategic planning and reflects appropriate priorities for development. Governors are beginning to understand their roles in shaping the direction for the college and are increasingly willing to take a lead in the process.
85. The college has a good policy for monitoring and developing teaching. Teaching styles have markedly changed since the last inspection and good practice is shared as a result of clear identification. Performance management is in place and contributes well to the development of teaching and other management objectives.
86. The college has established very clear priorities for development. The move towards performing arts status, conceived to generate high commitment to study in a popular area, has been significant. Increased opportunities for vocational courses, raising awareness of careers and work-related curriculum, and greater emphasis on more appropriate options in Year 10, have been well-chosen priorities for development.
87. The educational priorities are very well supported through the financial planning and, with the help of the high quality college management team, financial controls are securely in place. All developments are clearly budgeted and scrutinised by the finance committee of the governing body. All expenditure is monitored, balanced and controlled using new technology. Regular reports are provided for governors and departments and the principles of best value for money are carefully applied. The college has its accounts audited with very few recommendations needed and external support is given through a professional advisor.
88. The college benefits from several specific grants, which fund, for example, the appointment of learning mentors, support assistants, and additional staffing. All funds are used as designated and the staffing costs in different key stages match well the overall income when additional grants are taken into account. The income per student is above average, but the outcomes, including the level of improvement, indicate that the college offers good value for money.
89. The college has a satisfactory match of suitably qualified, experienced teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum and the age and ability of the girls. Those who are teaching outside their specialisms have sufficient expertise so that satisfactory standards of teaching are maintained. The college has experienced difficulty in

recruiting managers for some areas, notably for the dance and music departments. In design and technology, information and communication technology and science some teachers are part-time and in geography many have responsibilities in other areas of the college. Their contributions are valuable and enable efficient delivery of the curriculum. There has been significant turnover of staff in recent years, with nearly half of the total having been appointed during the last two years. Many of those leaving have moved for posts of responsibility in other schools. The special educational needs department is well staffed with four teachers and six learning support assistants, all of whom have received effective training. Support staff give valuable assistance to science, technology and drama. The college values its team of effective administrative, support and technical personnel.

90. Good arrangements are in place for the induction and support of new and newly qualified staff. Staff development is well managed, with attendance at professional courses closely linked to the aims of the college development plan. All members of staff have agreed objectives as part of the performance management process.
91. The college has made a substantial commitment to strengthening learning resources since the last inspection. Computer provision has been increased to the ratio of one computer to four students, well above the national average. Some of the stock is now aging, as are some of the programs, and a rolling programme of replacement is being initiated. To strengthen and support teaching and learning throughout the college, each department has been supplied with a laptop, a smart board and a projector. These have been welcomed and put to good use by the departments. Departments are further funded, to allow them to purchase a range of resources, which include book collections, CD-ROMs, videos and digital cameras.
92. The sports hall and gymnasium also have their own dedicated TV and video players. The library houses a growing collection of books, which, although unsatisfactory in terms of the ratio of students to books, is supplemented by the collections held in departments. The number, quality, range and suitability of the books within each subject section vary and this, together with the method of resource allocation, is under review; a video section, for loan, has been introduced. The library also houses 45 computers, 15 with monitored Internet access, which are well used. Resources for learning are satisfactory in all subjects, are good in geography, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology, physical education, drama, the performing arts and for the sixth form; they are very good in history and music.
93. The college is housed in a cramped and complex inner-urban site comprising an adjoining series of buildings. Some of these are new and others date back to the 19th century. There is marked contrast in the size, quality and suitability of the accommodation that the site offers the subject teachers, pastoral staff and the students. Over the years, considerable ingenuity and some pragmatism has gone into providing satisfactory facilities for a wide and varied curriculum within the confines of the building. A continuous programme of refurbishment, extension and improvement keeps pace with the changing demands of college life. At all times the considerations of health and safety, particularly fire risk, are paramount as fresh extensions add to the labyrinth that the college site has become. Students adapt remarkably well to daily life on its many levels, narrow corridors and staircases. They mostly move quickly and efficiently between classrooms and at break times find odd corners or open areas in which to work, socialise and play. A few students dawdle and turn up late for lessons.
94. The college continues to add to its already attractive and extensive performing arts facilities, which reflect the extent and high quality of its specialist provision. The large

music suite, drama studio, sports hall and gymnasium are purpose-built and well adapted to the curriculum offered to students. The respective demands of dance and physical education on some shared facilities are a potential source of tension, particularly in view of the lack of outdoor sports areas. The college has six large, well-equipped science laboratories and good specialist rooms for art and food technology. These latter premises, although spacious and well appointed, present problems of poor acoustics and extremes of heat and cold in summer and winter. Several specialist computer suites are of very good quality, although a scattered and diverse selection of old machines in various rooms and corridors is much less impressive. Most subjects are taught in satisfactory suites of adjacent rooms, although a few, including mathematics, lose some of their identity in more widely spread accommodation. The accommodation of the resistant materials and textile aspects of design and technology in narrow, featureless workshops is uninspiring. Some of the attractive, historic features of the building such as the Notre Dame hall and the St Julie resource centre have been very well preserved and adapted to the current needs of the college.

Sixth form

95. The leadership and management of the sixth form is essentially an integral part of the whole college. One member of the leadership team has responsibility and overall the management of the sixth form is good. Sixth form development planning is good and forms a significant part of whole-college issues that relate also to other areas in the college. For example, developments in the performing arts and vocational courses have been significant in relation to sixth form provision.
96. Assessment is being well developed at senior management level to support the work of colleagues in analysing performance in examinations. Good use is made of national performance data to generate targets and measure performance against them.
97. Resources are good in most subject areas and accommodation is generally shared with the remainder of the college. There are, however, specifically designated areas for private study. The sixth form is cost-effective and financial resources approximately match the expenditure.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards further the governing body, head teacher and senior leadership group of the college should:

1. Raise the level of attendance and improve punctuality by

- Evaluating and developing internal and external procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
 - Establishing ideas and sharing good practice from collaboration with other institutions
 - Implementing strategies for improving punctuality to lessons
(Paragraphs 15, 30, 63, 71)
2. Increase the involvement and contribution of parents and guardians to the students' learning, for example by
 - Ensuring that they receive information reliably, including the governors' annual report, and are kept fully aware of events within school
 - Developing the use of the weekly student planners
(Paragraphs 71, 76,77,78)
 3. Continue to review the curriculum organisational structure, including ability banding, and review the impact on subjects such as art and music.
(Paragraphs 39, 138, 183)
 4. Develop further the use of assessment within departments by:
 - Sharing good practice and improving consistency to the level of the best
 - Promoting the skills and benefits of analysis of performance data in relation to measuring achievement and influencing curriculum planning
(Paragraphs 32, 66, 67,68, 116, 152, 164, 172)
 5. Increase the use of ICT within the teaching method in subjects including English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history and modern languages.
(Paragraphs 30, 99, 105, 116, 130, 150, 174, 180)

Sixth form

1. Provide more consistent opportunities for independent learning in all subjects but notably including sciences, business education, theatre studies, history and English.
(Paragraphs 36, 216, 224, 229, 241, 252, 258)
2. Endeavour to increase the numbers of students to ensure viable group sizes
(Paragraphs 22, 56, 57)
3. Improve the punctuality of students to lessons
(Paragraphs 15, 22, 63, 71)

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	132
	Sixth form	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	6	31	57	38	0	0	0
Percentage	5	23	43	29	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	9	23	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	22	56	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	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	956	164
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	571	95

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	183	6

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	23

Student mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	12.1
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	2.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	201	201

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	152	82	94
	Total	152	82	94
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	76 (57)	41 (48)	47 (41)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	35 (19)	23 (21)	15 (15)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	131	105	97
	Total	131	105	97
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	65 (50)	52 (58)	48 (53)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	29 (17)	24 (24)	19 (20)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	0	173	173

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	0	0	0
	Girls	84	156	170
	Total	84	156	170
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	49 (33)	90 (92)	98 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	37.9 (32.4)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications in GNVQ Business Education, ICT or Health and Social Care, and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied.	College	78	76
	National		n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form 2001 (Year 13)

National Comparative Data for 2002 not available

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
College	Number of candidates	0	26	26
	Average point score per candidate	0	12.3	12.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
College	Number of candidates	0	26	26	0	19	19

	Average point score per candidate	0	12.3	12.3	0	6.0	6.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last college year**

Categories used in the Annual College Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1087	78	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	1	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.51
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	557.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3720533
Total expenditure	3870280
Expenditure per student	3560
Balance brought forward from previous year	445717
Balance carried forward to next year	295970

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	27.4
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	31.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1120
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	67	30	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in college.	69	28	0	0	3
Behaviour in the college is good.	59	38	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	28	10	0	0
The teaching is good.	69	28	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	62	36	0	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	67	30	0	0	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	18	0	0	0
The college works closely with parents.	64	33	0	0	3
The college is well led and managed.	76	20	0	0	4
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	28	3	0	2
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	64	26	5	0	5

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Forty-five questionnaires were returned. Within this sample, parents indicate that they are pleased with virtually all aspects of the college. They are particularly pleased with the high expectations that the college has in terms of the work of students. They also feel that the college is well led and managed and that teaching is good. Parents are very pleased that their children make good progress at the college and they feel very comfortable about approaching the college if they have any problems or concerns. A few parents indicated concern about the amount of homework. The inspection team found that homework was satisfactory overall, but not always consistent in quality. A few parents felt that there was not an interesting range of activities outside lessons. However, the school endeavours to offer activities after school, especially in the arts, as well as support for improving standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

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

- Standards have risen, significantly so in Years 7 to 9, a little less so in Years 10 to 11
- Students achieve well from a very low attainment base
- Good and frequently very good teaching and learning are the major factors in promoting good progress
- Students' good attitudes and very good behaviour have a clear impact on standards

Areas for improvement

- Promote greater use of ICT across the ability range, both within the classroom and as part of independent learning
- More consistency in marking, especially target-setting

98. Results in the 2002 tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and very high in comparison with similar schools. They show a significant increase on the results from the previous year. Teacher assessments were nearer to the national average and more in line with the general trend of rising standards within the department over the last three years. Since 1999, results have been consistently better than those in mathematics and science.
99. Standards in the lessons observed and in the work seen during the inspection were average overall, more in line with teacher assessments than with the 2002 results. This is because a different cohort of students was under observation. Achievement overall is good, reflecting considerable progress from a very low attainment base. Students are confident speakers and most listen attentively. The reading comprehension of most students is good; even those in lower sets are able to use a variety of reading strategies, including techniques such as skimming and scanning. High-attaining students are developing good analytical skills. Only a very few in the lowest sets have serious problems with reading. There is much fluent and accurate writing, including some imaginative descriptive and narrative work, although little extended writing from students in lower sets, many of whom have difficulties with spelling. Some students with special educational needs take great care over presentation, especially handwriting, and this has a positive effect on the overall quality of their work. There are few examples of ICT in English, however, mainly because of difficulties of access to computers.
100. In 2002, the GCSE English results were an improvement on those in 2001, although still a little below the national average. Results in English literature show a distinct improvement on those in 2001. They were well above average, but only represent the attainment of approximately half of the year group. The results overall reflect good achievement from Year 9.
101. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection are in line with these results. Students' speaking and listening skills are good; students are prepared to express their ideas at length if required. They are mostly fluent readers, developing higher order reading skills of analysis and inference. Much of their writing is well organised,

although careless spelling and weak paragraphing occur in the case of some weaker students. There is some high quality narrative and reflective writing, but again not enough work produced using ICT.

102. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall. This is due to the good and often very good teaching they receive. Lessons are structured carefully to meet their learning needs; learning assistants provide good support in class, and the students' confidence is boosted by the warm, friendly working atmosphere created by teachers. There are few students with English as an additional language and none in the early stages of learning the language. Many have been here for several years, and have made progress in line with their fellow students. A few more recent arrivals have had extra help from teachers, and many of these have shown considerable determination to improve, achieving good standards in a short time.
103. Students' good attitudes are a significant factor underpinning their good progress. Students know they are valued, that teachers want to help them, and they come to classes willing to learn. They are enthusiastic, approach their work seriously and sustain concentration. In a few instances, however, they have come to rely too much on their teachers, and are unwilling to work out problems for themselves. Most behave very well; they are courteous both in classrooms and outside lessons, very co-operative with teachers and work well together. They have a warm rapport with their teachers; it is clear that most students enjoy English and want to do well.
104. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with the majority of lessons observed good or better, an improvement on the situation at the last inspection. Teachers create a sense of order and purpose in their classrooms, and students respond positively, quickly settling to work. They feel confident in articulating their views in lessons; many are willing to read out their own compositions and there is a high level of participation in question and answer sessions. The quality of teaching in all year groups has been enhanced by the consistent implementation of National Literacy Strategy practices, and this has undoubtedly helped to improve results in Year 9. Teachers' planning is thorough, activities are varied, while lessons have a clear structure and are generally conducted at a brisk pace. As a result, students remain interested and work productively. Students know what they are meant to be learning as objectives are made clear at the start of lessons. They frequently participate in the consolidation of learning that usually takes place at the end of lessons.
105. Teachers make effective use of a range of resources to help students to learn. They provide writing frameworks to show students how to structure their essays; they use overhead projectors to help students focus on texts and analyse the way writers use language, and they reinforce learning with summaries on whiteboards or flipcharts. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology. Teachers have high expectations and many of the tasks set are now appropriately challenging. In Years 10 and 11, teachers' good subject knowledge and good questioning skills are further strengths; students are challenged to think more deeply about topics under discussion, and develop a sound knowledge of texts being studied. Teachers mark work regularly; some marking is very detailed, but greater consistency across the department is needed. Targets for improvement are sometimes indicated, but are not made sufficiently specific.
106. The department is managed efficiently and there is good leadership by example. Policies reflect the high principles across the department, principles which are very much in line with those of the college. There is a collaborative and supportive ethos. Monitoring of the work of students and of teachers in the department is informal, an

approach that works satisfactorily in the current situation, with a very stable department of experienced practitioners, but more formal arrangements might in future be desirable. Assessment procedures are thorough and common assessment tasks have been introduced since the last inspection. A further improvement has been the introduction of more curriculum time for English in Years 7 to 9. This is a strong department, adapting intelligently to national changes and well placed to continue the improvements in standards that have already been achieved.

Literacy

107. Standards of literacy across the college are satisfactory. Students have good listening skills, responding to their teachers' questions more than to each other's contributions in class. Most speak confidently, although not often at length. They are able to use each subject's specialist vocabulary well, particularly so in science, mathematics, history, physical education and modern foreign languages. The reading skills of the majority of students are sufficient to cope with the demands of the curriculum and in many but not all subjects students show they are able to use a variety of sources of information. There are, however, weaknesses in reading aloud with appropriate expression and intonation; this is a skill that is not yet being developed by all teachers. Standards of writing vary widely but are satisfactory overall. Most students write with a reasonable degree of fluency and accuracy, and most can plan, organise and express their ideas coherently, although in many subjects they are not required to do much more than give short answers. In subjects such as geography, modern foreign languages and drama, students are given writing frames to help with longer written tasks.
108. There are good procedures for managing the development of literacy across the school, with a management group, a working party and a comprehensive development plan. The college makes good use of available funding. So far there has been no significant involvement of the college library in developments. There is provision for monitoring the implementation of proposed developments, though none for monitoring and evaluating its impact on standards. There is evidence that most departments have responded positively to the need to take some responsibility for the development of literacy, and that changes already in place have helped to improve standards in English at the end of Year 9.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, coupled with a shared commitment to raising standards
- Very good relationships with students
- Good use of learning support assistants and overall provision for special educational needs
- Successful introduction of numeracy strategy within mathematics

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment at GCSE
- Consistency of marking and quality of feedback to students
- Sharing of good practice
- Use of ICT within mathematics lessons

109. Standards attained in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in the year 2002 were well below the national average and broadly in line with the average when compared with similar schools. Within the college, the standards achieved in mathematics were similar to those achieved in science but below those achieved in English. The trend line, although below the national line, indicates a steady rise in standards since the previous inspection up to 2001 but with a fall in the average points score in 2002.
110. In work seen during the inspection, student attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations and students make good progress, levels of attainment recorded on entry to Year 7 being well below national averages. This is a significant improvement upon attainment recorded at the time of the last inspection when students were working at a level one year behind expectations. The successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is a key factor in the raising of attainment, the current Year 9 being the first group of students to benefit fully from this initiative. Basic numeracy skills are developed through regular short, focussed sessions on mental arithmetic at the start of each lesson. Students are set work that is suited to their needs. Lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, demonstrate understanding of number patterns, although they have difficulty in retaining information. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 were observed working at Level 6 as they demonstrated good skills in exploring simultaneous equations via the use of graphic calculators.
111. The percentage of students obtaining a GCSE grade A*-C in the year 2002 was well below the national average, whereas the percentage obtaining grade A* - G was broadly in line with the national average. The 2002 results were slightly up on those achieved in 2001.
112. In work seen during the inspection, student attainment by the end of Year 11 is below national expectations. Students do, however, make good progress, levels of attainment recorded on entry to Year 10 being below national averages. The introduction of a modular GCSE course plus the extension of the numeracy strategy into Year 10 has increased student motivation and raised levels of attainment. Students with special educational needs respond well to the demands of following the GCSE course at foundation level; Year 11 students, for example, show good understanding of angle theory. Higher-level students demonstrate a good understanding of trigonometry and are very comfortable in handling statistical data and interpreting results. They are less confident with the solving of algebraic equations and transforming formulae. Value added analysis indicates that in order to further raise levels of attainment attention should be given to students in the middle ability groups, in particular the lower sets in the higher-attaining band.
113. Teaching within the department is good. All lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory, the majority being at least good and a significant proportion judged to be very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are conveyed to students. Teachers recognise the differing needs of individual students. They are aware of individual education plans that are provided for students with special educational needs and good practice exists in the use of support staff. The department is committed to the college's involvement in the literacy strategy; teachers make frequent reference to key words and insist that students use the correct terminology. The marking of students' work, however, is inconsistent and generally lacks diagnostic feedback. Not all teachers keep detailed records of homework marks and therefore miss an opportunity to monitor student progress.

114. In all year groups the majority of students take pride in the appearance of their work. Students at all levels are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour.
115. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has high standards and leads a team of enthusiastic and well-qualified teachers. He has successfully extended the use of the National Numeracy Strategy and introduced a modular GCSE course as part of the drive to raise standards. The departmental handbook is helpful and contains policies and guidance for good teaching. Monitoring of teacher performance, particularly with regard to marking, has not been fully implemented. Lesson observations as part of performance management have taken place and further opportunities for the sharing of good practice should now be considered.
116. Detailed analysis of student performance has been established, although the use of this data to improve standards is still developing. Further areas for development are formative assessment and the extension of ICT use. Although the statutory requirements for ICT within the mathematics curriculum are being met, there is insufficient use of ICT in the classroom.
117. The accommodation for the teaching of mathematics is satisfactory and the department is adequately resourced with regard to books, materials and equipment.
118. There have been significant improvements in teaching, learning and attainment since the last inspection report. The department has a clear commitment to the raising of standards as evidenced by the enthusiastic implementation of the numeracy strategy.

Numeracy

119. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory overall. The department has responded with enthusiasm to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which they believe is helping to raise standards.
120. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has been rewritten to comply with the numeracy framework. Mathematics lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 commence with short mental arithmetic sessions and finish with reviews of progress towards stated objectives. Catch-up lessons are not provided as a separate entity but the Springboard 7 materials are used extensively within the lower band classes.
121. Lesson observations show that students are able to apply numeracy skills in other curriculum areas. For example, in science students are able to take measurements and perform calculations with accuracy, in art students estimate and compare lengths and use geometric properties in the construction of patterns. In French students calculate accommodation and restaurant bills and in geography they use and understand grid references; they are also able to interpret graphs and statistical diagrams.
122. A numeracy co-ordinator has recently been appointed to lead whole-school development of the strategy. The head of mathematics and the LEA numeracy co-ordinator have provided preliminary training sessions for all staff. A numeracy committee consisting of representatives from each department has yet to be established.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are of good quality
- Effective assessment procedures for analysing test results and monitoring the progress of students
- Achievement of students with special educational needs
- New schemes of work structure the curriculum well

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT to assist in raising standards
- Achievement of higher-attaining students
- Consistency of marking and information given to students on how to improve

123. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards in the national tests are well below the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The performance in science was the same as in mathematics but not as good as English. The trend in overall results for the last few years is similar to the national trend. The results of the 2002 GCSE examinations in science were close to the results nationally and show a significant improvement in recent results in both double and single award science.
124. The standards of work seen in Year 9 are higher than expected from the recent national test results. Although they are still below the national results, they confirm the rising trend. The improved standards are as a result of more effective teaching and better use of the assessment data. However, the number of students reaching the highest level is too low. For example, although higher-attaining students in Year 9 have a sound understanding of the mechanism of photosynthesis, a large minority cannot identify the possible sources of error in an experiment to relate the volume of oxygen to light intensity.
125. There is less emphasis on activities involving investigation than the other areas of the science curriculum. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. Students enter the school with attainment well below the national average and overall their achievement is good. The attainment of students with special educational needs in Years 7 - 9 is in line with other students and their progress is also good.
126. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with the standards reached in the GCSE examination, that is close to the national average. For example, higher-attaining students in Year 11 understand the effect of a catalyst on a reaction and successfully investigate the variation in the rate of decomposition of hydrogen peroxide with the mass of manganese dioxide acting as a catalyst. Other students in Year 11 understand the electronic structure of the inert gases but the idea of activation energy is not fully grasped by a significant minority of students.
127. Students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress. For example, they explain how a particular feature has changed as the animal has evolved and adapted to the surroundings. Attainment of students at the end of Year 11 compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9 shows very good achievement. Students are encouraged to use the Internet as a means of obtaining information but there is little evidence of wider use of ICT.

