

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SEDGEFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Sedgefield

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114317

Headteacher: Ms L Ackland

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones  
114317

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249768

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Hawthorn Road  
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Co. Durham.

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W Hopps

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

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9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its students? How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
22458	G. McGinn	Sixth Form Co-ordinator	History	
30690	G Allison	Team inspector	Geography (Key Stages 3 and 4) Educational inclusion	
22531	D. Burbidge	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	Business education (Sixth Form) Provision for students with special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
11508	C. Griffin	Team inspector	English	
20287	D. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 and 4) Provision for students with English as an additional language.	
10727	R. Humphries	Team inspector	Design and technology (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
31688	B. McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Religious education (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
13623	J. Waddington	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (Key Stages 3 and 4)	

1340	D. Wigley	Team inspector	Music (Key Stages 3 and 4) Drama (Sixth form)	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Sedgefield community college is an average sized mixed comprehensive school with 913 students on roll. There are 471 boys and 442 girls. The college has a very small sixth form, comprising 22 students. Students are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and come predominantly from surrounding villages as well as Sedgefield. Over three quarters travel by school bus. The attainment of students on entry covers a wide range, but overall is broadly average. There are very few students from ethnic minority families and no students are at an early stage of learning English. Around 14 per cent are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Just over 17 per cent of students have special educational needs, which is broadly average, mainly concerned with moderate learning difficulties. Less than two per cent have statements of special need, which is below average. The college was granted specialist sports college status in 2002.

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

This is an effective and improving college. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She is supported well by the governing body and senior staff. The college is well managed. The teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and students achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and students' level of achievement are satisfactory. Standards are broadly average. The college is well organised. Students develop positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave well. Overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money, but the sixth form provision is not cost effective.

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

- Very good leadership by the head teacher with very good support from governors ensures a clear educational direction to the work of the college.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 leading to good achievement by students, particularly in English and science
- The college makes good provision to ensure that students with special educational needs achieve well.
- The college is successfully tackling the underachievement identified in recent inspections.
- Subjects across the curriculum contribute well to the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- Students behave well and show positive attitudes towards their work.
- The curriculum for students 11 to 16 is good and meets well the different needs of students of all levels of attainment.

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

- Standards in French in Years 10 and 11 are too low and students are underachieving.
- The consolidation of good work that has started, in order to stretch and challenge the higher attaining students in all subjects.
- The amount of teaching by temporary staff lowers the overall quality of teaching provision.
- The provision for post-16 education, which is inadequate.

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

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

The main school has shown good improvement since the previous inspection in September 2000. At that time it was judged to be underachieving. Students in Years 7 to 9 now achieve well, and in Years 10 and 11, their achievement is satisfactory. The trend in National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 is above the national trend. In 2001, results in GCSE examinations did not match the very challenging targets set. This was primarily



because the underachievement of older students had not been resolved due to continuing significant staffing difficulties. However, the trend in GCSE results is above the national trend. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Attendance levels have risen and rates of exclusion have fallen. The college has responded effectively to the issues in the previous report. The college has improved its curriculum and its use of assessment, and changes to the management structure ensure that there is very good capacity and commitment to improve further.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, results were above average. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average. The average points score was above average in English and science and average in mathematics. The results represent good achievement for these students, who came into the college with levels of attainment broadly average. The trend in results over time is above the national trend. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the average points score was close to average and in line with the average for similar schools. The trend in results was above the national trend. Most of these students achieved satisfactorily in relation to their starting points in Year 7, but there was still some underachievement where higher attaining students did not perform as well as expected. Targets were set for students in Year 9 and Year 11 that were realistic and challenging and were exceeded by Year 9 students, but not reached by Year 11 students, particularly in the proportion gaining A\*-C grades.

In Year 9, standards in the work seen are above average in the core areas of English and science and in music and religious education. In all other subjects, including mathematics, standards are average. Students achieve well through Years 7 to 9 in response to the good teaching they receive across most subjects. This group of students has clearly benefited from the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy, which has improved teaching and learning. In Year 11 standards are average overall and this reflects satisfactory achievement. The reason their achievement is not yet good is because they have experienced significant disruption in the teaching they received due to staffing difficulties that have led to too much teaching being undertaken by temporary teachers. The legacy is still apparent, for example in the low morale, motivation and underachievement of students in French. Standards in literacy are above average and numeracy skills are average. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Students identified as gifted and talented make the same progress as their peers but would benefit by being challenged further in their lessons. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. GCE A-level results were well below average overall and students' achievement on these courses was unsatisfactory. The standards of students currently in the sixth form are below average, but their achievement is satisfactory when account is taken of their starting points.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment.
Attitudes to the college	In lessons, students' good attitudes have a positive impact on learning. Students are interested and attentive in lessons. They concentrate well and persevere with their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the college is nearly always good. Behaviour of some boys in a few lessons is unsatisfactory. In the last reporting year, the number of exclusions was relatively high compared with similar schools, but is now falling. Only one student was permanently excluded last year.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is good. They enjoy the opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Relationships across the college are good and contribute positively to students' learning. Students form good and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

## QUALITY OF TEACHING

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

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

Teaching and the learning that results are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory overall in the rest of the college. This is an improvement since the last inspection and has led to improved levels of achievement among students. There is some unsatisfactory teaching, primarily by teachers who are temporary staff and who have not established the effective working relationships with students apparent with the permanent teachers. There is a small amount of excellent teaching.

Teaching is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. The teaching of the permanent staff in mathematics is good and often very good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good in religious education and good in all other subjects except history and physical education where it is satisfactory. A similar pattern is seen in subject teaching in Years 10 and 11, except that teaching in history and physical education is good, while in religious education, teaching is satisfactory because there is less teaching by subject specialists. The good teaching is matched by students' good achievement in Years 7 to 9, but in Years 10 and 11, students' level of achievement overall is satisfactory. This is because these students have suffered from considerable staffing upheaval as well as some unchallenging teaching in their early years in the college. The teachers are now having to work hard to counter some lack of motivation and low morale and these problems have left this group of students with some catching up to do. In the main the teachers are successful, and students' learning is satisfactory other than in French where new staff are finding it difficult to combat entrenched negative attitudes towards the subject.

Overall, the teaching of literacy skills is good and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily, although the contribution by subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent and detracts from the overall provision. The teaching of ICT is very good because other subjects of the curriculum make a very good contribution to the students' development in ICT in Years 7 to 11.

Teachers have a good level of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They plan well in line with the Key Stage 3 strategy so that students are clear about what they need to do. This leads to good learning in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' class management techniques are good. Teachers have positive relationships with their students and this helps to produce a good learning atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers' have appropriately high expectations both regarding their behaviour and the quality of their work, but gifted and talented students need to be challenged further. The setting of homework and the marking of work is satisfactory overall. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. There is less good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and there is more pedestrian teaching that was satisfactory rather than good. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, it is due to uninspiring material and teaching that is undemanding in its level of challenge. Here, students' learning is unsatisfactory and they do not make the progress that they should. Sometimes this results in unsatisfactory behaviour by students.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The quality and range of the curriculum are good for students aged 11-16. It is broad and balanced, meets the needs of all and satisfies statutory requirements.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. These students achieve well in response to the good teaching they receive, particularly when there is additional support in the classroom and when they are withdrawn for specific help.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory; it is good for moral, social and cultural development. The college successfully achieves its aim of respecting individuals.
How well the college cares for its students	The college provides a good level of pastoral care, which has a positive impact on achievement. There are effective procedures for improving behaviour and attendance and for ensuring the overall safety of students.
How well does the college work in partnership with parents	The college has good links with parents. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is good. The quality of information to parents is satisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership to give a clear direction for the college's work. Key staff make a good contribution that helps to ensure that the college is managed well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the college very well and fulfil an important role in ensuring a clear educational direction to the college's development. Statutory requirements are met other than providing a daily act of collective worship.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are good systems and strategies to measure the effectiveness of initiatives in terms of their impact on raising standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Specific grants are used effectively and best value is obtained in the college's spending. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents like the high expectations that the college has of their children.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable in approaching the college with questions or problems.</li> <li>• They are pleased with the progress their children make.</li> <li>• Their children generally like college.</li> <li>• They feel the college is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Some parents expressed strong support for the leadership of the headteacher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' behaviour.</li> <li>• The lack of homework.</li> <li>• A number of parents feel they are not well informed about the progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The college does not work closely with parents.</li> <li>• Concerns were expressed about the amount and quality of teaching by supply teachers.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive aspects expressed by parents. The team found behaviour to be good and teachers' use of homework to be satisfactory. Only a small proportion of parents is closely involved with the work of the college, but these have a good impact on students' learning. Information about students' progress is satisfactory. The team agrees that there is too much teaching by temporary teachers and the quality of their teaching is too variable.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form has seven students in Year 12 and 15 students in Year 13. Both male and female students are well represented, but there are significantly more boys than girls in Year 12. There are no students from minority ethnic groups. The college provides a very narrow range of subjects at GCE A/S and A2 level. There are no vocational courses. There are set minimum criteria for Year 11 students wishing to enter the sixth form, but these vary according to the courses taken up. Less than one in five of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form. The GCSE examination results of students now entering the sixth form are well below the national average for higher grades (A\*-C) and a significant number of students start courses in some subjects with GCSE grades that are much lower than usual for the courses of study they undertake.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is inadequate. The college has, in the past two years adopted a policy of giving impartial advice to Year 11 students about the whole range of options available in local sixth forms and Further Education colleges. Consequently, the sixth form numbers that had been falling steadily over the last 10 years have reached a level where they are no longer sustainable. The college can no longer provide a curriculum that matches the needs, capabilities and aspirations of the bulk of the Year 11 students. The limited range of subjects denies equal opportunity and access to students, who have a wide range of needs. Students have limited opportunities to broaden their experience beyond studying their particular subjects because the enrichment programme is very limited. Only five subjects were inspected, and in none was the overall provision judged as unsatisfactory. The teachers work very hard to ensure that students achieve at least satisfactorily in relation to their starting point in Year 12. Thus the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and the support and guidance that students receive are satisfactory. Many students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points, but for many those starting points are too low and they do not make enough progress to meet the course requirements and this is unsatisfactory. In English, physical education and drama, students are currently achieving well in relation to their starting points, and in drama, standards are above average. There is a high drop out rate at the end of Year 12, and GCE A/S and A-level results overall in 2001 were well below national averages. There are some unsatisfactory aspects in the management of the sixth form. It is not cost effective and now provides unsatisfactory value for money.

**Strengths**

- Students achieve very well in English and well in drama and physical education as a result of good teaching.
- There are good procedures for supporting and monitoring students' academic performance.
- Standards are above average in drama.
- Students have good attitudes.

### What could be improved

- The standards attained in GCE A-level subjects.
- The number of subjects currently available is too restricted to provide opportunities for students to pursue a balanced course of GCE A-level subjects.
- The type of course available does not match the needs, aspirations and attainment levels of many of the students.
- The enrichment programme does not provide students with a sufficiently broad experience.
- Aspects of the management of post-16 provision are unsatisfactory.
- Registration procedures are currently unsatisfactory.
- The cost-effectiveness and value for money of the provision are unsatisfactory.

*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.*

**I am of the opinion, (and HMCI agrees), that the school has an inadequate sixth form in terms of paragraph 1 (2) of schedule 7 of the Learning and Skills Act because it is failing to give students over compulsory school age an acceptable standard of education. The reasons for this judgement are:**

- **Students are offered a very limited range of subjects; many of these are inappropriate for their levels of attainment. As a result their needs, aspirations and interests are not met.**
- **Many students do not attain high enough standards to successfully meet the demands of their courses.**
- **Too many students do not complete their courses.**
- **The enrichment programme provided is too limited.**
- **There are weaknesses in aspects of the management of sixth form provision and it is not cost-effective, nor does it give satisfactory value for money.**

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business education	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students achieve satisfactorily from a starting point below average and their attitudes are good. There has been a significant improvement in provision with new staff appointments.
Drama	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students lead to above average attainment and good achievement, from a starting point below average. Standards have much improved and students have entered the sixth form mainly to study drama.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are well below average. The teaching is now good and students have good attitudes to their work. They are making satisfactory progress, but their achievement is hindered by their well below average attainment on starting the course.
Physical education/sports studies	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and the very good attitudes of the students lead to them achieving well from a starting point that is well below average. Students contribute strongly to the sports activities within the college.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Strong teaching ensures students of well below average ability achieve very well. Students' confidence and positive attitudes

	improve significantly as a result of this provision.
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One lesson of law was seen and the teaching was satisfactory. Year 13 students who are currently studying law achieved very poorly in their A/S examinations last year. Similarly, students who took A/S in psychology achieved very poorly in last year's examinations. Two lessons of ICT were observed. Here teaching is good. At this early stage in their course, students are achieving satisfactorily from a base of below average attainment at the start of Year 12 for most students.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students in Year 11 are given good guidance about the opportunities available to continue into the sixth form in other schools and colleges locally. The college makes great efforts to support those students who cannot obtain places elsewhere. As a result too many are undertaking courses for which they are not suited. Students receive satisfactory careers advice. Tutors closely monitor individual targets and students' progress.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Unsatisfactory.</b> Monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are good, but there are weaknesses of management in other areas. Not all sixth form courses are staffed appropriately by experienced teachers; there are no ICT facilities in the sixth form study area to promote independent study; key skills and an enrichment programme are inadequately organised; the registration procedures are unsatisfactory.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoy the small sixth form.</li> <li>• They have good relationships with their teachers, and find them to be supportive.</li> <li>• They value the sports facilities.</li> <li>• Careers advice on higher education is found to be helpful.</li> <li>• The progress review meetings with teachers and tutors are beneficial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of some A/S courses in 2001-2002.</li> <li>• The few opportunities that exist to take responsibility.</li> <li>• The provision of enrichment activities for their social development is inadequate.</li> <li>• Lack of support and opportunity for students to retake GCSE examinations.</li> <li>• Provision of computers in their study area.</li> </ul>

The team felt that the views expressed by students in interviews fairly represented the views of sixth-formers and that their opinions are justified. Students do enjoy life in the sixth form. They find that teachers are accessible for help, and that they are encouraged to study independently, although there are no computers in their study area to assist them. They find that the enrichment programme is too limited which also restricts opportunities for taking responsibility. Inspectors also found that courses in law and psychology in 2001-2002 were unsatisfactory.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The college's results and students' achievements**

1. On entry to college, students' attainment is average overall. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average. The results were well above the average of schools deemed to be similar on the basis of the proportion of students entitled to free school meals. In 2001, Year 11 students' results in the GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average and with the average in similar schools. This group of students achieved satisfactorily in relation to their starting points in Year 9.

2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students, results were above average overall. Compared with schools deemed similar on the basis of free school meals, results were well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. The proportion of students reaching level 5 and above was above average in English and science and average in mathematics. The proportion reaching level 6 and above was well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. The average points score was above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Girls' results were higher than the results of boys in line with the pattern nationally, except in English, where the gap was much closer. The results represent good achievement for this group of students particularly in English and science. The trend in results over time is above the national trend.

3. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the average points score per student was close to the average. The trend in results is above the national trend. When compared with examination results achieved in schools deemed similar, the results were average. This group of students made satisfactory progress, achieving expected standards in relation to their prior attainment, but there was still some underachievement where higher attaining students did not perform as well as expected. Girls gained slightly better results than boys. There were some variations in results at GCSE between subjects within the college. Students gained better results in English literature, drama and business studies. In some areas the results were significantly lower, including mathematics, art and design, home economics, French, and history. Six students did not enter for any GCSE examinations because they followed an alternative course organised by the local education authority. As a result, the college's overall examination performance was lowered.