128. Teaching and learning overall is good with no unsatisfactory teaching. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are structured well and in some lessons a move to encourage independent learning has begun. The work is more challenging than at the time of the last inspection. For example students, in Year 9 compare the effects of the different causes of weathering of rocks with some students able to predict the products of the reaction between hydrochloric acid and calcium carbonate. Their understanding of the equations involved is less secure.
129. There are more opportunities for the students to express their ideas than at the last inspection but this aspect needs further development. For example, lower- attaining students in Year 7 respond when asked to identify the properties of solids, liquids and gases. The effective teaching of students with special educational needs is a major factor in their very good achievement. Skilful use of a poster explaining continental drift showed students in Year 11 the importance of fossil records in describing the evolution of the earth.
130. There is insufficient use of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning or as a means of developing the students' skills. The teaching of skills in investigation has improved but this needs to have a greater priority. The chemical nature of drugs is raised and plays an important part in drug education, and moral issues such as genetic engineering are discussed. However, the wider impact of science is not well addressed.
131. Students' attitudes to science are good but they show little enthusiasm, owing to the lack of ICT and paucity of investigative work. They listen attentively and co-operate fully. This in turn allows the teachers to use the lesson time effectively. Marking is regularly carried out but it is not always consistent and does not provide the student with sufficient information on how to improve.
132. The management of science is good. The planned programme of study has been reviewed. It forms a sound basis for lesson plans and meets all statutory requirements. The relevance of ICT is identified but possibilities to enhance social development are lacking. Monitoring of teaching is in place by the acting head of department and members of the senior management team. There is a useful handbook and examination results are analysed in detail. This analysis identifies the achievement of individual pupils in each group. Data on the attainment of pupils is recorded throughout and the results of end of unit tests are linked to National Curriculum levels. This allows the progress of individual students to be tracked and any weakness in learning of specific groups to be identified.
133. The arrangements for dividing the year into sets puts higher-attaining students together, enabling gifted and talented students to be offered greater challenge. This is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in the earlier years. Students with special educational needs are also well catered for with this arrangement.
134. The accommodation in a suite of six, well-serviced, large laboratories provides for effective learning. The seventh is located away from the others and has a satisfactory range of services. The laboratories are well supported by two technicians. Resources are satisfactory but there are insufficient portable computers to enable activities such as data-logging to take place as a class activity. The library has a satisfactory range of books.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning that results in a sense of purpose in art which underwrites the long-term pursuit of excellence
- The quality of display that celebrates and inspires
- The high quality of work by students with special educational needs

Areas for improvement

- The banding and setting system that affects the access for students in larger groups to larger scale 3-D work
- Heating and light level control in the art rooms

135. The percentage of students in Year 9 gaining Level 5 or greater is well above the national average. GCSE results at grades A*-C and average points score are above the national average in 2002, and this standard was similar in 2001.
136. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection up to Year 9 were at the national average. They were above the national average in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs progress well, often attaining as well as their peers, and some very high quality work was seen from such students. Abler students work at appropriate levels, and show strong self-motivation in extension work. Good observed drawing was seen, showing development over time in sketchbooks, starting with some excellent drawings of crumpled crisp packets from Year 7 students. Oil, pastel and paint were well used in an impressionist project, with many students producing vibrant images. GCSE students are producing good quality and varied work for their portfolios. Extensive display in the department and around the college is used to celebrate success and inspire others. A visitor can get the impression that if a wall is available, it will be used to display good quality artwork.
137. Teaching and learning are very good at all levels. It is characterised by very good relationships, which give students the self-confidence to take artistic risks. Very good preparation and planning are linked to the setting of clear targets in all lessons, with clear criteria for success and effective strategies to support delivery. Efficient organisation and management leads to easy access to resources. Lesson pace is good, but above all, teacher passion and enthusiasm is communicated to students, who respond with equal enthusiasm and commitment. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by artwork and inspiration. Individual feedback inside lessons helps students to modify overall targets into individual ones, and thus maximise their progress. Students were seen to learn by observation and analysis, experiment and skill development, but above all, by progressive refinement. Student response is very good at all levels, and in many lessons fun and hard work go together. They both look and see in an exciting visual environment.
138. The curriculum is broad and balanced, fully meeting National Curriculum requirements. It is founded on direct observational drawing, and inspiration is drawn from a wide range of historical and world sources. ICT plays an appropriate part through Years 7 to 11. Two- and three-dimensional work is in place, and many styles and techniques are taught. However, the very large groups of more able students in Year 7 to 9 leads to difficulties of access to larger scale three-dimensional work because of space constraints. In the context of the good accommodation for art, ways to resolve the issues of inadequate storage, cold in winter and excessive heat in summer, and

difficulty in controlling the light from the sun at some times of the year should be investigated. The department is very well led. The head of department has vision and a determination to raise standards in the pursuit of excellence.

139. Progress since the last inspection has been good. There is a new head of department, and all issues raised, including assessment procedures, at the last inspection have been well addressed, laying a very good foundation for further development.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Established clear policy for teaching and co-ordination of the subject in order to meet National Curriculum requirements
- Good teaching that builds on the existing good practice in its personal development programme
- Successful raising of awareness of all teachers to the new requirements and identified subjects that can contribute to the overall teaching of citizenship

Areas for improvement

- Assessment practice, to ensure consistency across a range of subjects and teachers
- The scheme of work, to be composite and to identify more clearly the college's provision in order to help monitor the teaching and assessment of the subject.

140. The school has made a good start to introducing this new subject into its curriculum. In preparation, it carried out an audit to establish which subjects were able to teach elements of citizenship as laid down in the National Curriculum requirements. Where aspects were not identified as being taught in subject areas, specific modules of work have been incorporated into the well-established personal development programme.
141. There were no lessons during inspection with a focus on citizenship that were being taught outside the personal development programme. However, plans for teaching aspects of the subject were seen, for example, in history, geography and English documentation. Religious education is also identified by the school as making a significant contribution to citizenship.
142. During the inspection Years 9 and 11 had discrete lessons on different aspects of personal finance. Students achieve at a level appropriate for their age. Nearly all gain an understanding of basic financial terms and concepts, such as budgeting, and as a result of the good teaching are able to relate this to everyday responsible living. Overall students respond well to questioning and take part in discussions in different groupings. They express their views with clarity and respect one another's opinions.
143. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. In all lessons the planning is good and the quality of the relationships helps the teachers to achieve their objectives. In the best lessons students have opportunity to discuss issues openly through well-structured activities. The lessons judged satisfactory could have been improved by greater participation by the students and the use of better quality resources.

144. The subject is supported by the inclusive ethos of the college and by the good teaching strategies already well developed in the main personal development programme. Students' views are regularly sought and taken into account in a number of areas of school life. There are many opportunities for students to develop social responsibility and in the classroom they regularly and successfully work collaboratively.
145. The subject is being well co-ordinated by an experienced member of staff. There is a clear policy that identifies responsibilities for implementing and monitoring the various aspects of the programme. The system for assessing students' work and ensuring consistency across a large number of teachers is still to be developed. Currently there is no one detailed scheme identifying the topics being covered and the subject responsible.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching from enthusiastic, committed staff
- Students with special educational needs are well supported
- Students have positive attitudes to their learning and try hard in their work

Areas for improvement

- Use of ongoing assessment, including the quality of marking, and students' knowledge of their own learning
- Use of ICT, and introduction of CAD/CAM in students' work
- Accommodation, since the use of two rooms that are unsuitable for design and technology is affecting standards of attainment

146. Standards on entry to the college are very low. Many students have limited development of their technological knowledge, skills and understanding. As reflected in recent teacher assessments, standards of students' work at the end of Year 9 are below those expected nationally because design skills are not well developed. A few higher-attaining students reach the expected standards by the end of Year 9. Their work in Year 9 shows clear writing, well set out and carefully presented work with annotation. More students achieve satisfactorily because they use a range of equipment and tools safely and confidently.
147. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below those expected nationally. Students' results in 2002 by the end of Year 11 were well below those expected nationally, with the exception of GCSE textiles, which were at national average. Irregular broken attendance affects students' attainment. In the samples of work seen in Year 11, the highest-attaining students produce satisfactory work that shows thoughtful presentation and sequencing. The work of lower-attaining students is sometimes brief and incomplete. Standards of writing are well developed for the majority of students whatever their ability. However, research is often limited with students using only one source from which to glean information. ICT is not widely used in students' work. Students with special educational needs are reaching satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment, reflecting the standard of support provided by teachers. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory overall because teachers work very hard to ensure that students progress in lessons.

148. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan and prepare resources for their lessons very effectively. They use their specialist knowledge to plan well-paced structured lessons with useful student activities and good questioning. As a result, students work hard, concentrate well, listen carefully and show a good level of interest in completing the tasks set. For example, in a Year 11 GCSE food lesson, these features of good teaching captured the interest of students very well as they studied product development by preparing celebration foods, assessing the quality and suitability of the finished items.
149. All teachers in the department use a similar range of methods so students become accustomed to the good routines. Good classroom organisation, coupled with high expectations, means that students work hard. Thus, in a Year 7 product design lesson, students increased their understanding of money box construction and modelling by working individually and co-operating on relevant practical work that captured their interest. Planning for progression is another important feature of the teaching. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on fabric characteristics and care labels, the teacher's very clear introduction was followed by a combination of questioning and different activities with relevant homework. Throughout the lesson, the teacher's interaction with students contributed significantly to learning and progress, for example through perceptive questions.
150. The teaching of literacy is good across the subjects, but there is not enough teaching of numeracy. The use of ICT is currently unsatisfactory. Computer- aided design and manufacture developments are not in evidence. Students learn to work in a safe environment as health and safety systems are firmly established. All students are included in design and technology lessons. Improved marking and the wider use of individual targets arising from assessment of work would help students to become more independent in their learning. Students with special educational needs are well known and supported by teachers and make good progress in lessons. Higher-attaining students make satisfactory progress but are not sufficiently challenged to explore ideas in depth.
151. The majority of students throughout the school have positive attitudes to their work in design and technology. They listen attentively to their teachers' explanations and demonstrations and respond readily to their questions. Levels of concentration are good and they are interested in the tasks presented to them, particularly the practical aspects. Students show great respect for the design and technology environment.
152. Leadership and management in design and technology are good. The department's planning is clearly focussed on the issues of raising standards by the end of Years 9 and 11. There is a clear educational direction in the work of the department. Progress has been made in developing policies that will raise standards as they are implemented across the department. The best features are the strong sense of teamwork, coupled with the structured teaching and the good effect these have on student learning. Design and graphical skills, marking and assessment procedures, the use of ICT and challenge for higher attainers are all insufficiently developed, leading to depressed standards of attainment. The accommodation used for resistant materials in particular is unsatisfactory and affects students' attainment and achievement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching resulting in rising achievement
- Student participation in lessons
- Good use of ICT and audio-visual technology
- Use of assessment including departmental administration