4. The college set targets for the 2001 Year 9 students taking National Curriculum tests and for students in Year 11 taking GCSE examinations. In both cases the targets were appropriately realistic and challenging and based on good quality information about students' attainment levels and the progress they were making. Year 9 students met their targets. The target set for the average points score and the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more grades A\*-C was not met, but the target for the proportion of students gaining one or more grades A\*-G was reached. The students' under performance in the examinations was a result of the college experiencing significant staffing difficulties and a legacy of underachievement that still existed in the college at that time.

5. In the work seen in the inspection, students in Year 9 make good progress and achieve well. While there are still difficulties in staffing in some subject areas, for example there were three temporary staff teaching mathematics during the week of inspection, in most subjects areas there are now permanent teachers. The impact of the college's use of the Key Stage 3 strategy is also proving to be beneficial in improving teaching and learning.

Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are average overall, but vary between subjects. Standards are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. This marks good achievement in English and science and satisfactory achievement in mathematics, when account is taken of attainment on entry to the college. The levels of attainment of students when they enter the college vary in other subjects of the curriculum, but are broadly in line with the average. The standards of work seen are above average in music and religious education and average in all other subjects. At the time of the last inspection, the college was judged to be underachieving and the current situation represents good improvement.

6. In the work seen in the inspection, students' levels of attainment in Year 11 are average overall and students are achieving satisfactorily. Standards are below average in modern languages. In English, music and among students taking GCSE physical education, standards are above average. Standards in all other subjects are broadly average. Only in French is achievement judged to be unsatisfactory. This is primarily the result of a recent history of staffing difficulties and consequent low morale and motivation among students. New staffing this term is having a positive impact, but currently students are still underachieving. The raising of students' achievement represents satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

7. Students with special needs make good progress. They make good progress during withdrawal sessions, for example in reading, and during lessons in English, ICT, geography and music. They also make good progress in science and design and technology in Years 7 to 9 and in modern languages in Years 10 and 11. In other lessons, progress is satisfactory. Individual sixth form students make good progress in AS and A2 courses. Test data confirms students' good progress. In Year 9 tests in 2002, all students with special needs who sat the tests exceeded their target grades in science and mathematics and all but one achieved the same outcome in English. In the latter case the target grade was achieved. In 2001, two thirds of students with special needs exceeded their target GCSE grades and in 2002 the proportion was over three quarters. In both years this included students from all stages of the special needs register.

8. In the past year, the college has identified students in each year who are the highest attainers or who have specific talents, for example in music or sport. The college is actively developing its policy and its practices to ensure that teachers plan effectively to cater for their needs and ensure that they are stretched and challenged sufficiently. The systems are developing well, but are not yet embedded in the college's day-to-day practices. This is an area of developing strength and currently these students make progress and achieve standards in relation to their prior attainment, in common with their peers, but would benefit by being challenged further in their lessons. In most subjects, the differences in the standards reached by boys and girls reflect the differences nationally.

9. Students enter the college with average standards in literacy. They achieve well to raise these standards to above average: many have well above average standards. They benefit from the strong emphasis on literacy development that is the hallmark of English teaching in the college. Students across all levels of attainment listen well and speak confidently in whole class and small group discussions. Many students organise their writing well into paragraphs and have the expected levels of accuracy in spelling and punctuation. During the inspection, students in all attainment groups showed they can write clearly expressed and well organised extended work. Most students read fluently and confidently. In English and ICT, teaching also helps the students to apply and develop higher level reading methods of skimming and scanning. These skills require more planned attention in other subjects.

10. Standards in numeracy are average. Across a number of subjects students learn to apply numeracy skills effectively, for example in presenting graphs, measuring distance and weight accurately and, in ICT, using formulae appropriately. Most subjects of the curriculum make a very good contribution to the students' development in ICT in Years 7 to 11 and standards have improved since the last inspection and are now broadly in line with the average.

### **Sixth form**

11. The results in the 2001 examinations at GCE A-level were well below the national average when compared to all maintained schools as measured by the average points score obtained. There has been a gradual decline in students' average points score over the past three years. In GCE A-level examinations, female students performed marginally better than males. Retention rates were well below average.

12. In the 2001 GCE A-level examinations, results were average in biology and mathematics. They were below average in business studies, chemistry, and law. In drama, English literature and geography, results were well below average. In history, results were in the lowest five per cent nationally. In design and technology, physics, and psychology, the numbers completing the courses were too small for valid comparisons to be made.

13. In 2001, students took examinations for the first time in the new course leading to the GCE advanced subsidiary award (GCE AS-level). Results were broadly average in French. Results were below average in business studies, mathematics and physics. Results were well below average in English literature, chemistry and biology and very low in history. There were no national comparisons for other subjects taken.

14. In the inspection, Year 13 students' work in English, drama and physical education was inspected as they followed courses at GCE A2 level. The work of Year 12 students was inspected in business studies and history at GCE AS level. Other work was sampled including ICT in Years 12 and 13 and law taken by Year 13 students.

15. In Year 13, students studying English achieve very well. They attain average standards, matching the same students' 2002 GCE AS results and sustaining their very good progress. Most of the group started their GCE A-level course with an overall GCSE performance that was below grade C. In the AS examination they achieved grades that were significantly higher than would have been anticipated by their GCSE results. In drama, the students achieve well and attain standards that are above average. This is a popular course that has attracted students from other schools and their attainment on entry to Year 12 was average. In physical education, students started the course well below average and achieve well to produce standards that are nearer to, but still below average.

16. In Year 12, in business studies and history, two of the subjects focused upon in the inspection, students are achieving satisfactorily when account is taken of their starting points. However, standards are below average in business studies and well below average in history. There are only seven students in Year 12 and they are only able to study business studies, history and ICT. Such a choice of subjects is inadequate to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of these students. The type of course offered, exclusively GCE A-level work, is also inadequate. This is unsatisfactory. It is to the credit of students and their teachers that they have been able to sustain satisfactory achievement over their first half term in the sixth form in all three areas.

**Key skills:**

17. The overall provision for key skills is unsatisfactory and standards over the range of skills as a whole are below average. The application of number and the skills of problem solving are below average.

18. Students' skills in communication are average. Students in Year 12 follow the skills unit "Communication" to either level 2 or 3. Both levels are taught together. Through this course, students are given experiences in contributing to discussion, giving short talks to their peers, reading and summarising information from two extended documents, and writing two types of documents. Year 13 students' communication skills are developed through English, sports studies and drama. Students taking English in Year 13 demonstrate themselves to be articulate and clear when debating topics. The files of sports studies students are of a high quality in presentation and content. Drama students work well in improvisation activities, and in debating and hypothesising on given topics.

19. Standards of students' study skills are below average. In Year 12, students are trained how to read in a variety of ways. The objectives of this course have generally satisfactory outcomes, though business studies students are poor note-takers, and are not very proficient with their extended writing.

20. Students work well with others where collaborative development is a feature of the course. This aspect of key skills teaching is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Drama students in Year 13 clearly work as a cohesive unit, both in whole class and group work situations. Presentations given at the end of a five-period session on one day, on a project concerning anorexia and bulimia, demonstrated clearly how students positively contributed to the progress made over those five lessons. In sports science, three female students worked as a team to teach a group of younger students. Students on the English course worked highly effectively together when discussing aspects of "Othello."

21. Students demonstrate satisfactory standards in ICT skills. Many use their own computers at home for research purposes, and gain access to computers when they are not in use in the college. However, sixth form students do not have computers specifically for their own access in college, which restricts their independent learning skills and this is unsatisfactory. ICT skills are well developed by most business studies students.

**Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

22. Students have good attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and around the college. Personal development is good and attendance is broadly in line with the national average. A small number of parents expressed concern about behaviour but inspectors found the behaviour of the vast majority of students to be good. Most parents agreed that their children like school.

23. In lessons, students have good attitudes and this has a positive impact on learning. Students are interested and attentive in lessons. They concentrate well and persevere with their work. Students particularly enjoy religious education where they work diligently and confidently. In nearly a third of lessons across the college, attitudes are very good, especially in the lower school. Students in Year 7 always have at least good attitudes. Students following work related learning courses are gaining confidence. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes and learn well, particularly where they are withdrawn for lessons on their own and when they receive additional support in normal lessons.

24. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is nearly always good. Students know how to behave well and most are polite to visitors. The behaviour of some boys in a few

lessons is unsatisfactory. This is usually in lessons with temporary teachers where the pace is slow and behaviour is not well managed. In these lessons a number of boys do not listen, become bored and distract others from their learning. In the last reporting year, there were 62 fixed term exclusions involving 45 students, mostly boys. This is relatively high compared with similar schools. Only one student was permanently excluded. This was for persistent bullying. The number of exclusions fell considerably in the summer term last year after the introduction of a new behaviour policy and staff training in behaviour management. Students are trustworthy and behave well at break times, although a few still gather in quiet corners to smoke cigarettes. Students in Years 10 and 11 behave well in the town at lunchtimes. Students take good care of resources and equipment and have good respect for their college environment, although some litter is still strewn around the grounds each day.

25. Relationships across the college are good and contribute positively to students' learning. Students form good and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. Relationships with their form tutors who remain with forms through the college are usually good and support learning well. Students cooperate well in mixed pairs and groups and share resources well. They listen sympathetically to each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Students in Year 11 have recently been trained to offer support to younger students, especially those in Year 7 and have assumed their responsibilities conscientiously. Bullying and racism are occasionally a problem but the college does not tolerate this and investigates all reported incidents thoroughly, dealing with them quickly and effectively. In congested areas there is occasional horseplay, which more sensitive students may find intimidating.

26. Students' personal development is good. They enjoy the opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Students are beginning to appreciate their role in a democratic society, especially through sport, drama and the college council. Members of the student council are determined to improve the life of students in the college and are currently lobbying hard to reorganise lunchtime dining arrangements. Members of the environment committee are interested in recycling waste. Students on the land and environment course take very good care of the farm animals and this responsibility increases their self-confidence. Junior sports leaders play an active part in both the college and the wider community. They supervise younger students' sport and last year organised a 'Festival of Sport' for 180 junior school students. Year 11 students support those in Year 7 well.

27. Students of all ages participate well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and especially in sport. This contributes positively to their personal development. More than three quarters of students take part in extra-curricular activities and half go on residential visits. They value this experience. The college ensures that participation is not limited by financial constraints. There is good support for charitable activities through the student council charity committee. Students decide democratically which charity to support and last year raised £1000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust. Students also support the parent, teachers and friends association (PTFA) in raising funds for charity and for the college.

28. Attendance in 2001/2 was 91.4 per cent and is satisfactory. It is broadly in line with the national average and better than the average for the local education authority. It has improved since the previous year when it was below the national average. Truancy and authorised absence are broadly in line with national averages. Attendance so far this term is good and in Year 7 it is excellent. A significant proportion of the absence is due to holidays taken at the end of the summer term and the beginning of the autumn term. The poor attendance of a small number of students, especially in Year 9, adversely affects overall attendance figures. Punctuality to college and to lessons is usually good and lessons start promptly.

## **Sixth form**

29. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes towards study and this has a good impact on their learning. Their behaviour is good and personal development is satisfactory. Students are keen to learn and are well motivated in some subjects, but in others such as psychology, many do not complete their courses. The attitudes of students studying physical education, especially the girls, are very good. Students in Year 12 need a high level of support from their teachers but confidence and independence grow as they go through the sixth form. In this very small sixth form, students know each other well and the good relationships that exist between one another and with staff are constructive and supportive. They have a good level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and work very well together. Students are developing a good degree of independence and the majority have good skills to enable them to continue their learning in adult life.

30. Students' personal development is satisfactory. All members of the sixth form are encouraged to join theatre trips and visits to universities in order to develop a good social atmosphere and raise aspirations. Students are developing a satisfactory sense of citizenship but do not play a significant role in the college community because of their small numbers. They are involved in the college council, acting as officials but not leaders. Physical education students participate well in sports leaders awards and support younger students' sport in the college and primary schools well. Drama students perform for younger students and in primary schools. They are also involved in community drama groups. Students demonstrate an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves by organising occasional charitable events, such as a Macmillan coffee morning. They are developing confidence and becoming mature and responsible adults.

31. Attendance figures are unreliable, as registration procedures are not rigorously followed. Students do not come into college when their timetable is free. Attendance appears to be satisfactory so far this term and students are punctual to lessons.

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

32. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in the rest of the college. In Years 7 to 11, in nearly two out of three lessons seen, teaching was good, it was very good in a quarter of lessons and there was some excellent teaching in two lessons. Ten lessons were unsatisfactory most of which were taught by temporary staff. The impact of the good teaching is seen in the levels of achievement among students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and the good quality learning that is taking place. The overall quality of teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 where there is a greater proportion of good and very good teaching. Only in modern languages in Years 10 and 11 are students judged not to be achieving well enough. In this case, students' achievement has been affected by recent unsatisfactory teaching, which has left a legacy of disaffection and underachievement. The modern foreign languages department has suffered in recent years from low morale and a rapid turnover of staff. This has taken its toll on standards, which have been consistently lower than those of most other subjects in the college, and well below the national average. New leadership, however, is beginning to reverse this situation. The department is now up to strength with specialist teachers and is working better as a team. Teaching overall is satisfactory, but is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and students learn well as a result. In Year 11 French, however, a number of students lack motivation and are underachieving.

33. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all but five lessons observed, good or better in around two lessons in three and very good in over a quarter of lessons. Teaching was excellent in one lesson. Teaching is good in English and science. In mathematics, much of the teaching by specialist staff is good, but is not matched by the

temporary staff, and overall, students receive satisfactory teaching. In most other subjects the overall quality is good; it is very good in religious education. It is satisfactory in history and physical education. The preponderance of good and better teaching ensures good learning. As a result, students achieve well through these years in the large majority of subjects. The quality of teaching has clearly benefited from the college's adoption of the Key Stage 3 strategy, and there is a consistency in approach to planning, classroom management and lesson structure that is having a positive effect on students' learning.

34. The overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is a smaller proportion of good and very good teaching. In five lessons, teaching, mainly by temporary staff, was unsatisfactory. Excellent teaching was seen in one lesson. Throughout these two years, students show the effects of the recent staffing difficulties that have led to too much unsatisfactory teaching by temporary staff and teaching early in their years in the college that was unchallenging. The resulting disaffection and low motivation are legacies that teachers are still combating, mainly successfully. Students receive good teaching in English and science and satisfactory teaching in mathematics. Teaching is good in most other subjects and satisfactory in modern languages and religious education. Students' learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. At the early point in the school year when the inspection took place, the overall achievement of students is judged to be satisfactory. In some subjects, this is the case where teaching is good. This is because students in Years 10 and 11 suffered disruption as a result of staffing difficulties in the last two years, which resulted in poor progress and some disaffection. In all but French, these issues have been resolved. In the lessons observed, students were seen to be making clear progress in response to good teaching and achieving satisfactorily, but many have some way to go in order to make up ground they lost in earlier years. .