Areas for improvement

- Number of students opting to take geography in Year 10
- Proportion of higher grades in GCSE examinations

153. Standards of attainment are rising in this successful department. Students who enter the college in Year 7 with below average levels of attainment make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9. Though teacher assessments at the end of the year show that they are not reaching standards equal to national averages, especially those of girls, value has been added to their geographical education and a sound platform built on which they can progress further in Years 10 and 11. For the small number of students who opt to take geography in Years 10 and 11 progress is good. Grades awarded in GCSE examinations show a rising trend overall, though results have fluctuated over the last four years. Many students raise their attainment from below average to just above average, culminating, in 2002, when nearly two-thirds of students were awarded grades A* - C in GCSE examinations. Since 1998 results have risen overall despite a disappointing year in 2001 when only one third of students gained grades A* - C, well below the national average.
154. Students make good progress in geography in all years, though rates of progress are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is often due not only to the good quality of teaching provided by the department but also to the students themselves who concentrate very well, are very well behaved and work co-operatively in student-led learning situations. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on 'ecotourism'. These student-centred approaches create interest and motivate students well, as does the enthusiasm and patience of staff in providing individual help and support when, for example, teaching map skills to the lowest-attaining students in lessons in Year 7. As a result, these students make progress at the same rate as their peers. Higher-attaining students make good progress as a result of the stimulating teaching. Students working towards GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 have developed good research skills that they use effectively in coursework assignments, revealing a sound command of information and communication technology as an aid to presentation.
155. Overall the quality of teaching is good, though very occasionally the teacher plays too big a part in the lesson. Lesson content, timing and methodology are very well planned. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and ensure that the aims and objectives of each lesson are clearly stated at the beginning so that students are fully aware of what is required of them. They have high expectations and encourage students' literacy skills through the use of writing frames and explanations of technical terminology. Each lesson has a variety of tasks for students to undertake, sustaining interest and helping them to concentrate well. This was particularly the case in Year 11 lessons on tropical storms and the use of the recent oil pollution disaster on the Spanish coast as an illustration of global pollution, a task in which requirements were appropriately varied according to the levels of attainment of the students. Homework is

used well to extend learning and both starter exercises at the beginning, and end of lesson recall exercises consolidate work learned previously.

156. Very good use is made of specific examples as a means of learning and as preparation for tests and examinations, for example the 'Prestige' disaster, tourism in Majorca and the Gambia and flooding in Bangladesh. Field visits enhance attainment in all years, especially when studying urbanisation, spheres of influence, tourism and physical features. Lessons are made interesting by judicious use of audio-visual presentations and by the many good resources the department has accumulated. There is an emphasis on the understanding of geographical vocabulary as well as patterns and processes in physical and human geography. In all lessons students are encouraged to ensure that their work is sufficiently detailed to illustrate and demonstrate their knowledge in end of unit tests and examinations.
157. The department makes effective use of good assessment procedures to encourage students to make progress and raise levels of attainment. It analyses carefully performance in external examinations and uses outcomes well to guide teaching and learning. Students are aware of the standards they are reaching and the targets set for them and most understand the standards of the different levels of the National Curriculum and GCSE and departmental marking grades. As a result, they know what to do to improve. Extra sessions are provided to help students to prepare for examinations or to seek help with work. Displays of the work of students in classrooms, together with other geographical material, create an environment that encourages learning in the subject.
158. The leadership and management of the department are good. Although current staffing limits opportunities, tasks are delegated to other members of the department. The development plan identifies the current needs of the department and sets appropriate objectives to continue to raise attainment and improve the quality of learning provided for students. Schemes of work are thorough and provide good guidance for teaching, including the ways in which information and communication technology, literacy, numeracy and citizenship should be incorporated into teaching. They lack, however, information regarding the contribution the department should make to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students or the support to be given to students with special educational needs.
159. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, in raising standards of attainment, improving assessment procedures, increasing the part students play in lessons and in developing the use of information and communication technology for both teaching and learning. The number of students who have opted for geography remains small in both Years 10 and 11.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Attitudes and relationships
- Quality of teaching
- Monitoring and support of students' learning
- Leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in GCSE examinations
- Clarity and consistency of marking
- Identified whole-class ICT opportunities

160. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9, as reflected in teaching assessments, has fluctuated in recent years, although in 2002 it was very close to the national average. Inspection evidence supports this interpretation as representing good achievement, since the attainment on entry of a significant proportion of students was well below average. Before 2002 overall attainment in the GCSE exams was close to, although usually below, national comparators, although, as is exemplified by the paucity of A* and A grades at GCSE level, there were relatively few higher-attaining students. In 2002 the A*-C pass rate fell to well below the national average, partly as a result of confusion arising from a change of syllabus and of staff. This has now been rectified.
161. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. Despite considerable and largely successful efforts made by the department to improve standards of literacy, lower-attaining students continue to make errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and sometimes make simplistic assumptions, as in a Year 8 lesson where 'cavaliers' were equated with Catholics, and 'roundheads' with Protestants. Students read aloud competently and quite confidently; higher-attaining students complete good quality extended writing, having undertaken individual research, sometimes making use of information and communication technology, although limitations in the college's hardware restrict the extent to which this may be effected on a whole-class basis.
162. Work seen during the Inspection indicates that by the end of Year 11 standards are consistent with national averages. The majority of students express themselves well in writing, although not without errors in the technical accuracy of their written English. They make full and detailed notes, although topics such as the building of canals and railways would benefit from the wider use of appropriate maps, diagrams and chronology, and a more secure understanding of the technological changes underpinning these advances. Students' work reflects developing analytical, essay and examination skills as a result of the attention paid by teachers to these areas. Students make use of ICT to research 18th century road builders and take an evident pride in the overall presentation of their findings. They make good progress over the course as a whole.
163. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good features. The majority of lessons are very well planned, conducted at a brisk pace and make very good use of question and answer to challenge and consolidate students' learning. In a PowerPoint presentation to Year 11 students, provocative quotes about the inadvisability of extending the franchise to women were well used to stimulate energetic discussion and perceptive comment about the motives of those opposed to such a measure. Much

thought has gone into supporting students' learning through attractive and educative display, subjective specific glossaries, assistance with extended writing and examination guidance; these all make a valuable contribution to the good progress of students with special educational needs.

164. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive; a gentle humour and teachers' skilful management underpin very good classroom relationships and make a valuable contribution to the quality of learning. Teachers mark work closely and award levels according to the departmental mark scheme but the relationship between these and National Curriculum levels could be more transparent to students. Through both the nature and content of the topics taught, and the example teachers offer students, the subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual and cultural aspects of students' personal development, and a very good one to the moral and social aspects.
165. The subject is very well led and managed; the head of department has a clear focus on raising attainment and has paid great attention to broadening the range of teaching and learning styles. There are close and productive working relationships between the teachers involved which helps to raise standards through the sharing of good practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching with very well-planned lessons
- Students with special educational needs are well supported
- Attitudes and behaviour of students are very good
- Timetable arrangement for discrete lessons in ICT is good
- Good quality resources

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in national tests and examinations
- Use of assessment, including the quality of marking to ensure students are clearer about the progress they are making
- Use of ICT within many curriculum subjects
- Efficiency of use and access to computers that presently exist around the college
- Availability of technician support for the ICT department

166. By the end of Year 9 standards in information and communication technology are well below average. In 2002, the percentage of students gaining the expected level in the end of Year 9 teacher assessments was well below the national average. However, since students enter the college with very varied levels of attainment in this subject and, overall, well below average, their achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Skills relating to the presentation of different forms of information are more highly developed for most students than other aspects of the requirements.
167. By the end of Year 11, overall standards in ICT have improved. In the 2002 GNVQ Intermediate qualification nearly all students entered gained a Pass result. In the 2001 GCSE examination the percentage of grades A* - C was still well below average. Achievement of the majority of students is satisfactory throughout Years 10 and 11.

168. Standards of work seen are below the national expectation by the end of Year 9. However, there was evidence during the inspection of many students producing higher quality work. For example, students in Year 8 were able to create a document listing the eight principles of the Data Protection Act using word processing and the drawing toolbar. They were then able to work individually, producing the draft documents using the computer. Although a few of this large group required some support from the teacher in order to make progress with the task, the majority was able to work independently. Students were able to organise, refine and present the required information in different forms and were developing into confident computer users. In some other classes, students exhibit restricted skills and confidence when proceeding with tasks on the computer.
169. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are below the average for the majority of students, but improving compared to previous years. As with the lower school, some students, particularly those undertaking the GNVQ programme, are beginning to produce work of a higher quality. However, the majority of students have restricted information and communication technology skills. Students in a Year 11 GNVQ lesson, for example, were undertaking practical work on an individual basis concerning the structure of an invoice. Many of the class made good progress with the task and a few required support from the teacher in order to make any progress. Overall, all students, regardless of levels of prior attainment or special need make appropriate progress.
170. Attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. Students listen well to teachers, work with pace and concentration and show that they enjoy using computers. Relationships are very good and this is seen in the way higher-attaining students are willing to support others when they encounter difficulties in practical activities. Limited learning and slower progress for a few easily distracted students is seen in Years 9 and 11 occasionally.
171. The overall quality of teaching in ICT is good. All lessons are very well planned and this helps student progress. The objectives of the lessons are made clear at the start of the lessons, together with the expectations of the tasks to be completed. Lessons involve the students in a good range of different activities including working individually at computers and this maintains their interest. Teachers make good use of projectors and interactive white boards to support aspects of the work. Good subject knowledge, along with skilful use of questioning, checks the level of understanding of the students.
172. Teachers make regular checks on individual progress in lessons and provide students with good support and guidance. Routine reference is made to individual plans for students with special needs. This results in a sound awareness of these students' learning needs, so that they make good progress in lessons. Many of the tasks given to all students require them to write reports, create leaflets and letters and provide satisfactory opportunities to practise literacy skills. In working near each other at computers, students often have opportunities to collaborate over the work, speaking and listening to each other. Detailed marking and use of ongoing assessment is very basic.
173. Management of ICT is satisfactory. Detailed and effective monitoring and evaluation procedures are not at present in place. The staff meets on a regular basis and schemes of work have been developed and agreed. The department's work is characterised by enthusiasm and teamwork committed to raising standards of attainment in ICT. There is one computer to every four students, which is twice the national average. Specialist rooms are of a high quality, although rather spread out.

Good use is made of display materials in these rooms. Full-time technical support for the ICT department is not presently available.