35. The college has identified the most able students and has set in train good systems and strategies to meet the particular needs of gifted and talented students in the classroom. There is a good capacity for this aspect of the college's work to succeed and for these students to be challenged and stretched further in their learning. Very recent staff changes have delayed the implementation of plans to impact upon classroom practice, but the work has now been taken on by a senior member of the college's staff. The good systems and strategies put into place now need to be consolidated to ensure that these students are stretched and challenged in all subjects. At present, the system for grouping students by ability goes some way to ensuring that the learning needs of this group are met. There is some very good practice, for example in English, mathematics and science and overall the provision is satisfactory. In some subjects, for example design and technology, modern languages and history, the gifted and talented students are not challenged enough.

36. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching. Teaching and learning are good where students are withdrawn from lessons for specific provision, with well-planned sessions led by support staff. Year 10 students made good gains in confidence during a detailed study of the first chapter of "Of Mice and Men." Working in a small group gave them good opportunities to exchange ideas and thereby achieve a good understanding of the two principal characters. Support staff are used well in lessons. In a Year 9 ICT lesson the learning support assistant had good ICT skills and this enabled three students with different needs to each make good progress in the design of a William Shakespeare website. In some lessons seen good classroom management was a key feature in enhancing students' learning. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson students made good gains in applying rules and formulae. Students were motivated very well in oral work because the whole class activities required everyone to participate and listen to each other. There are no students who are at an early stage of learning English.

37. Teachers have good levels of knowledge and understanding of their subjects and use it to good effect in planning lessons so that there is a logical order that students can follow. They have adopted the Key Stage 3 strategy and use a common approach to ensure that students are clear about what they need to do. This leads to good learning, particularly where teachers use a plenary session to sum up the work covered and assess the progress students have made. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson with a group of high attaining students, the teacher embarked on a lesson where the introduction, then the main part of the lesson and finally the summary were linked closely and built on each other. As a result, students learned very effectively how to use graphical calculators efficiently in tackling algebra. Throughout the lesson, constant reference was made to how the work could be extended so that within the group, the highest attainers were stretched and challenged to learn effectively at their level of ability. The enthusiasm and interest of these students was fully exploited, they learned very well and made very good progress.

38. Teachers' class management techniques are generally good, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where the impact of the Key Stage 3 strategy has been most keenly felt. They use the time in the lessons effectively to ensure good pace to lessons so that good learning takes place. There is good practice too with older students. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, students studying poetry responded very well to the challenge of a high paced lesson, where they were given a set time to produce answers relating to a new poem. Their response was very good and they demonstrated very positive attitudes and very good behaviour as they were first engaged, then stimulated by the materials used. The teacher used question and answer techniques to bring the material to life, taking on students' answers and looking to the class to judge and take the answers further. Individual, pair and group work were all used to keep the interest high. The quality of learning was very good and this high achieving group made very good progress in the lesson.

39. In the best lessons, teachers use excellent class management skills in order to focus on how students learn and to improve their ability to learn for themselves. In a Year 8 science lesson the students made very good progress and learned very effectively from each other. Groups of students made presentations to the rest of the class having researched aspects of the functioning of the digestive system. As well as the factual knowledge gained, they learned how to collaborate and the virtues of listening and paying close attention to others. The teacher's skilful questioning bound the whole process together very effectively.

40. The positive relationships that teachers enjoy with students and the relationships they engender between students are common factors in much of the successful teaching. They are helped in this respect by the good behaviour and positive attitudes that mostly typify lessons across the age groups. As a result, there is usually a good working atmosphere in lessons where students expect to work hard and enjoy their work and they learn well. Where temporary staff have not engendered a positive working relationship with students, there is some unsatisfactory teaching.

41. Teachers' expectations of students are usually kept appropriately high. This not only applies to students' behaviour and effort, but to the quality of their work. In the best marking practices, teachers reinforce not only accuracy but how well students present their work. The use of assessment is an improving area in the college. Increasingly, targets are set to help students know what progress they are making and what they must do to improve further. In some classes with students in Years 10 and 11, teachers have to work particularly hard and effectively in order to ensure that students make satisfactory progress. This is due to the considerable disruption to teaching since the last inspection because of staff changes that have taken place and the consequent employment of a significant proportion of temporary teachers. In French, for example, students started the year with low morale and some degree of disaffection. The new staff have had to tackle a legacy of underachievement, and while



inroads are being made, disrupted teaching in the past has made students sceptical of new teachers, and there is still some underachievement.

42. The setting of homework is satisfactory overall. There is some good practice across a number of subjects where homework is set regularly and to a timetable to extend the work of the classroom. However, there are still some inconsistencies and the regular and systematic setting of homework needs to be improved in a number of subjects.

43. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, it is clearly linked to inappropriate lesson material and teaching that is undemanding in its level of challenge. On occasion this leads to unsatisfactory behaviour by students. More often, however, the students continue to behave acceptably but do not make the progress that they should. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching by the permanent teachers in the college. However, there is some pedestrian teaching that was satisfactory rather than good. Here, students' learning was slowed by lack of pace and too little attention being given to the amount of progress students made in the course of the lesson. In such lessons, students were too often the passive recipients of taught facts rather than being actively engaged in learning for themselves.

44. The overall direction of a whole college approach to the development of literacy is well coordinated by the literacy coordinator and is good overall despite some unevenness between subjects. The very good literacy provision in English impacts well on all students; the department's teaching effectively supports the students in improving all aspects of their literacy. Good provision also comes from the special educational needs staff for those students who start college with well below average standards. Those students whose standards are below average benefit from the English department's 'catch up' courses adapted from the National Literacy Strategy. Many departments use effective methods to develop the students' use of key vocabulary and thus enhance their understanding of the subject's concepts. The teaching of reading is satisfactory. Overall, the college's attention to supporting writing is having a good impact. The systematic development of writing skills in ICT is a strength, but in some subjects such as music and business studies more emphasis needs to be given to longer written responses.

45. The teaching of numeracy skills is good in mathematics and students' standards are broadly average. However, the implementation of the college's numeracy policy is recent and while most subjects teach these skills satisfactorily, this is not the case across all subjects.

46. The teaching of the key skills of ICT in other subjects is very good in science and good in English. Other subjects too make a very good contribution to students' development of ICT skills in Years 7 to 11. The co-ordination of these key skills is very good and, as a result, students use ICT well in their learning. Only in art and design and physical education and to a lesser extent history is the teaching of ICT skills under-developed.

47. The college has improved its teaching since the previous inspection and the interim inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors in June 2002. There is now a greater proportion of good and very good teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. Crucially, students are now more challenged and not allowed to coast. There is good capacity to improve the quality of teaching further, particularly as the needs of the gifted and talented students are met when current initiatives become embedded in the college's teaching practice. Students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. The work undertaken by the headteacher, the governors and senior staff to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching is having a clear impact. It is further improved by the monitoring of teaching within departments, which is now more rigorous and systematic in its approach. The college is making good progress in ensuring that students' learning experiences are improved by widening the approaches taken by teachers.

## Sixth form

48. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are satisfactory overall in the subjects that represented the focus of the inspection. In over three quarters of the lessons observed there was good teaching and very good teaching in around a quarter. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Students in the sixth form on the register of special educational needs receive good teaching and achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 12. The highest attainers make satisfactory progress. The progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.

49. Where students are following courses that best fit their needs, interests and aptitudes, they achieve well in response to the good teaching they receive, for example in English and in drama and physical education in Year 13. In psychology and in law, students achieved poorly last year. The few students still taking law at the college are achieving satisfactorily in response to new teaching provision. There are no students taking psychology. In other subjects, students in Year 12 are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. However, they were well below average on entry to the sixth form and standards are below those required to meet the demands of the courses.

50. Teachers demonstrate good specialist subject knowledge. Lessons are well prepared, but lose their effectiveness in history, business studies and physical education because too much time has to be spent in tackling the low prior attainment of students taking the courses. In English and drama in particular, question and answer sessions are used skilfully in order to produce good quality class debate. Students are frequently given imaginative and challenging tasks to complete, and teachers have high expectations of them. Subject specific terminology is used well to reinforce concepts and this leads to good learning. In the best lessons in English and drama, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that focuses on building up knowledge and understanding and leads students on to extend this process to studying independently. In other subjects, teachers use too narrow a range of teaching strategies and do not give students enough opportunities to research and learn for themselves. As a result, the highest attainers in particular are not consistently challenged.

51. Teachers have good relationships with their students and in English, physical education, history and drama these relationships are very good. This factor, allied to the positive attitudes shown by students, result in classrooms where there is a good climate for learning. Teachers use procedures for assessing students' attainment that are good overall. Systems and strategies have been put into place to raise standards of teaching further by providing students with well-informed intermediate targets and projections of the grades they are capable of attaining. This is an area of developing strength in the teaching of sixth form students. This will help students understand more fully where they are at present in relation to the course demands and what they need to do to improve further. There is no formal policy for teaching key skills and the method of delivery changes from year to year. Key skills were taught through subjects last year, and the quality of delivery was variable. In the present year, some aspects of key skills are taught separately by tutors: others, such as the application of number, are not taught formally, and opportunities for problem solving are few.

52. There is still a legacy in the college of a minority of students working through GCE A-level courses because they wanted to continue their education at the college, but had to follow courses from a very narrow range available, some of which do not suit their individual needs, interests and aptitudes. This is particularly true among the seven students who currently comprise Year 12. The impact of this legacy is seen where good quality teaching results in satisfactory rather than good achievement by students. This is because there are students who embarked upon the GCE A-level courses whose attainment at the end of Year 11 was comparatively low and they struggle to attain satisfactorily in relation to the course demands. This is unsatisfactory and a factor in the inadequate provision in the sixth form.

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

53. The quality and range of the curriculum are good in Years 7 to 11. The time allocated to the curriculum meets recommendations. The college has taken positive steps to rectify issues raised at the last inspection including the time allocated to different subjects that resulted in some subjects having insufficient time. The curriculum is now well planned and this results in good breadth and balance including flexible arrangements for Years 10 and 11 that were not in place at the time of the last inspection. The provision of citizenship is satisfactory with some aspects already being taught in personal, social and health education and with plans established for this to be extended to other subjects. The college's farm unit is a valuable additional resource and is used well to enhance curriculum opportunities, for example in science. Statutory requirements for ICT are now met, but the college still does not fully meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

54. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum plus religious education and personal, social and health education. It is further enhanced by the provision of ICT as a separate subject and by the addition of drama. Good links have been established between drama and personal, social and health education in Year 7 to explore some key issues through drama. In ICT the course links well with topics studied in different subject areas. Additional breadth is provided in Year 9 by the provision of German as a second language. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented well and this has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. ICT requires further development in design and technology, physical education and history. In art and design there is an over-emphasis on traditional art and craft work with a lack of sufficient emphasis on design.

55. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a good range of courses and opportunities for all students to broaden their experiences. National Curriculum requirements are met. In science, courses are well matched to needs with a good range of alternatives, including good provision for higher and lower attainers and with the majority of students taking a broad double science course. Further breadth and balance are achieved with the majority of students taking a humanities subject and by Spanish being offered as a second language. The "work-related" curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for students with particular needs. It has been planned well to meet the needs of particular groups of students including those with special educational needs and those who have found difficulty in conforming to college routines and procedures. The provision has been designed well to retain students' National Curriculum entitlement but with further opportunities to achieve greater breadth, for example through GNVQ accreditation and through additional work experience. The work-related curriculum provides valuable courses for students whose needs are not met by the main college curriculum. The land and environment (farm-related) course is particularly effective in this area. In physical education there are accredited courses

including martial arts, which provide good additional opportunities in the subject. The use of ICT and photography is limited in art and design.

56. There is a good provision of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum. Opportunities in physical education are very good and almost half the total college population participates regularly in extra-curricular sporting activities. Modern languages provide good opportunities with visits to countries abroad, including Germany, France and Spain, e-mail links with German and Spanish schools and after-school courses in German and Spanish. In a specially designated week near the end of the summer term, students choose from a wide range of college-based and off-site activities including youth hostelling, cycling, fishing, jewellery making and painting. Opportunities in music include a college band, a string group and a choir. Many other subjects provide opportunities for additional study through clubs and visits locally and further abroad. Learning support staff provide a regular programme of lunchtime activities for students identified as having particular needs. Some activities provide good opportunities to a wider group, for example study support evenings for families.

57. The college is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all and provision is good. The 'Base' is a particular strength. It provides well for students with special educational needs and effectively reintegrates students who are returning from fixed term exclusions. The college behaviour policy is applied consistently to all students. The headteacher and senior staff take an active and effective role in monitoring to ensure that all students are treated equally. There is good provision for the teaching of equal opportunity topics in the personal, social and health education programme, careers and religious education. This contributes significantly to the good relationships within the college. Most subjects have clear equal opportunity policies, which include planning for the needs of disabled students. The grouping of students is flexible, for example in mathematics, to allow students to move from group to group as their needs change. Students are entered for examination courses in which they are likely to be successful. The college operates a system that gives opportunities for all students to be rewarded.

58. Examination results of girls and boys are thoroughly compared. There are very few students of different ethnic origin and no students with English as an additional language. However the results are not formally analysed by the different racial groups in the college. The college is currently updating its equal opportunities policy to meet the requirements on racial equality.

59. The college makes good provision for students with special educational needs. The effectiveness of support staff is a very positive aspect of the college's provision. The lack of support staff was an issue at the last inspection. They make a wide contribution to the college's provision including supporting individuals and groups in lessons, delivering structured withdrawal programmes, support for GCSE coursework and by providing valuable informal support, for example during lunchtime activities. Support is carefully targeted according to need with all students on the special needs register receiving two hours withdrawal tuition per fortnight. Support in lessons is appropriately prioritised in the core areas of English, mathematics and science. Grouping arrangements in different subjects further enhance the provision. Additional groups, for example in English, enable students with special needs to be taught in smaller groups and therefore receive more individual attention.

60. The college has satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education that makes a sound contribution to students' development. Separate personal, social and health education lessons were introduced two years ago and are taught mainly by form tutors but the programme is currently under review. Teaching is satisfactory and students value the information they receive in helping them make choices. There is a good input on sex education, relationships, drugs education, careers and study skills. The programme is

supported appropriately by the college nurse and the police drugs team. It is enhanced through assemblies and in some other areas of the curriculum, such as in English where students investigate moral issues and in geography where students look at aspects of the environment. Citizenship is taught in history, English, drama and ICT as well as in personal, social and health education. The student council makes a good contribution to citizenship education. Citizenship is in the process of being developed in the college and is satisfactory in its provision.

61. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. Careers education is part of the personal, social and health education programme and begins in Year 9 by raising awareness of career choices. There is sound advice on option choice for Year 10. Visits to universities for some younger students raise their aspirations. Students in Year 10 have a useful and well-organised week of work experience, which they value. They are encouraged to organise their own placements and this has a good impact on learning and independence. Students on vocational courses have good additional work experience. Appropriate extra support is given to underachieving students and those with specific needs. All students in Year 11 have a careers interview and good advice is given on post 16 options especially at alternative colleges. A satisfactory guide is issued on the post 16 options at Sedgefield Community College. There is sound provision for careers in the library.

62. The college has good links with the community and these contribute positively to students' learning and personal and social development. Relationships with the local community have improved since the last inspection when complaints about students' behaviour in the town were commonplace. The college has made good efforts to overcome these difficulties and members of the community now find the college approachable and helpful. There are good links with the Town Council and the college takes part in the local Positive Youth Forum. The Community Association has a base in the college and the premises are well used by members of the local community. There are good links with community arts and drama groups and very good links with local community sports associations, which provided good support for the college's bid for sports college status. Local businesses provide good work experience placements for students in Year 10 and those on work related learning courses. The curriculum is enhanced by visits into the local and wider community, for example theatre and museum visits, religious education visits to St Edmunds church and geography visits to York.