ICT across all curriculum subjects and courses

174. There are insufficient opportunities for students to practise and apply their ICT skills by using computers in the other subjects. A few subjects provide good opportunities. For example, in geography good use is made of ICT at all years and particularly in students' examination coursework. Music also makes very good use of ICT and students in Year 11 compose, using sequencing software. In PE good use is made of ICT. A major factor in the lack of ICT is that many subjects have difficulty in accessing the ICT resources for a full class.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

French and Spanish

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning as a result of teachers' very good subject knowledge
- Very good assessment and procedures for predicting students' success
- Very good leadership and management of the department

Areas for improvement

- The number of students that leave the college with no language qualification
- Opportunities for students to travel or work abroad
- Potential use of ICT not being realised

175. In 2002, GCSE results in French at A*-C were below average and lower than the year before, when results were higher than those that those students gained in other school subjects. All students entering gained grades at A*-G. In 2001, the lower-attaining students entering for Spanish gained slightly lower than average grades and a small minority gained grades at A*-C. Students' attainment in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 was lower than the national expectation. Inspection evidence indicates that students are currently attaining at levels equal to the national expectation.

176. Students enter the college in Year 7 with little or no knowledge of French or Spanish, one of which they all study in Years 7-9. They soon exchange greetings, understand classroom instructions and lessons taught in French or Spanish. Students speak briefly but usually accurately with good accent and intonation. From reading captions and short statements, they progress very well in Years 8 and 9 to longer texts about home and school life or leisure. Students write simply about sport and healthy living and express their opinions about family and social life. Most recall and use idioms well for personal appearance, telling the time or predicting the weather. They use number accurately for dates, school timetables and travel details. The majority, including students from ethnic backgrounds, understand basic grammar, progressing in Year 9 to the use of tenses to describe or propose leisure pursuits. Students' writing is well adapted to producing posters, informal letters and writing scripts about visiting the doctor or travelling by public transport. Lower attainers and students with special educational needs progress very well with extra help in small classes, using simplified materials. Higher attainers progress well where there is high expectation from teachers.

177. A reduced number of students continue with French or Spanish in Years 10 and 11, working toward GCSE qualifications in modular examinations offering many students a good chance of success. Consequently, the standards observed in both French and Spanish are higher than those reflected in recent external examination results. Higher-attaining students, including some talented linguists, speak and write confidently and at greater length. These students increase their vocabulary and grammar, extending their writing on themes such as tourist information, descriptions of daily routine, helping around the house and earning pocket money. Talented linguists express the humour and disappointments of day trips out and work experience. Many project their own personalities, describing their home life, personal interests and career aspirations. Lower attainers, including a minority with special educational needs, as well as students having English as an additional language, reinforce simple work learnt previously but sometimes imperfectly, due to poor attendance or lack of commitment.
178. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and overall it is good. Teachers and their assistants have very good knowledge of French and Spanish. They use effective methods that engage their students' interest and talents. Teachers relate well to their students, sustaining a fast pace and rhythm in many lessons with lively interactive presentations. They often involve keen volunteers, who amuse their classmates with demonstrations of the newly learnt language. Students appreciate the games, competitions, songs, and classroom routines that enliven many lessons. Students' exercise books and folders are neatly kept and usually complete. Bright displays provide good examples of written work for students to emulate, expressing the imagination and creativity that teachers foster. A minority of books show incomplete, untidy or inaccurate work.
179. Teachers' expectations of a depth of understanding are high, and they mostly take account of students' abilities. They manage potentially disruptive students skilfully, diverting the energy into productivity or making sensible use of the college's sanctions. Their planning is usually sound, although many lessons follow a predictable pattern, which involves the majority of students, but bores a few who achieve less in consequence.
180. Teachers' assessment is very good, achieved informally in lessons from prompt, often boisterous responses, frequent short tests, thorough marking and by monitoring students as they work. Teachers are keenly aware of their students' potential, encouraging competent linguists to attain high levels and good examination grades. They share details of mark schemes and predictions with them. They place those with special educational needs, behavioural difficulties or from ethnic backgrounds strategically in class, to provide them with additional support. Teachers work well with talented language assistants who provide a valuable extra resource. Teachers use conventional resources well, providing extra materials to support or extend students' learning, as required. Their use of information and communication technology is only partially developed and the available equipment is not fully used. Teachers use homework well to preface and follow up the work done in class.
181. The department is very well led and well managed, despite a recent high level of staff turnover. Staffing is currently stable, with a good blend of established good practice and fresh ideas from newcomers, who are well supported in planning and managing students. Learning support and language assistants work hard, but need clearer instructions before lessons to put their talents to better use. The curriculum is sound, basic, and narrower than that which the college offered at the time of the last inspection. The department, unusually, offers students no study visits or contacts

abroad. Teachers benefit from professional development, including reviews by senior management, training, and frequent observation of one another's lessons. There has been some improvement on the provision noted at the last inspection, largely in terms of GCSE success in one language for a wider range of students, but the offer of a more flexible curriculum, combined with good external qualifications for all students, has yet to be achieved.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Use of technology and ICT in music
- Expertise in recording and contemporary performance which inspires students
- Work with primary schools as part of the college's community programme
- The quality of the leadership and management in improving teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- The banding and setting system, since musical ability often does not match the criteria used to make the groups
- Questioning skills that require narrow response

182. Attainment target levels beyond Level 5 are well above the national average. GCSE results at grades A* - C were above the national average in 2001, and are below it in 2002. The average over two years is at the national norm. Attainment in work and lessons seen during the inspection are at the national average up to Year 9, and above the national average in Years 10 and 11.

183. The setting and banding system in Years 7 to 9 is not always appropriate for music, since musical ability often does not match the criteria used to make the groups. However, those with special educational needs generally make good progress. The most able progress well, and take advantage of the very good extra-curricular provision in music. The opening section of each lesson involving the 'music for the week' is a very effective tool for the growth of listening skills and deduction from aural evidence. One student said that the bells used in the Harry Potter film music were to 'make it magical.' A very good composition and score in a rhapsodic style was seen from a Year 11 student using sequencing software very effectively.

184. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The head of faculty has been very supportive in helping current staff to develop their teaching skills, and the impact of her work is clear. It is better in Years 10 and 11 because the students are able to take full advantage of the unusually high levels of contemporary music expertise from the teacher concerned. In the best lessons relationships are good, making students feel secure. Preparation and planning are generally good, but there is a tendency to teach to the middle of the class. Organisation and class management are improving, and are very good in GCSE classes.

185. Questioning is overall good, but too many questions have only one factual answer. Learning was seen to be by listening and analysis, skill development, experiment and progressive refinement. The 'music for the week' element in all lessons provides good support for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting statutory requirements, including significant world music. ICT and music technology are a significant strength of the department. A good

number of students receive instrumental tuition, which is heavily subsidised by the college.

186. Extra-curricular provision is strong, and is an important extension to the curriculum for many students. Leadership is inspirational and management efficient. Music is an important part of the performing arts development, together with drama and dance. The effective policies underwrite effective monitoring of standards and their improvement. The community music teacher provides a very good service in primary schools, and many primary school pupils come to the college every week for exciting music workshops with staff and students. There is a strong commitment to the orchestra by students and teachers.
187. Progress since the last inspection has been good. All the issues at the last inspection have been resolved. Very close monitoring is in place to support current staff in the delivery of good quality teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning, resulting in high participation rates
- Good assessment procedures
- Very good management

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum breadth in the activities offered
- Specialist accommodation for practical activities, which is inadequate for curriculum needs and impacts on the fulfilment of National Curriculum requirements
- Progression to post-16 programmes in physical education

188. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* -C was close to the national average in 2002. The results indicate a significant improvement over previous years and are consistent with the predictions made for that cohort of students. Results in assessments at the end of Year 9, for those achieving the expectations of Level 5 and above, are close to the percentage achieved nationally.
189. Standards of achievement by the end of Year 9 are good. Students achieve well in all aspects of knowledge, skill and understanding. Students have sound basic skills in netball. Students with special educational needs make progress in the same measure as their peers. In hockey, students showed considerable skill in controlling a fast-moving ball on the hard and fast surface of the sports hall floor. All games have to be played on the courts or in the sports hall. Students are perceptive and are able to answer questions readily and accurately. They are able to evaluate performance, although this is less easily demonstrated in games than it would be in gymnastics or dance. Where achievement is less secure, it is the result of student lack of aptitude in the activity.
190. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Similar characteristics are present to those found in earlier years. Students engage in discussion and speak with confidence in the subject, work enthusiastically in lessons and show knowledge and understanding of the concepts of the activities and rules of games. Throughout, skill levels reflect students' ability to work with precision in games and their work in fitness shows a

fundamental understanding of concepts and principles. For example, most students are able to take their own pulse at different points on the body. Both standards of achievement and attainment, identified in the last report as generally satisfactory and sometimes good, have been maintained in the activities.

191. There is variation in the quality of teaching but the overall quality of teaching is good. As a result, the response and behaviour of pupils is excellent. Participation rates in lessons are high. Worksheets linked to the matter of the lesson, which also require observation and evaluation skills, are always available for use. Strengths in teaching derive from a good basis of subject knowledge supported by coherent planning. Lessons are well planned with the four strands linking to the attainment target clearly in focus and a good range of teaching and learning strategies are used.
192. Opportunities for literacy and numeracy are written into plans and the social and moral aspects germane to the teaching of the subject are evident, as when a student was counselled about dangerous hitting in hockey. Organisation is always good and allows for a strong supportive framework in which teaching and learning can succeed.
193. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning, as was seen in Year 9 netball, when a video-clip was used to illustrate directional change. Where teaching is most effective, it is interactive, makes pertinent use of observation and feedback to individuals and groups, introduces challenge, encourages self-esteem and uses assessment effectively. Elements of such teaching were seen in hockey and in fitness lessons. The instances where teaching and learning can be improved hinge upon the pace and timing of the lesson, the frequency of feedback and intervention and extending the more able students.
194. The subject is very well managed. Documentation and record keeping are excellent. Assessment procedures are well thought through. Monitoring and evaluation are carried through consistently and accurately, yielding a sound basis for the assessment of students. The department is well resourced in terms of equipment and ICT; however, the accommodation in which the programmes are carried out is inadequate.
195. The change in the dance component from the physical education curriculum in Years 7 - 9, to be part of performing arts, has resulted in neither gymnastics nor dance being taught within the area. Similarly, in Years 10 and 11 curriculum breadth and balance are affected as the only access students have to dance is through GCSE. Consequently, the curriculum has a games focus. A satisfactory programme of extra-curricular activities operates but these are mainly in games.

DANCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning resulting from good subject knowledge
- Well-planned lessons, resulting in excellent attitudes and behaviour

Areas for improvement

- Consistency and quality of feedback to groups and individuals
- Clarity of management structure within performing arts

196. Dance as an independent subject is a new subject to the curriculum and is located in the area of performing arts. No measures against national criteria are yet available.
197. Students in all Years 7 - 9 perform well within lessons and develop quickly when they experience good teaching. Quality of teaching and learning are always at least satisfactory and where teaching and learning harmonise to maximize pupil achievement and attainment, excellence occurs. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are satisfactory and attainment is above expectation for the age. The response and behaviour of students is excellent. Participation rates in lessons is high and focussed work is prepared for any non-participant, which promotes their involvement in the lesson and works upon their observational skills, knowledge and understanding.
198. Lessons are well planned and are framed within the context of the National Curriculum for physical education in Years 7 - 9. GCSE offers the only access to dance in Years 10 and 11, and the GCSE syllabus provides both the context and the framework. The work in dance is appropriately divided according to the experience and expertise of the teachers. Lesson plans clearly identify links with literacy, numeracy and citizenship. In the best practice, these are reinforced throughout the lesson. Attention to literacy is apparent during lessons, in the plenary at the end and is further reinforced through homework notebooks. Students with special educational needs can perform with confidence and at a high level of competence within the subject.
199. The development of dance as a subject, outside of physical education, is currently challenging as it is through two newly qualified specialist teachers under the management of the head of the large faculty of performing arts. Extra-curricular programme work is developing and students have been taken out to the theatre for subject enrichment.
200. Accommodation is adequate. Lessons are taught in the gymnasium, which has a good sprung floor; mirrors and barres are to be fitted and a dedicated room for theory lessons is being built. At times, because it is the only space available, two teachers, teaching two classes, have to share the space.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Teaching and especially planning to ensure sequential skill development
- Practical skills are well developed
- Effectiveness of students in analysing their work orally

Areas for improvement

- Revision of curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to develop a more challenging programme in readiness for post -16
- Opportunities for independent learning with a greater focus on writing skill development

201. Students enter school with standards well below national expectations in speaking and listening and with little experience of drama. By Year 9 attainment in drama is in line with expected standards, demonstrating good gains in understanding and skills development. In 2002 GCSE examination students achieved standards in line with the national average, which demonstrates good achievement as all students take drama one year early at the end of Year 10.

202. Inspection evidence reflects these standards, which are similar to those found in the previous inspection. Standards in practical skills are very good; the detailed and sequential planning in the first three years ensures that students are able to use a range of dramatic devices effectively. Good examples of well-developed improvisation were observed in a lesson on 'Street Theatre'. Students have very good standards of analysis and evaluation of their own and others' work orally. Unfortunately, this is not carried through into written practice and some detailed observations are lost as a result. By Year 10 nearly all students are competent in performance but not with written coursework. In a lesson on the Bosnian/Serbian conflict, the lack of opportunity for reflective note taking prevented the considerable gains made during the practical session being fully explored.
203. A significant number of higher-attaining students in Year 10 does not achieve high enough standards due to insufficient challenge in either practical or written work. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve standards similar to their peers. Students with English as an additional language make good progress in drama and achieve well in speaking and listening activities.
204. Teaching is good overall, but the quality of teaching ranged from very good to barely satisfactory. Nearly all teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge but the planning at Key Stage 4 does not allow this to be shared with the students. Schemes of work are taken directly from a commercial publication and have not been geared to the needs of the students, the majority of whom already have well-developed drama skills. In very good lessons such as one on 'Medieval Mummers' the National Literacy Strategy was used very effectively to sequentially build up skills and experience. The plenary session encouraged students to evaluate their performance orally. In the lessons where teaching was weaker the introduction was too long and the pace too slow and, as a result, students became demotivated. In these lessons there was insufficient variety and group work was neither demanding nor interesting.
205. A major weakness in the teaching is the insufficient focus on written evaluations. The students do not have drama notebooks. The assessment system focusses on whether girls have attended the lesson with drama kit or completed homework and targets for the next lesson are given. There is insufficient emphasis on assessing what skills the girls have developed during the module.
206. Relationships with students are very good and the majority of students work hard and sustain concentration. Students have little opportunity for independent learning and, as a result, a significant number find writing for GCSE coursework difficult. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently, either as a resource or as a tool for designing costume, make-up or staging.
207. Although the overall management of drama is very good, recent staffing difficulties have resulted in inappropriate changes to syllabus and timetable. The overall effect of classes in Year 10 being taught by more than one teacher is a lack of continuity and progression. Although some written work is marked, the effectiveness of the exercise is inconsistent across groups.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is **good**.

Strengths

- Good achievement in leisure and tourism and health and social care
- Range of vocational course opportunities
- Work-related curriculum available for lower-attaining students

Areas for improvement

- Progress of a number of students with special educational needs in health and social care resulting from oversize classes and insufficient learning support

208. The majority of students in business education, ICT, and health and social care begin their courses with below average results at the age of 14. In both years 2002 and previously in 2001, most of these students achieved at least pass grades, the equivalent of grade C in GCSE. The results in 2002 were better than 2001 overall. This represents good achievement. In work seen during the inspection in leisure and tourism at intermediate level and health and social care at intermediate and foundation level, the majority of students are making good progress set against a lower than average starting point.
209. Some students with special educational needs do not progress as quickly as other students. In health and social care, this is the result of oversized classes and a lack of in-class support for the larger than usual number of students on the register.
210. Most students work eagerly and in a positive manner. They enjoy their work, work well together and value the support given to them by their teachers. In all these subjects the overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers know the subjects well and produce well-structured lessons with clear emphasis on improvement. The needs of all individual students are known and consequently the lesson objectives are carefully set in order to enable all to be successful. For example, in Year 11 leisure and tourism, where students were producing promotional posters, there was a good range of ideas and good progress by all students. The overall quality of the posters was variable.
211. The work in these subject areas is well co-ordinated. The head of department is newly appointed but has already had a positive effect on the organisation of the teaching and learning in all of them. There is still work to be done in the assessment of learning skills but the GNVQ style of working towards clear grade criteria is well established. These subjects together represent an important opportunity for students to gain accreditation through the vocational route and many can then progress to higher-level awards in the sixth form.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. Small numbers of students in many subjects requires caution in making comparisons

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Religious Studies	3	-	26	33	85	0.3	2.4
Sociology	1	-	7	100	63	2.0	1.2

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Biology	3	-	34	67	88	3.3	5.3
Chemistry	4	-	43	75	90	2.5	5.9
Communication Studies	10	20	31	90	93	5.0	5.5
English Literature	17	24	37	88	95	5.1	5.5
French	7	-	38	57	89	2.6	5.6
Geography	8	25	38	100	92	6.3	5.7
History	2	-	35	50	88	1.0	5.5
Mathematics	4	-	43	25	87	0.5	5.8
Physics	4	-	40	75	88	3.5	5.7
Sociology	16	19	35	75	86	3.9	5.3
Business Post-16 VQ	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.1	10.5
Health & Social Care Post-16 VQ	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.8
Leisure & Tourism Post-16 VQ	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	10.0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

212. In mathematics the focus incorporated both the AS and A level courses. Many students resit their GCSE mathematics to improve their grade as part of the college's key skills provision. The one lesson observed was very well taught but was poorly attended.
213. In science the focus was on chemistry. Biology and physics were also sampled but the small number of students taking the examinations makes comparison with national or college data invalid. Achievement, comparing students' advanced level performance with their GCSE results, is below the national average. One lesson in each subject was observed. In each lesson there were very good relationships with the teachers supporting the students well. Pace was satisfactory in physics and good in biology but both lessons missed the opportunity to develop independent learning.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Strong subject knowledge base provided by subject specialists
- Lessons well planned with clear objectives
- Very good relationships between students and teachers

Areas for Improvement

- Standards of attainment in AS level examinations are very low
- There are few opportunities for independent learning or investigative work

214. Standards attained in AS level examinations in 2002 were well below national expectations and resulted in a significant drop in the number of students expected to study mathematics in Year 13. Standards attained by the two Advanced level students sitting examinations in 2002, one grade A and one grade E, were an improvement upon results in 2001. In work seen during the inspection student attainment at AS level is broadly in line with national expectations; this is a reflection of the commitment of the students, appropriate prior attainment at GCSE and increased teacher awareness of course demands.
215. Year 13 students have commenced A2 studies having struggled at AS level. Work observed in lessons is variable but generally below national expectations; students lack confidence when tackling problems that are not straightforward. Year 12 students show more confidence and have prior attainment levels that give cause for optimism. In mechanics they are able to draw accurate force diagrams, apply Newton's Laws and show good understanding of the principle of taking moments for forces in equilibrium.
216. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are conveyed to students. Good practical illustrations are used to demonstrate aspects of mechanics, for example moments of forces. Lessons are, however, very much teacher-led and there are limited opportunities for independent learning, as a result of which there is often passive learning and a lack of student confidence when tackling problems.
217. Very good relationships exist between students and teachers, based on mutual respect and good humour. The marking of students' work is regular and they receive

constructive feedback. Not all teachers are fully aware of students' prior attainment levels and associated targets.

218. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership at sixth form level and is committed to the raising of standards. The departmental handbook is helpful and contains policies and guidance for good teaching. Analysis of student performance has been established but more use could be made of subject-specific value added measures to measure progress and set appropriate targets.

Chemistry

The overall quality of provision for chemistry is **good**

Strengths

- Teaching is good and is the main reason why students make good progress
- Students have a very good attitude to learning, fostered by the effective teaching, which in turn assists in motivating students
- Teachers care for their students bringing about mutual respect and a shared commitment for all to succeed
- The subject is well managed

Areas for development

- The use of ICT is underdeveloped as a teaching and learning aid, to help encourage more independent learning
- Independent learning needs to be developed further

219. The GCE examination results in 2001 are not as good as the national average; however, direct comparison is not valid due to the small number of students in the college who took the examination. The small number of students in 2002 also suggests caution when making comparison between years. Results are in line with recent years and show good achievement considering the students' grades at GCSE level. There were no unclassified grades in 2001 or 2002. The standard of work seen is as expected from the examination results. The accuracy of the answers to advanced level questions involving organic chemistry shows that the attainment of Year 13 students is above that expected from the recent examination results. The achievement of students in Year 13 has been maintained. For example, they are able to compare the properties of two compounds given three-dimensional structural models. The level of attainment of students in Year 12 is not as high. Basic chemistry ideas such as the mole as a measure of mass are understood but application to solving problems is less secure. For example, they were unsure how to find the mass of copper carbonate required to investigate the correct formula of copper oxide. They also found difficulties in scaling down the quantities involved. There is little evidence of the use of ICT techniques.

220. Teaching is good overall and, as a result, students learn well. Teachers display a thorough knowledge of their subject. Lessons are delivered at a brisk pace, are well planned and structured to involve the students fully all the time. There is a clear relationship between the quality of teaching, learning and students' attitudes. For example, students in Year 13 respond well to undertake revision questions following focussed revision material presented before each question. Students are expected to assess their own work using the mark scheme provided, thus involving the students in self-evaluation of their learning. Scrutiny of work shows that students are beginning to work independently but independent learning needs further development. The planned

programme of study outlines the course in sufficient detail and provides a sound framework for effective lesson plans. However, the application of ICT needs to be more fully incorporated. The students' attitude to chemistry is good. They have very good relationships with the teachers and with each other.

221. Chemistry is very well organised with the teaching shared effectively between two teachers. The planned programme of work is delivered in detail, presenting every student with an appropriate level of challenge, and provides a sound basis for lesson plans, but opportunities for ICT are missed. Assessment of students' progress provides a detailed track of progress and identifies any areas of weakness in the delivery of the schemes of work. Laboratory accommodation is good, with effective help from two technicians. Provision of basic resources is good. The number of students studying chemistry has risen significantly in the last two years, reflecting the subject's increasing popularity. Students and teachers show mutual respect with a shared commitment to succeed, with chemistry assisting in students' personal development. The students find the work challenging and appreciate the support given by members of the science department. Year 13 students have enjoyed the sixth form course and consider that they are prepared well for their advanced level examinations. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved as a result of more effective teaching.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects available

BUSINESS

The focus subject was business education. No other subjects are available.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are rising
- The department has a good assessment record
- There are good links with business in the community
- It makes a significant contribution to the teaching of key skills
- A variety of courses provide students with increasing opportunities for independent learning

Areas for development

- The number of students opting to take business education in the sixth form
- The number of higher grades obtained in external examinations
- The suitability of accommodation provided for the subject
- The preparation of schemes of work

222. The department offers a variety of courses to students wishing to take business education in the sixth form. This variety allows students with varying degrees of prior attainment to follow a course commensurate with their previous achievements and to be successful. For most, good value is added to previous performance. Results in external examinations in recent years show a rising trend and some students achieve awards above those previously targeted. In examinations for the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) in 2002 all students were awarded grades higher than those predicted, including four students who achieved grades A or B in the final examination. In courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) at intermediate level, trends have risen over the past four years with a significant number of students achieving merit grades and almost all a pass grade, though there were no distinctions over the same period. Likewise, at Advanced Vocational Certificate level all students were successful in the 2001 examinations, with over one-third of candidates receiving merit awards.
223. Students have a good understanding of the topics studied during and prior to the inspection. They recognise the main concerns for health and safety at work and the need to make risk assessments; they have a good grasp of the principles of cashflow and how businesses cope with the problems of ensuring that lack of finance does not adversely affect their operation. They appreciate the need to motivate the workforce and are conversant with the theories of Maslow and Taylor and they know the ways by which businesses measure their success. Assignment work reveals that students have good research skills and they use the data collected well to describe situations and reach conclusions but the latter are not always well supported by reasoned explanations. These independent studies, which make good use of information and communication technology to present information numerically, graphically and with the help of word processing, illustrate the effective contribution the department makes to the development of key skills.
224. A feature of the teaching, which is always at least satisfactory, is the very thorough preparation of lessons by staff. This ensures that the aims of each lesson are clear and there are a variety of tasks for students to undertake so that they are actively involved in the learning process. This was particularly the case in lessons where students checked the college buildings for health and safety hazards and when good use was made of students' prior experiences on a visit to local industry. As a result, students are given many opportunities to learn for themselves and to draw on their own experiences. Effective use of videotape and PowerPoint presentations reinforces learning, especially when they relate to real-life situations. Examination preparation is thorough and often features as part of lessons. Teaching, however, suffers when the teacher plays too large a part in the lesson and students, who are otherwise very attentive and well motivated, become passive learners and allow the teacher to do much of the work for them. Schemes of assessment are good and external moderators recognise the accuracy of assessment information provided by teachers to encourage and support students in their work.
225. Attainment and teaching in business education are considerably enhanced by the links established between the department and local businesses, including a successful professional football club, an international motor manufacturer and a local printing concern. These links form the basis for teaching and assignment work and assist learning as students draw upon these first-hand experiences of the business world. The department makes effective use of its resources to create interest and consolidate learning. Staff teaching business education have a background of working in business and commerce and bring to teaching valuable experience of business practice.

226. Recent changes to the management of the department are proving successful. The developing leadership and management qualities of the new head of department are beginning to take effect and augur well for the future. The department development plan, though only of one year's duration, provides a sense of direction and clearly recognises the current needs of the department. Schemes of work are being rewritten to guide the new courses provided by the department but are not yet complete and lack the contributions to be made to the development of key skills and the teaching of citizenship. Sharing accommodation with other departments, the lack of a suitable base for business education in the college is a concern and places some limits on the quality of learning provided by the department.
227. Since the previous inspection new courses have been established, business links have been forged, standards are rising and assessment is more effective. This satisfactory improvement has provided a firm foundation for the department to build on in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There was no focus subject in this area but ICT was sampled as part of the key skills provision and both teaching and learning were good in this lesson.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus subject was leisure and tourism.

AVCE Leisure and tourism.

Overall the provision for leisure and tourism is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good with some very good features
- Leadership and management in the subject are good
- Most students have a positive attitude
- Students achieve well, many from below average starting points

Areas for development

- Provide more opportunities for collaborative learning in college and investigative work outside
- Extend the assessment arrangements to include individual skills and provide students with information about progress in these areas

228. At the start of their course in the sixth form students in leisure and tourism have a broad range of attainment as indicated by their 'average points score' in GCSE examinations. Overall this is below average, though a few students begin the course from above this level. In the 2001 examinations, in GNVQ leisure and tourism, results were near the national average and this reflects good achievement and clear added value. In 2002 results were better and this reflects very good progress from a similarly low starting point. Almost all the work seen during the inspection was drawn from the Year 12 students and most are making good progress. The work seen in their folders is well presented, showing good ICT skills, both in word processing and in publishing. The narrative is sound overall though some students do not yet possess the required skills in analysing their results. In assignments that have already been assessed some students have achieved grade "E" criteria. This shows good achievement over the short time since the commencement of the course.

229. The quality of teaching overall is good and in some lessons there are very good features. All teachers have very well-developed subject knowledge and ensure that the students have themselves a strong knowledge base. The planning of lessons is very thorough and detailed and the examples chosen to illustrate key features are, wherever possible, local and therefore within the experience of most students. Much use is made of the Internet to provide the students with information and this enables them to use and further develop their ICT skills. Most work eagerly and are quite confident in working independently as they visit sites that will provide them with the most up-to-date facts, for example on the conflict between various agencies in Chester over how best to develop land in the city. The students' understanding and their ability to develop and hold their own strong views on such issues comes from the sharing of "live" examples and more use could be made from the students' own examples and experience in collaborative group work. More time could be given to investigative work outside college of the type that would put less reliance on the media generally. Most students respond positively to their teachers. They concentrate well and value the support given to them. There is, however, in a few cases, a pattern of broken attendance and this affects overall progress in that the teachers' time devoted to assisting students in catching up is lost to the whole group.
230. The work of the department is well organised. The newly appointed head of leisure and tourism brings experience from another curriculum area, together with good vision of the potential of both the students and the subject for the future. Assessment arrangements are good and the students' work is very thoroughly evaluated in the required GNVQ manner. The students have a good understanding, both from the grade criteria and from teachers' supportive comments, of what they need to do in order to achieve the next higher grade.
231. The department has a strong commitment to improvement. There is, though, insufficient information given to students relating to their personal learning skills, for example in using their knowledge to provide analysis of graphs or maps. When these areas are assessed in more detail for individuals, clear targets for improvement can be set and checks made on progress. The subject provides an important vocational route to accreditation, linking well with geography in the main college and an alternative to the traditional advanced level.
232. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Most students now achieve well and teaching is more consistently good. Both students and their teachers share a commitment to improvement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus subject was the advanced vocational certificate course in health and social care.

AVCE Health and Social Care

Overall the provision for health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- Most students show a positive attitude towards the subject.
- The department is well led and managed
- Many students achieve well from a modest starting point

Areas for development

- Provide more opportunities for collaborative learning
- Increase the use of information gathered in the assessment processes to track the progress made in individual students' learning skills

233. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is generally below average. Students in the AVCE course begin their studies from a modest level of attainment based on their GCSE average points scores. The standards reached in the nearest comparable subject (AVCE) health and social care, in the 2001 examinations, were close to the national average. This represents good achievement and clear value added. In the AVCE examination in 2002 higher standards were reached and achievement was very good. In the current Year 13 most students are making good progress from a modest starting point. For example in preparation for a written assignment on "play", where they clearly knew and understood the key elements of "play" and were then able to apply their understanding by citing examples of play situations where particular characteristics of child development might be found. Work already completed and assessed in the current group's folders is well presented and shows good word processing skills. Standards overall are average and many students are already achieving 'E' grade criteria, some higher. This confirms the good progress made since the beginning of the course. Year 12 students are also making good progress. Completed work has already been assessed and there are some students already reaching the 'E' grade level. This is very good progress within the short period of time since the beginning of the course.
234. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a good variety of previous experience outside the subject. The planning and preparation of lessons is a strong feature of their work and this ensures that the varying needs of the individual students will be met. During the inspection, teachers made very good use of the college's ICT resources and encouraged students to research information, for example on asthma, diabetes, and skin disorders. This leads to their using their ICT skills in order to work independently in gathering the most up-to-date information for inclusion in case studies.
235. Most teachers use well-chosen examples from their own experience to illustrate key points for learning; however, more use could be made of students' examples of the type that arise more readily from collaborative group work. All these examples ensure that the subject remains fresh and the casework element is a clear reflection of everyday life. Most students respond well to their teachers and value the good quality of the relationships they enjoy. They work hard and eagerly and clearly enjoy the successful progress they are making.

236. The assessment of students' work is regular and thorough. The GNVQ approach used is most helpful to them in that the clearly staged grade criteria, together with supportive teacher comments, ensure that all know what they need to do in order to improve and then make the further progress towards the next level. Where there are weaknesses in, for example, analytical skills, there is scope for a more detailed assessment of how those weaknesses might be improved at an individual level. This shared information would then enable more specific targets for improvement to be offered to individual students.
237. The work of the department is well organised by a hard-working, committed and capable head of department. The subject provides a most valuable opportunity of a vocational nature for those students whose needs might not be best met by their studying at the traditional advanced level.
238. Since the last inspection there has been clear improvement. Standards have been raised and the range of learning opportunities extended to meet needs in the 14 –19 age range. Many students now achieve well and this comes as a direct consequence of an improvement in the quality of teaching. The subject is now well placed to move forward.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on theatre studies, but art and music lessons were sampled. Numbers studying A2 level art are too small to allow comparison with national standards but A/B grades and average points scores are good. Music is only studied in Year 12 and the two lessons seen were very well taught and there were excellent relationships within the small group.

Theatre Studies

Overall provision for theatre studies is **good**.