63. The college has good relationships with partner institutions. These make a good contribution to students' academic progress and personal development. Students join the college mainly from five local junior schools. The college has regular meetings with these schools and their associated infant schools. There is good transfer of information from junior schools, especially for students with special educational needs. Good transfer arrangements help students to settle well in Year 7 and good plans are being developed to extend links still further. Bridging units of work have been tried in religious education and English but are still in the early stages of development in other subjects. There are good sporting links with junior schools and junior sports leaders organise sporting events for younger students. Junior school provide a number of good work experience placements for students in Year 10. There is a good range of sporting fixtures with other secondary schools. Links with post 16 providers are good and ensure that students are offered the best choice of course available for them. Links with other colleges enhance the provision for work related learning courses. Visits to universities and from representatives of universities successfully raise students' aspirations.

64. The college's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The college has a good and comprehensive set of aims for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

of students. It rightly aims to give students a reasoned set of social and moral values, to make them sensitive to the needs of others and give them an understanding the young person's role and status in the community. Most subjects include aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, but they are not always formally planned into schemes of work and opportunities for enhancement are sometimes overlooked. Religious education, English, music, drama and personal, social and health education make a strong contribution.

65. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The quality of assemblies is variable and opportunities for spiritual reflection are limited, although in some, students have the chance to reflect on their own achievement or contribution to society. There is no religious focus in assemblies and no daily act of collective worship. Students are rarely given the opportunity for reflection in form time on the 'Thought for the Week' as recommended in the staff handbook. Insufficient time is set aside for students to reflect upon their own feelings, values and beliefs. There are good links with the local church but links with other churches and faith communities are underdeveloped. Subject contributions to spiritual development are satisfactory overall. There is a very good contribution in religious education where students are encouraged to evaluate their own feelings. English, drama and music contribute well to spiritual development, for example in English students empathise with others and analyse spiritual dimensions of love, obligation and betrayal. Students show a concern for those less fortunate for themselves by raising funds for charities such as the Teenage Cancer Trust.

66. The college's provision for students' moral education is good. Teachers are good role models and have clear expectations of good behaviour. They set out ground rules from the start and students are helped to realise the difference between right and wrong. The student council contributed to the Code of Conduct that is published in the student planners. Students understand the rules and consider sanctions and rewards to be fair and used consistently by most staff. There is good provision for moral development in most subjects of the curriculum and especially in religious education, where students examine tolerance, rights and wrongs and the extent to which families influence young people. Assemblies reinforce moral messages well. Teachers place a good deal of trust in students to behave well in and around the college and they respond well to this.

67. The college's provision for social development is good. Students are given good opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups. They are encouraged to take collective and individual responsibility for safety. Students have good opportunities to take responsibility in extra-curricular activities and routine classroom duties. Members of each form are elected to the student council that considers a wide variety of issues affecting the college community. This has a positive impact on learning and personal development. There are good opportunities to form relationships across the year groups in the student council, drama and sport. Year 11 students provide a good counselling service for younger students. The lunchtime dining arrangements provide too little opportunity for social interaction. The college's good links with the community encourage students to take an active part in the local community and develop an understanding of citizenship, for example through support for sport in junior schools. There are good opportunities for students to participate in residential activities abroad, such as ski trips, language visits and history visits to the World War battlefields. Activities week in the summer term, residential visits and day trips contribute very positively to students' social development.

68. Provision for students' cultural development is good. Students gain a good insight on their own and other cultures across the curriculum and this contributes positively to personal development. In English, students learn about the West Stanley mining disaster and study contemporary life through literature. In religious education, students learn about the cultures of other religions and racism. In music, they learn about the music of Africa, China and India. History makes a good contribution to cultural development through the study of native Americans, slavery, the Romans and twentieth century Germany for example. In design and technology older students study multicultural food and fashion. Students' experience of European culture is enhanced by a history trip to the battlefields of World War One, language visits to France, Spain and Germany as well as a ski trip to Italy.

### **Sixth form**

69. The curriculum provided in the sixth form is poor. Sixth form numbers have fallen steadily over the last 10 years and in the last two years, the college has followed a policy of giving Year 11 students appropriate and helpful advice on the whole range of options available in other local sixth forms and colleges. Consequently, there are only 7 students in Year 12, six male and one female, and 15 in Year 13, four males and 11 females. As a result, the college can no longer provide a curriculum that matches the needs, capabilities and aspirations of the vast majority of Year 11 students. Students also have limited opportunities for personal and social development as the enrichment programme is too limited. There is a high drop-out rate at the end of Year 12 with less than half of the students staying on to the next year in 2001-2002.

70. The college provides a very limited range of academic courses and no vocational courses. Only three subjects are available at A/S level: business studies, history and ICT. Five subjects are provided at A2 level: English, ICT, law, drama and physical education/sports studies. The lack of breadth in these academic subjects, with the notable absence of two key subjects, mathematics and science, denies students the opportunities of studying a balanced GCE A-level course. As the type of courses provided is so limited with the absence of vocational courses at any level, the needs, aspirations and attainment levels of students are not being met. Many students of low attainment, especially in Year 12 are taking courses for which they are not suited. Consequently, although Year 13 students are achieving well in some subjects, overall standards are below average and many are unlikely to fulfil course requirements. The college complies with statutory requirements by providing a separate lesson of religious education for all students, although not a daily act of collective worship.

71. Sixth form students have poor provision for enrichment activities and limited opportunities to broaden their experiences beyond subjects. There is no programme for general studies, unsatisfactory provision for key skills and no organised extra-curricular activities. As a result, students have an excessive amount of time for use for private study and this is not monitored to ensure that it is used to good effect. There are too few opportunities for sixth form students to take responsibility and play an active part in the college and wider community in general, although some departments, such as physical education and drama offer good opportunities. All students have lessons in personal, social and health education organised on an ad hoc basis. These include sex education, drug education, careers and religious education. Occasional visiting speakers from charities or universities enhance the personal, social and health education programme. The college encourages social interaction by taking all sixth formers together on excursions to the theatre and universities for example. A team-building expedition was organised last term.

72. Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is poor, although some subjects in the sixth form curriculum make a sound contribution. Religious education is included in personal, social and health education and is mostly about Christianity. However, there is very little provision for spiritual development. Support for moral development is sound. In drama students study eating disorders and in English they study moral issues. Provision for social development is satisfactory within curriculum subjects, but students have too few opportunities for responsibility within the college community. Sixth form students participate in the student council but efforts to get them to lead and organise it have been unsuccessful. The sixth form committee was not effective last year and has not yet been established this year. The lack of opportunities offered to sixth form students to take responsibility hinders their development as independent, caring and responsible citizens.

73. Students' personal and academic development in the sixth form is supported by sound links with the community. Students are involved in community service in junior colleges through drama and physical education. Students studying for sports leader awards organise sporting activities for younger students and coach sports. Drama students perform in junior schools and help local theatre companies with productions such as a recent Murder Mystery event. This has a positive impact on the personal development of the students involved. Business education students have useful links with local business. Most Year 12 students find appropriate work placements within the local community.

74. There are good links with partner institutions. The college has tried to broaden curriculum provision in the sixth form through links with other post 16 providers. This has enhanced the law course, but timetabling difficulties have made collaboration on other courses impossible. Links with universities enhance learning and help students with their choice of course on leaving college. Sound opportunities are given to students to visit universities.

75. Careers education is satisfactory. Students in Year 12 have careers lessons. They are encouraged to arrange their own week of work experience in the summer term and are given appropriate support where necessary. Students in Year 13 are currently being helped to complete personal statements for their UCAS forms. They feel they are getting good advice from their tutors. The careers library is appropriately stocked.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

76. The college provides a good level of pastoral care for students, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is good educational and personal support and guidance to enable students to make further progress with their learning. The college takes satisfactory care of students' welfare.

77. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good. There is good liaison with primary schools and a well-organised induction process. There is a sound programme of guidance and personal, social and health education to support students' personal development. The role of year group learning co-ordinators has recently been revised to good effect and form tutors play an important role in supporting and mentoring. Students' academic progress and personal development are tracked through interim and annual reports. There are regular pastoral meetings, which are effective in maintaining the progress students make. Students are confident they can turn to tutors or learning co-ordinators for help and support. Very good use is made of outside agencies to support students. Students are well prepared for adult life.

78. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. There is an electronic system of registration and clear procedures are followed rigorously. The use of registration



time is variable, but most tutors use it effectively to establish good relationships with students to promote personal development. Tutors monitor student planners well in form time. The college rightly emphasises the importance of good attendance to parents. Rewards for good attendance and telephone calls to parents on the first day of absence have improved attendance. Regular checks are made for internal truants. The provision of an alternative work related curriculum has encouraged some disaffected students to attend better. Attendance initiatives have a positive impact on the learning of students involved. The college analyses attendance figures well to target areas for improvement. The Educational Welfare service is currently giving good support to the college. There are good systems in place to monitor students who arrive late.

79. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The behaviour policy has recently been revised and staff have received good training in behaviour management. The policy is positive and used fairly and very effectively. There has been a significant decline in fixed term exclusions since the new system was introduced. Most teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and students respond accordingly. Good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour, bullying and racism. The 'Remove' system has been replaced by an executive call out system, which is effective in controlling unsatisfactory classroom behaviour so that other students' learning is undisturbed. Incidents of poor behaviour and those resulting in exclusions are properly recorded and analysed. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying have recently been revised and are good. A coordinator has been appointed and a college counsellor is available to support victims. Awareness of bullying is promoted to younger students in personal, social and health education and drama, but it does not have a high profile in display around the college and there is no confidential way of reporting incidents of bullying. Most students and parents are confident that any reported incident will be resolved quickly and to their satisfaction.

80. The college takes satisfactory care of students' welfare. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of all students are sound, but the recently drafted policy needs to be more specific to the college in order to be a useful working document. A member of staff has responsibility for coordinating health and safety. The premises supervisor and the governing body take an active interest. Teachers give good attention to following safe procedures in lessons. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for all activities, including trips out of college. Evacuation drills are carried out properly and recorded appropriately. A number of minor health and safety problems have been brought to the attention of the college. It is unsatisfactory that emergency evacuation procedures are not posted throughout the college. First aid procedures are satisfactory and good records are kept, but it is unsatisfactory that designated first aiders currently do not have up to date accreditation. Further training is planned for later in the term. There are good procedures for dealing with child protection issues and the college maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies.

81. The college takes good care of the welfare of students with special educational needs. Good use is made of information from feeder schools and students already entered on their previous school's special needs register promptly receive withdrawal support on entry. In addition diagnostic testing is well used to identify or confirm individual students' special needs. College tests for whole year groups also contribute to the identification process, but are less well used to monitor progress. There are regular reviews of progress with the appropriate involvement of students, parents and staff. The recording of the outcomes from reviews lacks clarity in terms of showing clearly the extent to which previous targets set have been achieved. Successful subject strategies are linked well with individual education plans and this reinforces the whole college approach. Identification and review procedures have been recently further reinforced by the appointment of learning co-ordinators who refer individual students causing concern to the special needs co-ordinator. The informal care and support provided by special needs staff is very good.

82. Assessment procedures were not satisfactory or effective at the time of the last inspection. The college has since made good progress in developing effective systems. Assessment has been a major focus for development. Overall procedures for assessment are now good as are the procedures for monitoring and supporting the students' progress. The "Assessment for Learning" group has promoted assessment methods to support learning and there has been a good response in many subjects. The college sets targets for each student using information from their attainments in their end of primary school national tests. Many subjects use this information as a basis for identifying learning targets and making sure the students know precisely the skills they need to improve. Particularly good practice exists in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In ICT, teachers compile and use a wide range of data to assess the students and to set them targets for improvement. In religious education end of module assessments effectively inform teachers and students of the progress made. Modern foreign language teachers make strong use of targets in Years 7 to 9 but their use is not as effective in the GCSE courses. In geography, history and physical education the impact of assessment on learning is satisfactory and not as strong as in other subjects. In art and design and design and technology, newly appointed subject leaders have rightly identified the need for development but at this early stage have not had the time to embed good practice.

83. The learning needs and progress of students with special educational needs are diagnosed and monitored closely. These procedures are used very well to provide learning courses and programmes that match their needs. Assessment also identifies those Year 7 students who will benefit from the 'catch up' programmes provided by the National Literacy Strategy. During Year 9, assessment information is used effectively to identify those students who will benefit from the work-related curriculum during Years 10 and 11.

84. In addition to subject procedures for monitoring progress there are effective whole college strategies. A twice-yearly progress report records progress against National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. This information is monitored closely by learning coordinators to evaluate and recognise good achievement and to intervene where there is underachievement. Despite the improvements made, the college rightly continues to adopt a self-critical approach to assessment and has identified further developments that are needed.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

85. The overall assessment procedures for students in the sixth form are good. They match those used in the main school. Targets are set, based on prior performance at GCSE. There is some unevenness in the practice of ensuring that students are clear about their targets in the early stages of Year 12 although these are clarified by half term in the autumn term via the progress review. Prior to admission to the Sixth Form assessment makes a significant contribution to the guidance process to support choices of courses at Post 16. Guidance is totally objective and ensures the aspiring students know what is available in other institutions.

86. The quality of assessment feedback in English is very good. Students receive constant appraisal of their responses. The marking of the work is very detailed. Teachers make sure that students understand the assessment objectives for each unit. Students value this information and it has had a positive impact on their attainments. In drama students receive positive, supportive appraisal of their work during lessons. The teachers' use of assessment is based on an effective 'critical friend' model. Students' knowledge of their

standards is also enhanced by evaluations made by other students. In history the students' progress is monitored closely and they receive good quality feedback on their progress. Good systems operate in business studies. Assessment is satisfactory in physical education, but better use should be made of assessment data to set targets and to monitor students' progress towards such targets.

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

87. Careers guidance and guidance for future courses, study or career opportunities are satisfactory. Students are complimentary about the support and guidance they receive in the sixth form. The good relationships that exist with tutors are supportive and helpful. Students value the availability of a student counsellor to discuss issues of a personal nature. Health and safety procedures in the sixth form are similar to the main college, but registration procedures for students in the sixth form are unsatisfactory. The college has no good record of their presence on the premises.

88. The small minority of students who stay at the college for their sixth form education feel ill prepared for entry into the sixth form. Those interviewed felt that they had been let down and directed onto the wrong courses. This is reflected in poor retention rates in the sixth form and well below average results. Students receive a brochure on subject option choices in Year 11 which then gives them details about the courses on offer but does not relate subjects to career choice. Sound guidance on post-16 options is offered at an open evening for parents and students. Members of the senior staff subsequently arrange interviews for those who choose to enter the college's sixth form to ensure the suitability of the courses for the student, but this is not effective in ensuring a good match. There is sufficient flexibility for students to change courses at the start of Year 12.

89. Each student belongs to a tutor group and relationships with tutors are supportive. The tutors, supported by the head of the sixth form, monitor academic progress and personal development well and are responsible for careers guidance and personal, social and health education. These programmes include study skills, writing curricula vitae, careers advice, higher and further education advice and health issues. A small number of visiting speakers support this work. Sixth formers find the guidance for future courses and study useful. Careers information is sound and is supported by external agencies and a useful section in the careers library.

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

90. The college's links with parents are good. Parents who attended the meeting for parents and those who responded to the parental questionnaire are generally pleased with the college. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is good. Parents of students with special educational needs are kept very well informed about the provision made for their sons and daughters. They receive letters giving full details of the provision made and receive copies of individual education plans. They are appropriately involved in review procedures. The college has been successful in initiatives to involve these parents, for example through the running of a Lifelong Learning and Literacy course and through informal "coffee morning" events.

91. Parents like the high expectations that the college has of their children. They feel comfortable in approaching the college with questions or problems and are pleased with the progress their children make. Their children generally like college and the vast majority of parents feel the college is well led and managed. Several parents expressed strong support for the leadership of the headteacher. Several parents raised concerns about students' behaviour. A high proportion of those who responded were concerned about the level of

homework. A number of parents feel they are not well informed about progress and that the college does not work closely with parents. Parents expressed concern about the amount of teaching by temporary staff and the variable quality of this teaching. Inspectors agree with the positive aspects expressed by parents. They found behaviour to be good and satisfactory use of homework. Only a small proportion of parents is closely involved with the work of the college, but these have a good impact on students' learning. Information about students' progress is satisfactory. The team agrees that there is too much teaching by temporary teachers and the quality of their teaching is too variable.

92. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about students' progress is satisfactory. Newsletters and occasional letters are informative. The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents provide parents with useful information, but a number of items are missing from the governing body's annual report, which have been notified to the college. Students' planners are used well by parents and tutors to monitor personal development and homework, but it is unsatisfactory that no homework timetable is provided to parents or students. Current students' reports are satisfactory but subject reports are inconsistent. In the best examples, such as ICT, a clear indication of what has been studied, a report of attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels or expected GCSE grades and clear academic targets for students to improve are given. It is unsatisfactory that there is no separate report for personal, social and health education. The college is currently designing a new and more consistent approach for reporting to parents. The use of interim progress reports is good practice. Sixth form reports are satisfactory overall, but variable in quality and usefulness. Most subject reports are satisfactory, but others are not sufficiently specific to their subject. The best, such as those in ICT, give course details, predicted grades and good advice on how students can improve. It is unsatisfactory that parents of last year's Year 9 students did not receive formal notification of their public examination results. Parents are invited to a consultation evening each year. The college does not have accurate figures but estimate that the majority of parents usually attend.

93. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at college and home is good. Parents are invited to participate in college policies, for example in planning anti-bullying and in the sex education policy. They are consulted on a number of issues such as detention and lunchtimes. 'Positive' coffee afternoons have been organised for families of disaffected students and those with specific needs in order to boost self-esteem and confidence. The parent, teachers and friends association contributes very positively to the social and financial life of the college by organising a good variety of social and fund raising events involving parents and students. The parent governors have a good impact on the work of the college. Parents enjoy students' performances and many provide Internet access at home to help their children develop study skills.

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

94. The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership. She is very well supported by a committed and knowledgeable governing body. The new senior management team also provide good support as they develop and establish their responsibilities into a well defined leadership role. Overall, the leadership is very good and the college is managed well. This ensures a clear educational direction to the college's work where all students are fully included, in line with the college's aims. Because of the college's positive response to the previous inspection there is very good capacity and commitment to improve further.

95. Throughout the college, teachers who have management and leadership roles, for example the learning co-ordinators, are clear about their responsibilities and to whom they are accountable. Good systems and strategies have been put into place to guide progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. Senior managers and staff leading subject departments and year groups demonstrate energy and good commitment to raising standards further. Their overall contribution to managing the teaching in their areas of responsibility is now good. The improvement of teaching and making use of the good practice within the college were areas identified at the previous inspection as needing improvement and the college has responded very well.

96. The impact of the very good leadership can be clearly seen in the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection in 2000, (at which point the current headteacher had been in post for one term). Two years ago, the college was judged to be underachieving. It is now an effective and improving college, where students in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well, and students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactorily. There are now good systems and strategies in place to identify and tackle underachievement where it still exists, for example among some students in Years 10 and 11 in French. Where previously the college did not evaluate its performance to good effect, it is now an effective self-evaluating college and standards are rising as a result. In this process, data about the college's performance are increasingly being used to good effect. Where previously the management structure was top heavy, it is now streamlined. It is now based upon rational principles and ensures that senior and middle managers maintain an overview of the all-round development of students rather than viewing their academic and pastoral development as separate entities.

97. Staff change has been the greatest barrier to improvement over the past two years. There is still too much teaching being undertaken by temporary staff, and it is significant that nearly all the unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection involved temporary staff. The headteacher and governors have worked impressively within the constraints placed upon them to ensure a better balance and match of teachers to the curriculum being taught. While all staffing issues have not been solved, the college is now better placed and has a very good capacity to improve further in raising standards. This is most clearly seen in the approach now being taken to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. At the time of the last inspection, the performance of teachers was not appraised in a regular, rigorous and systematic manner. The college now monitors the quality of teaching and learning well and this has led to an improvement in both areas. Areas for further improvement in teaching have been identified and effective measures have been taken to deal with past weaknesses. As a result the overall quality of teaching and learning is better and this represents good improvement since the last inspection.

98. The changes described above are fundamental to the working of the college, embracing as they do the curriculum, the management and the staffing of the college. The rate of change has been rapid and has not been accompanied as yet by a rise in recent GCSE results because these students were underachieving, but the recent trend of improvement is higher than the trend nationally. The changes in approach to teaching the higher attainers are becoming embedded and staffing issues are being resolved. These factors ensure that the college has a very good capacity to improve further and to build on the improvements seen in the recent performance of students in National Curriculum tests in Year 9.

99. The college has still to resolve the inadequate provision for post-16 students. Again, good progress has been made due to action taken by the headteacher and the governing body. While the sixth form is still not cost-effective, it does not drain the resources of the

college to nearly the degree it did at the time of the previous inspection. Provision is still not satisfactory, but the college has systems and strategies in place to ensure that the large majority of Year 11 students undertake courses in other schools and colleges that best meet their needs, aptitudes and interests. Currently this is not the case for students staying at the college, particularly for the very few students in Year 12 and to a lesser degree, those in Year 13

100. The college is well organised, and governors and staff deal effectively with the bureaucratic demands made upon its administration. In this process, information technology is used satisfactorily. Targets for whole-college improvement are realistic and challenging and are based upon accurate information about students' attainment levels. The setting of individual targets for students is becoming well established. This is a good response to the findings of the last inspection as is the better use of assessment so that students know what they need to do in order to progress.

101. The college's approach to the previous inspection report has been very positive and largely very successful. The college's further development is guided by a sound development plan. It is carefully constructed and takes account of funding implications. A satisfactory consultation process ensures that all staff and governors can make a contribution. Subject departments take clear account of whole college issues when planning their own developments. Overall, the cycle of college development planning ensures full consultation with staff and governors and provides an effective framework for budgetary decisions. The plan is a very good working document that guides whole college and departmental progress and the priorities are appropriate to the college's current position. For example, the improvement of teaching and learning is, appropriately, the first priority and is having a good impact on raising standards and tackling underachievement. Good systems and strategies have been put in place to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting the college's priorities.

102. Governors take a very active role in the leadership of the college and make a very positive contribution to the decisions that are taken. The governing body is in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the college to account for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the college is good. The governing body has a very good knowledge of the strengths of the college and the areas needing further development. Overall, they are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties. However, there are some areas where the information to parents is lacking and the college still does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship

103. The leadership of the special needs co-ordinator is very good and has successfully combined the co-ordinator's role with that of inclusion manager. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in the provision for students on the special needs register. There is now a greater level of support and the progress made by these students is now good. The college has very successfully brought together the management of special needs so that students with a wider range of needs are provided for. This initiative has been very successfully driven forward by staff and led very effectively by the headteacher. The location of a single base as a focus for the provision is centrally located in the college and is an effective demonstration of the importance the college has attached to these developments. The work of various outside agencies is located in the base and this reinforces the multi-agency approach that is a strong feature of the developing provision. A strong link with governors has been sustained throughout these developments, but the governors' annual report does not include sufficient information on the implementation of the college's policy. The revised Code of Practice has been fully implemented. Training and

development of staff are good, including whole staff awareness-raising sessions plus more focused training for individuals and groups.

104. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials are satisfactory overall. In most subjects there is a satisfactory range of appropriate class sets of reference texts. ICT resources have improved since the last inspection and are now good and are used well by many teachers. The fiction and ICT resources in the library are satisfactory. However the range of non-fiction for students to use to support their learning is less well developed. A temporary member of staff is managing the library effectively on a day-to-day basis.

105. Overall, the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and in the sixth form. However, the college is currently experiencing some difficulties with staffing, largely because of staff illness. This situation has existed to a significant degree over the past two years. There are nine members of staff on known sickness absence or maternity leave at present and supply cover by temporary teachers of the appropriate quality is not always available. There have been ten staff appointed in the last two years to replace the seventeen who have left. This has enabled the governors to improve the balance of staff and there is now a better blend of experienced longer serving teachers, recently appointed experienced staff and those more recently qualified. The technical staff undertake a valuable role in supporting the teaching of the curriculum in science, ICT and design and technology. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the college.

106. There are good arrangements in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the college. The newly qualified teachers receive very effective mentoring and department support. In addition, they have college-based training and are supported in their attendance at local education authority courses arranged specifically for newly qualified teachers. The college is also a good provider of initial teacher training through its links with local universities and has four students in training this term.

107. The college has good and effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Evaluation and feedback systems ensure that the college receives value for money from the courses attended by its teachers. Priority is appropriately given to training that is linked to the college development plan, curriculum and guidance plans and performance management. Support is also given to individuals to pursue further qualifications when funding allows. The college has taken a positive approach to performance management and procedures are good. The first cycle has been completed and staff targets have been agreed and set. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

108. The college has addressed the problems of accommodation identified in the previous inspection with energy, effective use of minimal funding and self-help projects. There have been significant improvements that have reduced the negative impact of the accommodation on teaching and learning. Although it still has many shortcomings, the accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum, but developments in ICT for example have been constrained by the unsatisfactory structure of some of the building. The college has done its best to improve the accommodation, albeit superficially, with a limited budget. Further improvements, which are long overdue, will require significantly more financial investment than the college alone can provide.

109. Overall, the college gives satisfactory value for money. The process of financial planning is sound and there are effective procedures in place to ensure that the college consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Financial administration is sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. There is a satisfactory programme of

audit. The principles of best value are applied well in the college's use of resources. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial situation of the college. The strategic use of resources is good and specific grants are used appropriately.

## **Sixth form**

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

110. The leadership is firmly in the hands of the headteacher and governing body. The final decision whether to continue sixth form provision in the college has been deferred over the past two years as the college has awaited wider developments at local education authority level. On her appointment in May 2000, the headteacher quickly identified a serious problem in providing for sixth-form students. The course of GCE A-levels on offer was unsuitable for the attainment levels of many of the students who stayed on into the sixth form. Examination results were poor and Year 11 students were not receiving good, impartial advice about the next stage in their careers. The inspection of September 2000 confirmed that the sixth form was draining the resources of the college. In the twin interests of better meeting the needs of students and protecting the college's resources, the headteacher and governors have overseen the reduction of sixth form subjects offered and in doing so have shown decisive and strong leadership. Since then, the college has actively encouraged more students to seek their sixth form education at other schools and colleges locally. As a consequence, the decline in numbers that was apparent over the last ten years has continued to the present, where there are only seven students in Year 12. The number of subjects available is insufficient. The type of course available, restricted as it is to GCE A-level subjects is inappropriate for the students currently staying into the sixth form. The college has taken this action as the best means of ensuring that the needs, aspirations and interests of students are met. The students currently in Year 12, and to a lesser degree, those in Year 13 are not studying subjects or courses that best suit their needs, the latter group as a legacy of past decisions. This denies them equality of opportunity in the choices open to them. The leadership has been effective in keeping in full-time education some students who would otherwise have dropped out and it has been effective in ensuring that the large majority has found courses in other schools and colleges that suit their needs. While the course on offer is still not cost-effective, the drain on the college's resources has been reduced significantly. In these respects, leadership has been and continues to be good.

111. The sixth form provision is managed jointly by two part-time teachers. There are some inadequacies in the management of the sixth form that have a detrimental effect on the students' learning and the breadth of their experiences that deem it to be unsatisfactory overall. Year 13 students on the sports studies course make a strong contribution to sports activities within the college and local primary schools, but there are few opportunities for students on other courses to take wider responsibilities within the college. There are specific areas that require improvement. There is the need to raise attainment in GCE AS and A level examinations. The enrichment programme is too limited. There are unsatisfactory aspects in the provision of key skills. The registration procedures are unsatisfactory and there is insufficient monitoring of the excessive amount of private study time of some students. Computers for specific sixth form use have not been provided in their study area, which has constrained the development of skills of research and independent learning. The teaching of some GCE AS courses such as law and psychology, have not been closely monitored and resulted in poor results in these subjects in the examinations in 2002.



## **Resources**

112. Resources for learning, including books, equipment and materials are satisfactory overall, but are poor in history and law. The library is managed effectively on a day-to-day basis but the present lack of a specialist librarian inhibits the development of the library as a wider learning resource centre that can be used by sixth form students to enhance and extend their learning. Computers for specific sixth form use have not been provided in their study area, which has constrained the development of skills of research and independent learning. While staffing is now satisfactory overall across the very limited range of courses and subjects on offer, not all sixth form courses are staffed by experienced teachers. There have been problems in the recent past, which have plainly had an adverse effect upon students' achievement. These have been mainly resolved and students now receive satisfactory teaching overall and are achieving satisfactorily in Year 12 and well in Year 13.

113. The governors have a good understanding of the issues facing post-16 provision and are actively involved in making decisions relating to sixth form provision. There is good teaching for many of the students in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. However many students cannot follow the courses they wish to from the existing options and this has resulted in a poor retention rate. The management of the sixth form budget is sound, but the sixth form is not effective overall and is not cost effective.