Strengths:

- The course is well led and managed
- Students' performance skills are very good
- Effective use is made of the purpose-built drama studio

Areas for improvement:

- The standards of students' written work is unsatisfactory
- Students need to develop independent learning skills
- Promotion of attendance at the course

239. Overall standards are average. In 2001 all students achieved a pass at advanced level, with two students achieving a pass at the higher grades A - B. In 2002 only three students were entered for the examination, all of whom passed. One student with English as an additional language has made very good progress over the two years and has recently performed as Theseus in a college production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

240. Standards seen during the inspection reflected the examination results. Standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are higher in practical work, in particular the interpretation of plays from a performance perspective. In one such very good lesson students confidently explored the mechanicals in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Students are proficient in their application and knowledge of dramatic forms, as demonstrated in a Year 12 lesson where their understanding of practitioner Stanislavski helped them to produce new and interesting images.
241. However, standards in written work are below average at both AS and A level. Students do not keep effective drama logs. As a result, sensitive and empathetic responses frequently observed in practical work are not recorded. Students' portfolios reflect teacher produced notes with little evidence of independent research around the subject.
242. Standards are also affected by the spasmodic attendance of some students, which results in time being wasted in reallocating roles at each lesson. As a result, there is a lack of continuity in practical work, which affects all students. Almost one third of students attending at AS level do not continue to the A level course.
243. Teaching is good overall with some very good features. Relationships between staff and students are very good, resulting in a positive learning ethos. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; as a result students make rapid gains in practical skills and are confident orally in evaluating their work. Teaching methods are effective; good use is made of the drama studio and students gain from the range of theatrical opportunities, which are carefully planned into the lessons.
244. Oral assessment is good but assessment of written work needs to be more focussed towards the assessment objectives of the course and these objectives need sharing with students at each lesson. The rigour and academic quality of the practical sessions is not reflected in the students' portfolios. This has had a considerable impact on depressing standards. Teachers do use information and communication technology to produce teaching materials but the use of information and communication technology needs further development to embrace wider theatrical experiences.
245. Leadership is very good. Students are well supported and every effort is made to accommodate teaching beyond the normal timetabled day. Although there is some monitoring of student progress, this needs to be much more uniform between teaching groups to avoid the underachievement of some students. The present head of the performing arts faculty is also responsible for music and dance and this has presented many challenges. There have been staffing difficulties, which have impacted upon her time; as a result, the departmental development plan is not fully implemented. The performing arts faculty is undergoing many changes including a building programme which is temporarily impeding staff development. This leaves key personnel unable to fully develop their roles.

HUMANITIES

The focus subject was history. Lessons in geography and sociology were sampled.

246. The provision for geography in the sixth form is good. Standards of attainment, though fluctuating, show an upward trend with almost all students in recent years gaining pass grades in GCE advanced level examinations in geography. In some years the performance of students in geography has been better than that of students in several other subjects in the college. The number of students opting for geography in the sixth form is small and those who do so bring only average levels of prior attainment to their studies. Consequently, few students achieve the higher grades in advanced level examinations and their points scores are below average. Nevertheless, their performance represents good value added to their achievements.
247. Rising standards owe much to good quality teaching, which successfully incorporates much independent learning by students. As a result, students have research skills that assist them to produce good quality coursework for external examinations. Appropriate schemes of work, good relationships, careful assessment and effective preparation for examinations all contribute significantly to rising standards.
248. In sociology one lesson was observed. Results in sociology have fluctuated from very high to below national averages over recent years without any clear trend. In the lesson seen the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject outweighed the lesson's organisational shortcomings, resulting in good learning and progress.

History

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

Strengths

- Attitudes and relationships
- The quality of teaching
- Monitoring and support of students
- Leadership and management

Areas for development

- Students' independence and self-confidence in their learning
- Raise attainment at the higher grades at A2 level

249. Overall results were about average in recent years, although in 2001 only two candidates sat the examination, one being successful. In 2002 all eight candidates obtained pass grades, although the proportion obtaining the higher A - B grades was lower than in most recent years and below equivalent national figures.
250. Standards in work seen during the inspection are in line with national averages. Students complete a large volume of appropriate work including detailed notes, spider graphs, mind maps, annotated diagrams and ICT/overhead projector slides. They make good progress in the acquisition of analytical and evaluative skills in coming to logical and reasoned conclusions in drafted and redrafted essay work. There are weaknesses in the spelling, punctuation and grammar of lower-attaining students who often do not write in sufficient detail, resulting in the oversimplification of complex issues. The current reliance on photocopied resources in one of their units undermines students' independence and self-confidence in their learning. They make good use of

ICT in the research and presentation of material, which develops their communication and personal learning skills well.

251. The quality of teaching is consistently good in the sixth form. Students undertake individual and group research to investigate allocated tasks and present their findings in a variety of ways including the use of electronic media. Teachers use question and answer very effectively to challenge and refine students' learning, and use their very good subject knowledge to strengthen students' understanding of the different interpretations of historical events and developments. Assignments are very closely marked and the sharing of mark schemes with students, combined with the quantity of diagnostic comment, affords them a clear understanding of examination requirements and how to secure further improvement. In a Year 12 lesson on the Liberal reforms of 1906-14 students demonstrated a good understanding of the stigma associated with the workhouse, although their appreciation of the relative nature of the concept of poverty was less secure.
252. One area that currently restricts students' attainment, and their otherwise good progress, is their reluctance to read around the subject as widely as they might. The small size of groups in both Years 12 and 13, and the reticence of lower-attaining students to take part in protracted discussion, limits the scope for more discursive lessons. Absence and a lack of punctuality affects the progress of a minority of students but the very positive attitudes of the majority play an important part in their good achievement. Students' learning is well supported by high quality duplicated notes, although lower-attaining students do not show as much initiative as they might in processing and supplementing them.
253. The subject is very well managed and led. Examination results are carefully analysed and reflect good added value. Progress is closely monitored and assisted by frequent practice of examination style questions. Schemes of work are detailed and learning objectives are effectively shared with students. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus in this inspection was on English literature at AS and A level.

The focus on modern foreign languages was French.

English

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

Strengths

- Results in 2002 were a clear improvement on the previous year and show good achievement
- Teaching is good overall; teachers' good subject knowledge and thorough structured approach are key strengths
- Students have positive attitudes to the course

Areas for improvement

- Students need more encouragement to develop greater independence of thought and greater confidence in debate
- Students need a programme of wider reading and greater cultural enrichment

254. Results at A level in GCE English literature have been variable over time. In 2001 they were below the national average and lower than in previous years. In 2002, the proportion gaining A-B grades represented a considerable improvement on the previous year, more in line with the national average, although this statistic has not yet been formally validated. Most students started the course with a modest GCSE base and the results show good achievement.
255. Standards in Year 13 seen during the inspection are average. Higher-attaining students are confident in expressing complex ideas. They have a good command of written English and show considerable insight into the way a writer uses language. Most have a good understanding of the texts studied, and many can show a strong personal response, although their expression often lacks sophistication. Weaker students write essays of a more uneven quality, with insufficient analysis, ideas not developed in detail and a style that is sometimes inappropriate.
256. Standards in Year 12 are also average. Students frequently make very discerning comments in lessons; they show developing confidence in articulating their ideas and growing insight into writers' techniques. Essays are of an appropriate standard for this stage of the course and show significant improvement in the way they approach texts compared to GCSE. Most students are starting to use structured argument supported by evidence and example. Many need to develop a more formal written style and make more assured use of literary terminology in their writing.
257. Teaching is good overall, sometimes very good, an improvement on the previous inspection. One of the main strengths is teachers' thorough knowledge of the subject, so that explanations are very clear, points made are illuminating, and teachers are able to use skilful questioning techniques to direct the development of students' thinking. Teachers plan carefully so that students are introduced gradually to more and more demanding tasks. Time is well managed so that lessons are well concluded and there is an opportunity for the consolidation of learning. Teachers give a great deal of time to providing individual support. This is recognised by the students as one of the main factors promoting progress. Another factor is the detailed marking they receive.
258. Students feel their personal learning skills have improved as a result of A-level study. They are more organised and are better able to manage their time. They were initially daunted by the gap between work in Year 11 and that at AS level, and though they use the college library and the Internet for background research, do not call upon a wide range of sources for independent study. They have enjoyed the opportunity to read texts in considerable depth, but many have not extended their personal reading beyond the set texts of the course. Teachers should do more to help students to widen their cultural perspectives.
259. Leadership and management are good, as in the main college. Staff teaching AS and A2 level are well qualified and very experienced. Assessment procedures are effective. Teachers are secure in their judgements and use assessment well to guide learners and to modify their planning. The main improvement has been in the quality of teaching, as teachers have effectively incorporated the best planning techniques of the National Literacy Strategy into their own practices. This is a successful course with good levels of recruitment, run by a successful department.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good with very good subject knowledge, so students learn well
- The subject is well managed through a joint co-operative effort
- Students use information and communication technology well
- Teachers assess students' work thoroughly, with advice on how to improve

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum offered could be richer and more varied
- The uptake of the subject post-16 needs to be put on a regular footing
- The sixth form base is bleak and could be made more stimulating

260. Since the last inspection very few students have entered for advanced level French. In 2001 a small number of students entering gained grades well below the national average. Only one student gained the higher grade B.
261. The evidence observed in lessons and in students' written work shows that standards are now higher in Year 12, where a substantial class of six students is studying to AS level. Students are mostly achieving their potential in progressing through a well-planned course, chiefly based on a good, relevant textbook and some ancillary materials. Students have made good progress from GCSE standards in the small group situation. They build firmly and accurately on the basic language needed to discuss topics ranging from the familiar and domestic to wider social and international issues. The most competent students are doing very well, speaking French confidently and conveying views and opinions about matters of personal and wider interest. Some are more hesitant in speaking but join in conversations led by their teachers and partners. Most students' knowledge of tenses and other points of grammar is good. They perform well in tests and exercises designed to bolster their accuracy in writing.
262. Students benefit from authentic tape recordings and the excellent model presented by their teachers and the French assistant. A minority form complex sentences, which convey their ideas clearly. The amount of writing they do is slight. Their exercise books revealed only a couple of pieces of discursive writing of any length or depth but many short comprehension and grammar exercises. Teachers supply a limited provision of materials, including Internet websites and periodicals, although many available resources are untapped. Students have good research skills and regularly access the Internet to exploit French websites containing additional useful study material.
263. The sixth form teaching is good overall, and some lessons are very good. In all of these students achieve well. Close contact with subject specialists and especially native French speakers encourages students to give of their best, with a strong emphasis on the analysis of language and widening exposure to vocabulary and idioms. Lessons have clear aims and are well planned to include teacher-directed learning, group work and individual learning with the teacher or the language assistant.
264. Teachers provide students with good strategies for success in reading and aural comprehension. Much of the work is closely related to the requirements of the AS level examination. Teachers give students practice in examination technique, based on training and information they themselves have received. The range of tasks is

satisfactory, although more could be done with debate, the relation of work to current events or cultural development. Most significantly there are no opportunities for correspondence, work experience or travel in French-speaking countries.

265. Students of French are gaining in maturity and confidence, largely through close and continuous contact with native French speakers in an intimate seminar approach to lessons. Students seek help when required and act upon the advice given. They work hard at homework tasks set, which extend their learning in class and help their progress significantly.
266. The teachers of French are gaining in experience as they work through the course. They have undertaken training to gain better insight into the requirements of advanced level examinations, and have modified their teaching accordingly. Initial priorities have been to provide reading sources and a basis of grammar for mature expression of ideas and opinions. The department has a potentially excellent sixth form base, which is currently underdeveloped and could be put to much better use with an investment of resources. Students have very good opportunities in having enthusiastic, personable teachers who share with them a common sense of purpose. The college's GCSE provision has generated a robust and very keen Year 12 class. They deserve to be nurtured and given a rich, stimulating diet that will retain them in a second year of study to complete their advanced level course.