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

114. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in French in Years 10 and 11 by:
  - Ensuring that all students are given more systematic help with pronunciation and sentence-building.
  - Giving students more opportunities to read and use the foreign language in lessons.
  - Preparing work that stretches and challenges the highest attainers, so that they achieve their full potential.
  - Ensuring more stable teaching provision, so that students have more continuity in their learning.(Paragraphs: 193-200, 202)
- (2) Reduce the amount of teaching by temporary staff by continuing the drive to appoint suitably qualified and experienced teachers.  
(Paragraphs: 32-34, 116, 130, 133, 134, 137, 138, 141, 142, 150, 154, 156, 164, 177, 193, 196, 197, 219)
- (3) Consolidate the good work that has started in order to stretch and challenge the higher attaining students by planning for their needs in all subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 8, 35, 47, 117, 119, 120, 133, 152, 158-162, 176-178, 183, 184, 194, 195, 198, 213, 214, 221)

## Sixth form

- (1) Raise the standards attained in GCE A-level subjects by ensuring that students achieve standards for entry into the sixth form that are high enough for them to be able to cope successfully with the demands of GCE A-level work.  
(Paragraphs: 88, 226, 232, 238, 241, 242)
- (2) Ensure that the number of subjects available is sufficient to provide opportunities for students to pursue a balanced course of GCE A-level subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 69, 110)
- (3) Ensure access to courses that produce a better match of courses to students' levels of attainment in order to meet their needs, interests and aptitudes.  
(Paragraphs: 61, 70, 227, 240-242)
- (4) Improve the management of post-16 provision by
  - Monitoring more closely the teaching and learning that is taking place in all subjects taught.  
(Paragraphs: 110, 111, 229, 236, 241)
  - Planning and teaching a broader enrichment programme to give students a wider sixth form experience outside the immediate study of their subjects.  
(Paragraph: 71)
  - Monitoring the excessive amount of private study time of some students and ensuring that it is used to good effect in raising standards.  
(Paragraph: 71)
  - Making registration procedures more rigorous so that the college knows precisely how many students are present on site in the case of an emergency.  
(Paragraph: 87)
  - Monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching by subjects in order to improve students' key skills.  
(Paragraphs: 227, 232, 234, 243, 245)
  - Improving the cost-effectiveness of sixth form provision.  
(Paragraphs: 110, 111, 113, 230)

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the college needs to:

- Attend to health and safety issues brought to the notice of the college.  
(Paragraphs: 80 )
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.  
(Paragraphs: 53)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	154
	Sixth form	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		64

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	2	38	55	49	10	0	0
Percentage	1	25	36	32	6	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	0	4	9	3	0	0	0
Percentage	0	25	56	19	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	869	44
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	127	1

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	45	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	57	3

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

<b>Student mobility in the last college year</b>	No of students
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4

Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving
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7
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## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
College data	8.9
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	1.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	91	80	171

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	64	70
	Girls	68	53	55
	Total	129	117	125
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	75 (52)	69 (65)	73 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	42 (19)	43 (43)	38 (41)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	65	74
	Girls	57	56	75
	Total	104	121	149
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	60 (54)	72 (69)	88 (90)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	30 (23)	45 (44)	35 (50)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	94	86	180

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	27	85	88
	Girls	42	82	83
	Total	69	167	171
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	38 (41)	93 (84)	95 (90)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	36.9
	National	39.0

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
<b>School</b>	Number of candidates	20	18	38
	Average point score per candidate	7.6	9.9	8.7
<b>National</b>	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
<b>School</b>	Number of candidates	20	18	38	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	7.6	9.9	8.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>National</b>	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	908	51	0
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	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	264

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.9
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	22.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2 745 034
Total expenditure	2 450 825
Expenditure per pupil	2 681
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	29 420

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	914
Number of questionnaires returned	200

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	60	11	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	32	58	7	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	56	13	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	54	19	4	5
The teaching is good.	18	69	9	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	48	18	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	48	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	43	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	48	19	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	40	49	5	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	62	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	53	5	2	10

## 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 **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards are improving: above average in Year 9 and 11 with significant proportion of students well above average.
- Students receive consistently good teaching: often very good.
- Students demonstrate positive attitudes and are keen to learn.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership and management.

#### What could be improved

- There is some inconsistency in certain aspects of teaching such as questioning techniques
- Examination results in GCSE need to be raised to match the improvements in the end of Year 9 national tests.

115. The teaching of English has been transformed since the last inspection. Standards are now clearly above average with a significant proportion of students in Years 9 and 11 well above average. Teaching is consistently good or better. The leadership and management of the subject – both at departmental and senior management levels – are very good. The department has been a principal player in the college's attempt to improve learning and drive up standards.

116. In the 2001, Year 9 national tests results were above average: a significant improvement on the below average results of 2000 and the average results of 1999. Results were well above average in comparison with students from similar schools. There were no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Results were higher than those in mathematics and science. Following some staffing disruption there was a small fall in the proportions at both Levels 5 and 6 in 2002.

117. In the 2001 GCSE English examination, results were average compared to all and to similar schools. Even so, more students attained grades A\*-C than the students' end of Year 9 standards had indicated. In English literature the proportion at grade C or higher was average. However, the college entered significantly more of its students for the examination than most schools. Students did better in literature than in most of their other subjects, especially the girls who significantly outperformed girls nationally. Students achieved better results in English than in mathematics and science. Staffing disruption was a major factor in a fall in results for both subjects in 2002. However, the proportion achieving grades A\*/A in literature from a very high entry was twice the usual national figure. This represents outstanding achievement from higher attaining students.

118. In the work seen in the inspection, standards are above average in Year 9 and very close to well above average. From a typically average starting point this represents good achievement with a number achieving very well. About three out of every four students have acquired the standards of written accuracy and organisation associated with Level 5 or higher. More than four out of ten have acquired the standards associated with Level 6, especially in their engaging use of vocabulary and phrasing in a range of writing. Well above average standards of reading and writing were to the fore when students closely identified how Laurie Lee created a sense of place and mood. These students effectively used higher

order reading skills to annotate examples of rhetoric and persuasive language in speeches by Churchill, Pankhurst, King and Mandela. Middle attaining students, as a result of a very well structured approach to teaching and learning, successfully developed their understanding and use of persuasive advertising techniques. The closing activity showed secure retention and understanding of the lesson's objectives. About one in four are below average in writing but very few well below. These students, including some with special educational needs, are making good progress in improving their literacy skills. When given time and guidance they write clearly and attempt to organise their work into paragraphs. In all lessons observed, standards of speaking and listening were above average, for example within three minutes of the start their lesson all ten students in a lower attaining group had made clear, coherent responses to the teacher's probing questions.

119. In Year 11, standards are above average and students are achieving well. About six out of ten students write and read with the levels associated with grade C or higher. About four out of ten are at grades A\*-B. The best work of these students is typified by powerful writing. One student's essay on the impact of love and fate in 'Romeo and Juliet' was notable for its consistent evaluation of the text and included many clear explanations of the impact of language, such as the evil connotations of Tybalt's vocabulary. Middle attaining students write accurately in the main with strengths in overall organisation. The style of some is more pedestrian and lacks the variety of higher attainers. They include a lot of detail in their literature course work but do not always make its relevance to the assignment clear. Some of these students are not reaching C grade in their response to non-fiction writing, especially when required to give detailed comparisons of language strategies. Some do not reach C grade standards because of lapses in punctuation and spelling. A few students are below average with a very small proportion well below average. Although they have clear and valid opinions about texts such as 'Boys from the Blackstuff' they do not consistently support their opinions. But many, including those with special educational needs, make good progress: they enter both English and literature examination successfully and improvements in accuracy lift their work to a below average level. As in Year 9, standards of speaking and listening are above average. Very high standards of discussion were clearly attained when a higher set discussed where responsibility lay in 'An Inspector Calls'.

120. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching was good in all but two lessons observed and frequently better and this resulted in good learning. Teachers have very good subject expertise. Consequently they know precisely the skills the students need to learn and develop. Planning is a major strength leading to methods, learning tasks and resources that closely match learning objectives. The accurate pitching of tasks and concepts to the learning needs in different ability groups is a consistent strength. A higher attaining group of Year 10 students gave an excellent response to an exciting discussion activity when predicting events in 'Lord of the Flies'. High expectations were evident when a student took her turn in giving a short presentation on a theme of the text. Such challenging teaching is evident in the good progress made by gifted and talented students. A Year 11 middle ability group, writing about a colliery disaster, benefited from the teacher's very good preparation of computer software resources to support their use of different types of appropriate vocabulary and phrases. Teachers have responded vigorously to the college's attempt to establish a consistent three part lesson format with development supported by clear learning objectives and closing plenary sessions. They have also interwoven aspects of the National Literacy Strategy, making explicit what students have to do, why and how. Good teaching helped Year 10 middle set students make good progress in their skim and scan reading of chapters in 'Of Mice and Men' to compare aspects of the characters of George and Curly. Lessons are consistently busy with a clear sense of purpose and a good learning atmosphere. Students work hard, analyse texts and ideas and make strong progress. Because the use of levels and grades in marking is closely related to learning targets, students have a clear knowledge of their standards, targets and how to attain their targets.

121. There are some areas that need development to improve learning further. One lesson lacked the required pace, drive and expectation. Sometimes there is confusion between a learning objective and a task and students are not clear about the purpose of the activities. Some marking, especially in Years 7 to 9, does not specify sufficiently what the students have done well. Occasionally, questioning techniques are not probing. The conduct of whole class question and answer sessions does not always ensure that students have enough chance to respond to each other's ideas.

122. The students' attitudes and behaviour are good and often very good and this promotes the good learning that takes place. The emphasis on personal development issues in the texts engages their interest and enforces their sense of English as having relevance to their lives. They respond to the excellent example set by their teachers whose enthusiasm, enjoyment and 'can do' approach has a major impact on the good working atmosphere in lessons.

123. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Senior management set the lead in stressing the need to improve teaching and learning. Staffing levels allow smaller teaching groups and more individual attention especially in middle and lower groups. The head of department leads from the front and takes her colleagues with her. There is a consistency of approach rarely observed elsewhere. Schemes of work have been rewritten with the emphasis clearly on how teaching will enhance learning and standards. The use of assessment for enhancing learning has also developed. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored well. The subject's performance is measured against external standards. Assessment information has led to changes in curriculum to target areas for development. This is a strong self-evaluating department, which is concerned to improve standards and to ensure the current levels attained in Years 11 are reflected in examination results.

***Key Skills: literacy***

124. The overall direction of a whole-college approach to the development of literacy is well coordinated by the literacy coordinator. In post for just over a year, she convenes a steering group with representatives from each subject. A draft policy clarifies principles but also provides specific advice to teachers on how to develop literacy. Initially, the main focus has been on developing key vocabulary and on structuring non-fiction writing. Further plans include attention to the development and application of reading and research skills: an appropriate target. The inspection confirmed this aspect of literacy to be relatively neglected.

125. Overall provision is good despite some unevenness between subjects. The very good literacy provision in English impacts well on all students. Adopting good practice from the National Literacy Strategy such as the three-part lesson structure, clear learning objectives and good demonstration of the skills the students need to develop, the department's teaching effectively supports the students in improving all aspects of their literacy. Good provision also comes from the special educational needs staff for those students who start college with well below average standards. Those students whose standards are below average benefit from the English department's 'catch up' courses adapted from the National Literacy Strategy.

126. Many departments use effective methods to develop the students' use of key vocabulary and thus enhance their understanding of the subject's concepts. Provision for this is very good in ICT. Not only are technical terms prominently displayed and used, they are supported by other helpful vocabulary such as examples of connective phrases and how to write evaluatively or reflectively. The use of a sophisticated 'word bar' package also enhances use and understanding of vocabulary. It supported Year 11 English students well in their writing about a colliery disaster. The very good practice in ICT serves as a blueprint for other subjects. Other good practice was observed in physical education, music, science, art and

design, design and technology and religious education. A sharp focus on the power of words led to very effective understanding of the nature of tolerance and intolerance in a Year 9 religious education lesson. Elsewhere, the development of vocabulary is satisfactory.

127. Although there was evidence of some subjects, for example art and design, geography, music, expecting the students to use reading skills to research independently this was not a prominent feature. There is some very good practice in ICT and religious education. In ICT students are often required to skim a text and then scan for specific and relevant information. In religious education, students frequently skim and scan texts, analyse, use indexing skills, match opposite opinions and evaluate the material and opinions they encounter. Very good application of these higher order reading skills were frequently seen in English. Year 9 students analysed an item of persuasive writing closely to identify specific features of the genre. Overall, however, these good approaches to reading are not used enough in a number of subjects.

128. The use of specific methods to improve writing is good in science, art and design, geography, religious education and ICT. The systematic development of writing skills in ICT is a significant strength. There is a good emphasis on how to structure an assignment and also on the importance of accurate spelling and punctuation. In religious education, teachers support the students well in structuring their writing and in marking spelling and punctuation. Overall, the college's attention to supporting writing is having a good impact but will require sustaining. In some subjects such as music and business studies more emphasis needs to be given to longer written responses.

### ***Drama***

129. In the 2001 GCSE drama examination the proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C was above average, even though the entry rate was twice the usual national average. In 2002 there was a fall in the proportion at C or higher. Current standards in Year 11 are above average. One Year 11 drama lesson was observed. Very good teaching combined with very good students' attitudes contributed to the above average standards and some very good learning. Students have a secure grasp of dramatic conventions such as thought tracking. By the end of the lesson they had clearly made gains in knowing how to portray dramatic tension. A strength of the teaching was the finely judged balance between allowing the students to explore their own ideas and giving them specialist advice. The students' attitudes and behaviour were very good. Both boys and girls enjoyed the lesson and are clearly on track to achieve their targets.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- There is very good leadership and management, especially in monitoring and developing teaching and learning in the department.
- Results are improving in the end of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of students create a good atmosphere for learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The achievement of students taught by temporary teachers does not match the achievement of others.
- The specific reviewing of the subject's performance in relation to national standards and standards in other subjects in the college is not sufficiently developed.
- Strategies for developing students' literacy skills through mathematics need improvement.

130. When students enter the college their overall standards in mathematics are average. Current standards are broadly average in Years 9 and 11. The effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the positive attitudes of students are helping them make satisfactory progress as they move through the college. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall although some students do not achieve as well as others, where they receive inconsistent teaching from temporary staff.

131. In the 2001 national tests for fourteen-year olds, standards were average, matching those of the previous year when a significant increase was made. The average points score was in line with the average for all schools and was above average for similar schools. The results of girls were closer to those of girls nationally than the boys' results were in relation to boys nationally. Results were not as good as those in either science or English. Results in 2002 fell back slightly.

132. In the 2001 GCSE mathematics examination, the proportion attaining grades A\*-C was below average for all schools and for similar schools. The proportion attaining grades A\*-G was above the national average. The overall average grade was as expected given the students' earlier test results. This represents satisfactory achievement. Students did not do as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Girls did slightly better than boys, but not significantly so. Results in mathematics were not as good as those in English and science. Results have continued to rise since the last inspection. In 2002 they showed a significant improvement: the proportion of A\*-C grades increased by ten per cent.

133. Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are broadly average. Standards for highest attaining students are above average. Students enter the college with broadly average standards. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although not all students are achieving as well as they should, most particularly where they are taught by temporary staff. Students' numeracy standards are average. Most students handle numbers mentally with confidence. Middle attaining students in Year 9 can recall squares, cubes and square roots of whole numbers accurately. However, lower attaining students still have difficulty recalling tables. Algebraic skills are not as well developed. In Year 8, middle attaining students find solving equations difficult. Students handle data well. They calculate averages and draw accurate graphs. Higher attaining students in Year 8 understand well about different kinds of angles and triangles. In a Year 9 lesson on Pythagoras' Theorem, higher attaining students developed well their understanding of calculating the lengths of sides in right-angled triangles.

Problem solving skills are developing well. In their investigations, students find patterns, establish rules and use formulae successfully.

134. In Year 11 standards are average. More consistent teaching has helped Year 11 students to achieve standards higher than those achieved in previous GCSE examinations. Work by the highest attaining Year 11 students is above average. Overall students' achievement is satisfactory. Again, students taught by temporary teachers are not achieving as well as others. Algebraic skills are still not well developed for many students. Although higher attaining students solve quadratic equations graphically most others find solving simple equations difficult. Year 10 students understand the difference between experimental and theoretical probability. Most students handle numbers confidently although lower attaining students are still unsure about using positive and negative numbers. Problem solving skills in GCSE coursework are average with students able to successfully find rules, use formulae and predict and test results.

135. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and results in satisfactory learning. Teaching by permanent teachers is often good or very good. During the inspection three temporary teachers were covering for absent teachers. Teaching and learning here was often unsatisfactory. Where teaching is most effective, students make good progress and are achieving well. In Years 7 to 9, the introduction of the numeracy strategy has had a strong positive impact on students' learning. The teachers' good planning means that the lesson activities effectively focus on the learning objectives. They make good use of starter activities at the beginning of lessons to develop students' mental skills, review knowledge and introduce new topics. As a result, there is a consistency to these lessons and students learn effectively. In a Year 8 lesson, a game of noughts and crosses was used very well to get students to recall facts learnt in the previous lesson about angles. The review time at the end of lessons is used well to ensure that students think about and reinforce what they have learnt. In a Year 10 lesson, students were asked to discuss and write down two things they had learnt in the lesson and this was very effective in reinforcing and consolidating the learning that had taken place.

136. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures they are able to explain skills and concepts clearly. A good knowledge of GCSE syllabus requirements ensures students are well-prepared. Good links are made between lessons, and activities meet the needs of all students. A range of challenging activities, including practical activities, is used to help students learn effectively and enjoyably. This ensures that gifted students, and others with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress. For example, middle attaining students were asked to use their knowledge of 'Pythagoras' Theorem' to identify 'Pythagorean Triples'. The management of students' behaviour is good. As a result students listen well, concentrate on their tasks and cooperate well with each other during group activities. This ensures a good learning atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers use overhead projectors well to generate a good pace to lessons and develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding. Homework is used effectively to support students' learning. Students' ICT skills are developed well. Although key words associated with mathematics are displayed in some classrooms they are not being used effectively enough. Teachers' are not referring to them often enough during discussion or insisting that students use them during oral responses. Where teaching is least effective, good classroom management is lacking. Here, the pace of lessons is slow, students are not stretched and challenged and they do not do enough work. Marking is not regular or focussed on improvement. As a result students do not achieve well enough.

137. Overall attitudes are good. Students' behaviour is usually good. Work is presented well. Some students, however, are not cooperating well enough with temporary teachers. When working together students cooperate well.

138. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has moved the subject forward despite regular staff absence and considerable difficulty in recruiting suitable temporary teachers. Considerable energy is directed to help temporary staff, but the impact of this is lost because of the high turnover of such staff. A clear direction has been given for the development of the subject. Teachers share good practice and work well together to raise standards. There is a well-established formal system for monitoring teaching and learning. The department has worked very hard to implement the numeracy strategy. It is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching, learning and the achievement of students. Very good schemes of work are being developed to match the needs of different groups of students and to incorporate the new numeracy strategy. Arrangements for assessing students' attainment are good. Targets are set and students' progress towards those targets is monitored. A very good record of students' progress is being developed. However, the results from external tests and examinations are not used well enough to monitor the subjects' performance against national criteria or other subjects in the college. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Standards in national tests have improved. Teachers' planning is now good. Better use is made of the available resources. The accommodation now includes good displays of information and students' work.

**Key skills: numeracy**

139. A whole school policy to guide the development of students' numeracy skills has been introduced. The college has provided good training opportunities for teachers and most subjects make a satisfactory contribution. However, the policy has been introduced recently and there is a lack of consistency in the contribution made by all subjects.

140. The standard of numeracy is average. In science, students make good use of graphs to display results of experiments and demonstrate confident use of measuring apparatus. In biology, for example, higher attaining students can analyse genetic crosses and predict possible outcomes. In design and technology, students measure lengths and weights accurately in practical work. In geography, students use coordinates confidently in map work and produce accurate graphs. In ICT, contributions to numeracy are well planned. Students used formulae well in work using spreadsheets. In music many lessons begin with a number activity that help to reinforce numeracy skills.

**SCIENCE**

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

**Strengths**

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- The very good use of assessment in setting targets, and the good marking policy are effective in helping students to learn.
- The good curriculum choice in Years 10 and 11 meets the different needs of students.

**Areas for improvement**

- The provision of more ICT hardware in the laboratory areas to support investigative work.
- The sharing of best practices within the department, to further assist the raising of standards.
- The provision of a structured homework timetable to balance students' workload.

141. When students enter the college, their levels of attainment in science are close to the national average. In work seen in the inspection, levels of attainment are above the national average at the end of Year 9. Among the current group, standards are close to the national average in Year 11. By the end of Year 9, supported by good teaching, and very good



teaching in Year 8, students achieved well. The achievement of students in Year 11 is satisfactory, when account is taken of their starting points in Year 7. A very unstable staffing situation and a period of disruption during refurbishment since the last inspection, have had an adverse effect on standards. The situation is now improved. Students are learning well in response to the overall good teaching that takes place, and their very positive attitudes and good behaviour have a significant impact on their improving level of achievement.

142. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests, the average points score in science was above the national average, when compared to all schools, and when compared to similar schools. Within the college, the average points score was better than that for mathematics, but not as good as that for English. Since 1997, the trend in average National Curriculum points has been above the national trend. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests, the results show a decrease in the average points score. Higher attaining students are entered for three separate science GCSE examinations, biology, chemistry and physics. All other students in the year group are entered for GCSE double award science. This is reflected in the 2001 GCSE double award examination where the percentage of students gaining A\*-C was below the national average and those gaining A\*-G was above the national average. Girls outperformed boys. In 2002, there is a slight increase in the percentage of students achieving A\*-C in all science subjects. Students achieve very well in chemistry and biology and well in physics.

143. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are above the national average at the end of Year 9. Year 7 students learn, after their initial attempts, the need for care, patience and accuracy as they determine the point of neutralisation of an acid and alkali, using universal indicators and burettes. They are able to observe yeast cells using a microscope, and have an understanding of cell division. Higher attaining Year 8 students assisted by very good teaching, use role-play to help their learning. They make good and detailed presentations to the remainder of the class, of their understanding of the workings of the liver, pancreas and nutrients, within the digestive system, based on their individual research. In an ICT cross-curricular lesson, students constructed tables within a database to provide information to be used in a later science nutrition lesson. By the time students are in Year 9, their application and the knowledge and understanding they have acquired are above average. For example middle attaining students can employ a range of experiments to determine speed by recording distance and time. Lower attaining students, using globe and video support, understand the workings of artificial satellites.

144. Students in Year 11 are broadly in line with the national average. Good teaching, by a now stable staff, with regular marking and support, has assisted Year 11 students in achieving day-to-day work standards higher than those achieved in previous external examinations. Lower attaining Year 10 students are able to unscramble key words, match them to definitions and then sequence the digestion process, reflecting good learning in the lesson. They understand the terminology of concept maps and are able to use word pairs as they link statements related to the uses of limestone. Higher attaining Year 11 chemistry students, challenged by their teacher, understand conductivity, and using correct scientific terminology can describe the differences between ionic and covalent properties. Biology students can describe the symptoms of a genetic disorder, such as cystic fibrosis, and analysing genetic crosses, can predict and determine the ratio of possible outcomes. Lower attaining students know the differences between sexual and asexual reproduction. Students with special educational needs make good progress and clearly benefit from setting arrangements, appropriate levels of work, worksheet, and support. There are weaknesses in the work of some students that lead to below average standards, seen particularly in the presentation of their work. There is, for example, wide variation in standards of handwriting, pencil sometimes being used, the drawing of diagrams, ink used on occasions, with poor labelling, and graph work not always fully completed.

145. Teaching is good. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and is very good in Year 8. Teaching in two lessons in three in Years 10 and 11 is good and satisfactory in all but one of the rest. The high quality of teaching, with well-prepared, and organised, lessons, has a positive impact on students' learning. The good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has a reduced impact compared to the same quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 because the older students still retain a legacy of unsatisfactory teaching provision in their earlier years in the college. A now stable, committed, well-balanced staff of eight teachers with a range of experience has good subject knowledge and between them ensure better learning is now taking place. Since the last inspection there has been emphasis on improved teaching and learning using new schemes of work. There has been increased lesson observation and monitoring within the department, with an emphasis on improving students' learning. As a result of sharing the best practice within the department, teaching quality has improved and students are learning more effectively. As a result, lesson objectives are well-planned to give positive support to students' learning. Using appropriate teaching material and methods, for example, the first letter of key words in a competitive game of noughts and crosses helped to consolidate learning at the end of a lesson. Assessment procedures are very good. Students are aware of their National Curriculum targets, and these are indicated in their exercise books. Teachers' marking is regular, and is based on constructive written comment, with guidance for improvement. National Curriculum levels are often indicated on work to keep students' learning on track. Using good relationships, teachers challenge and have high expectations of students, in particular the lowest attainers in Year 10 and 11 and this too, leads to good learning.

146. Grouping students by ability, and the teaching of biology, chemistry and physics as separate sciences in Years 10 and 11, provide good opportunities to extend and challenge the thinking skills of the gifted and talented and most able students and ensure that they make satisfactory progress. In the mixed ability groups in Year 7, the needs of individual students with special educational requirements are known, and well supported by the teacher. Learning support assistance, where provided, and the assistance given by a student teacher attached to the department, is of good quality, but the standard of presentation and organisation of work by students with special educational needs is of variable standard. Throughout the years, appropriate homework is set. However, there is not a structured homework timetable and this does lead to an unbalanced workload for students. The teaching and application of literacy and numeracy skills are well developed. Wall displays illustrate the regular use of ICT and the Internet by students. It is unsatisfactory, that because of a lack of sufficient ICT hardware within the laboratory areas, that practical equipment, and liquids, have to be transported and used in computer suites elsewhere in the college, in order to perform investigative work. Two full-time technicians give good support to teachers and efficiently manage the department's equipment.

147. Standards of behaviour are good overall. Attitudes and behaviour are never less than satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Attitudes are mainly very good in Year 8. In Years 10 and 11 attitudes are mainly good. The positive attitudes and good behaviour of students are central to the good learning atmosphere created by teachers. Students arrive punctually at their lessons, generally settle quickly, mainly show interest in their work, and keep on task. Relationships between students, and teachers and students, are good. Students enjoy science.

148. The good leadership of the department, the commitment of all the teachers to raising standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are strengths of the department. The monitoring of performance, teaching and learning within the department is good. All staff within the department share key responsibilities. Links with the primary sector have strengthened since the recent delegation of Key Stage 3 co-ordination in the department.

Standards of accommodation in the science suite vary. Two recently created laboratories in the suite are good, but other laboratories require refurbishment and an increase of display area, in order to provide a good learning environment. There has been a good response to the issues raised at the last inspection and a good level of improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is now good; teachers come to lessons well-prepared and plan well.
- Learning is good in response to good teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Class sizes are too large for the available studio space.
- The current curriculum is narrow and provides little opportunity for design work incorporating ICT and photography.
- More effective use of assessment information to set targets for individual students.
- The attainment of boys needs to be raised.
- Make more effective use of homework to extend learning.

149. Students enter the college in Year 7 with a level of attainment in art and design that is well below the national average. By the end of Year 9, attainment is broadly in line with the national average because students make good progress and achieve well. In Years 10 and 11, the current group of students are making satisfactory progress. Relationships between teachers and students are very good from Year 7 through to Year 11. Students respond positively to the tasks that are set and behaviour in lessons is good. Students with special educational needs are integrated well into all teaching groups and they rise to the expectation to work hard to reach their full potential.

150. In the 2001 GCSE art and design examination, students' results were well below the national average. The number of girls who achieved the highest grades of A\* to C was just below the national average. Boys' attainment however, was well below average. Overall, students performed less well in art and design in the college than in the other subjects that they took. Over the past two years serious staffing issues relating to the management of the department have had a negative impact on students' attainment. During the inspection it was apparent that most of these issues have been resolved with the appointment of a new head of department. She has made a good start since the start of the term by replacing unsatisfactory practices and procedures with fresh thinking, for example on matters relating to assessment and recording of students' performance.

151. In Years 7 to 11 standards are now broadly average. Work seen during the inspection demonstrates that the standard is currently higher than recent examination results. This is due mainly to the recent appointment of a new subject leader and to greater stability in the teaching team. There is now good achievement from Year 7 through to Year 9. As a result of good teaching, students in Year 9 are achieving well in relation to their starting point in Year 7. There is also real improvement in Years 10 and 11 as students gain in confidence and show that they are acquiring the capacity to work with much greater independence and to think and to learn for themselves.

152. In Year 7, students respond positively to the set tasks. Although they work well to develop and improve their painting skills most continue to find this a very challenging

experience. They remain very keen however, and apply themselves readily to the task of using different materials. Most are heavily reliant on their teacher at this stage and very few demonstrate that they are capable of thinking and learning for themselves. Girls work with much greater application and concentration than boys. By Year 8 most students show interest in acquiring new knowledge and understanding of colour and how it can be used to create mood in paintings. They are developing an awareness of the power of art and design to communicate ideas and express feelings. They are also developing a deeper awareness of the broader context of art and design by exploring the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky and other artists. The highest attaining students are beginning to demonstrate their capacity to work independently, and to think and learn for themselves. By Year 9, most students produce two-dimensional drawn studies that are broadly in line with national expectations. However the lowest attaining students continue to struggle to gain control over basic drawing and painting techniques. The majority experience some degree of difficulty in analysing and commenting on their own drawings and paintings and on the work of other artists. Literacy skills are extended in the good levels of discussions between teachers and students during lessons. Students are also encouraged to include written comments with their own two-dimensional studies in their visual diaries.

153. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10, they work with dry media such as pencils, coloured pencils, chalk and charcoal. This is mainly due to restrictions imposed by class sizes that are often too large for the available studio space, which results in three or four students having to work at the same table. Most work reasonably well however, even under these cramped conditions, to acquire new knowledge, understanding and appropriate skills. By this stage many are capable of carrying out research into a wide range of art historical sources such as the paintings of Picasso, Jan Van Eyck and Henri Matisse to gather information that they will later use to inform their own work. By the time that students reach Year 11, their working pattern is largely determined by the GCSE examination specifications. Most are capable of conducting independent research away from college and of collecting and storing information in their visual diaries. At present however, they are obliged to work within a rather narrow model of the curriculum that places undue emphasis on drawing and painting. There was no evidence of any use of modern technology in the form of photography or of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers as means of generating images.

154. Teaching is now good overall, from Year 7 through to Year 11. Teachers come to lessons well prepared and planning is good. Students are managed well during lessons and all students, including students with special educational needs are expected to work to the best of their ability. As a result of these good teaching practices, students learn well. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory rather than good because they have some ground to make up as a result of the turbulence in teaching provision in their earlier years. Good use is made of the very limited range of media and materials, equipment and resources that are currently available. Introductions to lesson however, could be made much livelier by making much more creative use of video cassettes, slide strips, CD-ROMS, all of which could be used to provide stimulating visual material for students. The setting and marking of homework is unsatisfactory at present but this too is under review by the newly appointed head of department. In the recent past too little use was made of assessment information to inform target-setting for individual students.

155. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Over the past two years there have been significant issues that have led to unsatisfactory features in the leadership and staffing of the department. These have had a negative impact on both teaching and learning. However, staffing issues have been resolved and a new head of department has been appointed. Already new assessing, recording and tracking procedures have been devised and put in place. There is a recognition that the current curriculum is too

narrow and that there is a need for more design work involving photography and ICT within a more vocational, work-related context. Accommodation is barely satisfactory and there are issues surrounding class sizes and available studio space. Resources are just adequate and students have limited access to the wide range of media and materials that are essential if they are to develop and extend their technical skills in art and design.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good; teachers have good subject knowledge and they are committed to improving standards.
- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well.
- The successful emphasis on the development of good graphic skills from Years 7 to 11.
- Teaching and learning within textiles is of a consistently high quality.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of students, particularly the higher attainers and especially boys in Years 10 and 11.
- The consolidation of the assessment system in Years 7 to 9 and using it set targets to raise levels of achievement.
- The accommodation, especially within the resistant materials and graphics areas, in order to provide equal provision for all students within design and technology.

156. Students enter the college with standards below average and by the end of Year 9 they are in line with the national average. Students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points. At the end of Year 11, students' attainment is in line with what is found nationally. However, recent examination results have, overall, been below the national average. This was partially due to staffing and curriculum problems, which have now been resolved. The quality of teaching and learning is overall good and this is a direct result of the senior management's priority in developing and improving good teaching and learning styles in the college.

157. In 2001, the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A\*-C was below the national average. The overall results were below the college average for grades A\*-C but not significantly below the national average. Results in textiles were well above average, in graphics they were in line with the average. In food and child development, results were below average and in resistant materials and electronics were well below average. Results in 2002 were similar to those of 2001 Girls' results were in line with the national average in 2001 but those of boys were well below. Nearly half the grades in 2001 were D grades.

158. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the national average. The teachers' assessments of design and technology in 2001 are similar to the national average. Inspection evidence shows the students are making good progress as a result of good teaching and planning for progression through interesting projects in a range of materials. However, the high attainers and the gifted and talented students are sometimes restricted in developing higher order skills by the nature of the task and the planning booklets. The emphasis on the development of quality designing skills starting in Year 7 is having an impact on the overall quality of designing. Students with special educational needs often find designing difficult but are able to explain how to make, for example, a lap-joint in wood in resistant materials. In Years 8 and 9, the higher ability and gifted and talented boys are not sufficiently focused on producing work of a high quality and are therefore underachieving. The achievements of girls are nearly always higher than those of boys other than in graphics. In

all teachers' planning, technical terminology is emphasised and used effectively in lessons to develop students' literacy skills and understanding of industrial practices. A numeracy planning sheet has identified areas to be covered within the subject and there is evidence of accurate measurements within the manufacture of products. Although planning for the use of ICT is evident within the schemes of work, until recently facilities have been limited and students use home computers for word processing and research on the Internet. Funding is now available for the department to set up and teach the control aspect of the National Curriculum for ICT.

159. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are higher than recent results in GCSE and are in line with the national average. This is because recent staffing difficulties have been resolved and the balance of the curriculum has been improved. In textiles, food and graphics the standard is higher and, although engineering has only been introduced this year, the interest and enthusiasm displayed by the students indicates good capacity for them to achieve well. Students are successfully transferring their designing skills, especially in graphics, and are producing some quality design ideas for the promotion of new mobile phones, pagers and computer mice. The gifted and talented and high attainers within the graphics group are very good at presenting a range of graphical ideas. The focus on how work is assessed for the textile projects is given a high priority and students are made fully aware, via sample projects, of what is required of them in order to gain a high grade. Some boys as well as girls are doing particularly well in food technology in Year 11 and are able to comprehensively evaluate and modify their products. Subject knowledge and the understanding of manufacturing processes are less well developed.

160. Through Years 7 to 9, progress and achievement are good because teachers have successfully put into practice their training to improve teaching and learning styles. Students in Years 10 and 11 have yet to benefit fully from the teachers' training and are making satisfactory progress in most areas. The highest attainers and those identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, but good progress in Years 10 and 11 as they respond to more closely focused teaching. Boys who take the resistant materials course are not always fully aware of how their project work is to be assessed and to what depth their research influences their final ideas. Students taking child development are recognising that some aspects of the subject are difficult to understand, for example terminology of the anatomy and some do not always show good powers of concentration. The progress and achievement of students taking textiles are very good. Students are encouraged to develop good research skills, which benefit the development of their projects as seen in Year 11 students' work on Mexican ideas. The interesting range of projects within the food course gives students the scope to explore individual areas of interest, for example, special diets for athletes or preparing multicultural dishes. Students with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when they receive extra support from assistants in the classroom.

161. Overall the quality of teaching is good and results in good learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, the teachers are limiting individual creativity by not providing appropriate extension work or space within the course booklets for the development of a range of ideas. This was observed in a Year 9 group of high attaining students in graphics. Here, students were encouraged to produce high quality work on storage units, but were given too much guidance. However, the support material provided within project booklets in Years 7 to 9 is often a very helpful guide for lower and middle ability students. Some of the support material, particularly on information about materials, is too complicated for the lower ability and students with special educational needs to comprehend.

162. Good and very good teaching is well planned, well paced and teachers' expectations are high. They set relevant homework, which extends and consolidates classroom learning.

Most tasks are challenging, but timescales for completion are not always shared with the students. In the lessons observed, the teachers used a range of starter activities to focus on and reinforce previous knowledge prior to introducing the objectives of the current lessons. For example in a food lesson in Year 9, the teacher used a word-search to identify the different human senses, prior to a successful lesson on sensory analysis of a food product. Group work and individual research are managed very successfully in many lessons and most students are encouraged to share ideas and contribute to discussions. This leads to good learning. Throughout the lessons the teachers' own subject knowledge and expertise contribute to the students' level of understanding and achievement and the quality of their learning. Teachers regularly mark work but specific areas for improvement are not always identified clearly enough. Target setting, particularly in reports, is also not clearly focused. Currently the high achievers and gifted and talented are not being challenged sufficiently though in a Year 9 graphics lesson their knowledge and understanding were challenged in a review at the end of the lesson. Safety and hygiene are given high priority in lessons, particularly in practical lessons.

163. Students' attitudes to design and technology are good throughout the college. The majority of students enjoy their work and are keen and interested to learn and very few are observed off task. Behaviour is nearly always good except where work is too difficult to comprehend or the pace of the lesson is slower. Relationships within the classes are good and teachers use humour well to develop mutual respect.

164. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. The head of faculty has been in post since September and has already made improvements in the management of the subject. She has prioritised within the department development plan the key areas for improvement and has already begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. A co-ordinated assessment scheme has been introduced in an effort to target the improvement of students' work. An analysis of the recent dip in examination results has helped to establish strategies for the improvement of students' examination performance. The former staffing problems have been resolved and courses are designed to utilise the expertise of the teachers and resources available. Although there has been an improvement in resources over the last two years, the effects of under-resourcing in recent years has meant that equipment has not been replaced and there are very few sets of appropriate textbooks available for the students. The library resources are also inadequate. Although some improvement has been made in accommodation since the previous inspection the overall accommodation is unsatisfactory. A full time technician is now in post and his contribution to the smooth running of all areas is highly valued. The identified weaknesses of the previous report have, in the main, been tackled apart from the improvement in accommodation. The new assessment system, including the assessment of students in Year 7 is beginning to tackle the need to produce more focused targets to help to improve standards of work for all ages. Overall, there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress because of good teaching.
- There is good leadership with a commitment to raising standards.
- Students have positive attitudes because of good teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Make better use of assessment information to track students' progress and to set targets.
- Increase the pace and quality of students' learning in some lessons.

165. Students' attainment is average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievement in relation to their previous learning is good. The quality of teaching in geography is good in most lessons. This is a major factor in promoting good learning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

166. GCSE results at grades A\*-C in 2001 were below average when compared with national figures. The proportion of students reaching these higher grades has risen slightly over the previous three years. In 2002 the proportion of students reaching the higher grades fell but they achieved better results than their previous attainment indicated. Girls' results at these higher grades are better than boys. However the proportion of students reaching A\*-G was above average in 2001. In 2002 all students achieved an A\*-G grade. Students are well prepared for the examinations. Especially strong is the support their teachers provide to improve students' individual studies. This is a major reason for the reduction in the number of un-graded results.

167. The overall standard of work of students in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection is average. When teachers assessed work at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of students reaching Level 5 and above was just below the national average. Previous years' assessments show a similar pattern. Students enter the college with below average attainment in geography. Because of individual support from their teachers and work that is matched to their needs, students make good progress. Girls reach higher standards than boys.

168. Students in Years 7 to 9 develop a good understanding of geographical skills, concepts and the ways in which physical and human factors influence economic activity. For example, most students in Year 9 have a good understanding of why Spain has become a major tourist centre. Using Benidorm as an example, all students, including those with special educational needs can describe the effects of tourism on this resort. Higher attaining students can explain why the number of tourists visiting Benidorm has varied since the 1960s. Students are able to transfer the concepts they gained in studying tourism in Spain to other areas. Higher attaining students can explain why Paris was chosen as the location for Euro Disney. Lower attaining students show good mapping skills in the production of a statistical map to show the areas from which Blackpool draws its visitors. However they cannot draw conclusions about the patterns that are shown on the map whereas the higher attaining students can describe and explain these. In Year 8, most students understand the meaning of renewable and non-renewable resources. Students of average attainment could not relate the main energy producers and consumers to their locations in the world. Written work is completed diligently and is well presented. Lower attaining students write only brief accounts and their spelling is often inaccurate. Higher attaining students' writing is much more extensive and detailed. Most students in Year 7 do



not have a good knowledge of the location of continents and oceans. Higher attaining students know these and can accurately locate the major rivers and the larger countries.

169. The overall standard of work of students in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection is average. Students in Years 10 and 11 had below average attainment in geography at the end of Year 9, therefore they are achieving well in response to the good teaching they now receive. Students with special educational needs also make good progress because of the active support from their teachers and support staff. Recent improvement in the consistency of teaching by geography specialists is a major reason for the good progress made by students and the higher standard of work seen compared to recent GCSE results. Overall, girls' work is of a higher standard than that of the boys. The standard of presentation in students' individual study is uniformly good, and students are conscientious in amassing the data required in order to test their hypothesis concerning tourism in Durham City. Students use a variety of graphs to represent their data and higher attaining students are very perceptive in the evaluation of their methods and results. Good use is made of ICT by most students in word-processing their work, when drawing graphs and in using the Internet for research. Higher attaining students show initiative in the development of their individual studies. Their ICT skills are good as they are able to use a variety of software to analyse and display their work to an above average standard. Presentation skills are well developed in lower attaining students who take considerable pride in their individual studies. However their analysis of the data they have collected is often brief and undeveloped. Study skills continue to develop well. Students demonstrate the ability to write accurate notes and to identify key ideas and vocabulary. Students in Year 10 show a good understanding of the effects of earthquakes on cities but only the higher attaining students could accurately locate the main earthquake belts.

170. The quality of teaching is good and this results in good learning and consistently good achievement by students. In the best lessons, teachers communicate an enthusiasm for their subject, plan effectively to meet the objectives for the lesson and students' needs. As a result, the progress made by students is good. These lessons, which move on at a good pace, are often broken down into a number of short varied activities, which enable students of all levels of attainment to learn well. A Year 9 lesson, for example, began with a short starter activity that reinforced and extended students' knowledge of the location of theme parks in England. Students then worked in groups to draw a map from memory that they had been shown. This involved all students and they responded enthusiastically. Skilled questioning then enabled students to understand the advantages that Paris had as a site for building Euro Disney. A good summary at the end of the lesson, which again involved the students, further reinforced the main learning points. The teachers use their very good knowledge of their subject to give insights and detail that maintain the students' interest. In the best lessons teachers emphasise the importance of using the correct geographical terminology and clearly explain the importance of giving accurate and detailed answers when responding to examination questions. In lessons where learning is satisfactory rather than good, students make less progress because the pace of the lesson is too pedestrian. Often, this is the result of a lack of clarity in the teachers' planning. The consequent lack of set objectives leaves students unsure of what to do to improve their work and the usual good quality in their learning is undermined.

171. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and give good targets for improvement. Teachers' on-going assessment of students' individual studies is focused firmly on improving the mark that each student will receive. As a result, many of these are of a good standard. However the use of assessment information to track progress and set targets for individual students, whilst now underway, is not yet fully developed. Homework set after each unit of work done in Years 7 to 9 is challenging and gives ample scope for students to develop their own ideas. Homework is also used well for students to conduct individual research. A

particularly good feature is the Intranet developed by the geography department, which provides curriculum information that students can readily access

172. Teachers create a good environment for learning because students are well managed and generally behave well and show a positive attitude towards their work. Teachers expect students to work hard and as a result they are quick to engage in written work and group tasks. Students answer and contribute enthusiastically in most lessons. They help each other willingly as teachers encourage discussion as an aid to learning.

173. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is good and ensures that students' geographical skills and knowledge progress year-on-year. The department handbook gives good guidance to all staff. As a result there are consistent approaches to classroom management, marking, and the use of display throughout the curriculum area. The emphasis that the leadership of the college has placed upon improving teaching and learning has helped the department to improve in terms of lesson planning, teaching methods and resources. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and teachers are committed to the further raising of standards.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and this leads to good learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to work and good relationship with their teachers.
- Resources have improved and there are now more outside visits to enhance learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising the level of attainment in GCSE examinations.
- The more effective development of students' analytical skills.
- More effective use of assessment information for target setting and for monitoring students' progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Greater challenge is needed for higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9.
- The more systematic use of computers to enrich lessons and develop history skills.

174. Levels of attainment are in line with the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents satisfactory achievement. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection and a number of issues raised then have been successfully tackled.

175. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average. The proportion achieving A\*-G grades was close to the national average. Students, especially girls, did less well in history than in many of their other subjects. There has not been a significant difference between boys and girls' attainment in recent years. Results in the two years previous to 2001 and in 2002 were broadly the same.

176. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are close to the national average. This matches the teachers' assessments for 2001 and 2002 for the proportion of students attaining National Curriculum Level 5. Boys perform as well as girls. Students' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7 is satisfactory as they enter the college with skills and understanding in history that are broadly average. Students have good recall of the facts of previous lessons and satisfactory skills of enquiry and note-making. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are often helped to develop these skills by

teachers. For instance, a mixed ability group in Year 7 was helped by good support materials to consider carefully the different classes in Roman society. Higher attaining students develop satisfactory skills of writing at length, though these are insufficiently developed in students of other abilities. The skills of evaluation and interpretation of evidence are undeveloped. Year 9 students showed a good understanding of the effects of the railways on population growth, but the higher attainers were not pushed into evaluating these effects. Students of higher ability in a Year 7 mixed-ability class described Roman trade well, but were inadequately challenged to write more freely about the links between its various aspects.

177. Standards of work in Year 11 are close to the national average. This is better than the GCSE results for 2001, as the cohort is more able and the staffing situation is settled after a year of turbulence from 2000 to 2001, which had an effect on standards. The students' achievement is satisfactory compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9. Students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and events they study. Nearly all students develop sound skills of selecting and recording evidence and making appropriate links between events. However, lower attaining students and those with special educational needs find this difficult without the close support materials given by the teacher. Gifted and talented and higher attaining students evaluate sources well and write well descriptively and with empathy. This was demonstrated by Year 11 students who wrote sensitively about conditions in the 1930's American depression. Their skills of writing at length, critically and analytically with strong evidence to support, are less well developed.

178. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are often good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. The difference in the teaching in the two age groups is much due to new staff settling in and non-specialists teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and planning to set varied activities. These interest students and lead them to help in creating a good learning atmosphere. In the best lessons, students are involved actively in enquiry work and problem solving and this challenges their thinking, especially higher attainers and the gifted and talented in Years 10 and 11. For instance, pairs of higher attaining students in a Year 10 lesson were challenged to analyse for their content and meaning well chosen cartoons of Kaiser William. Very good learning resulted as the students were fully engaged and their skills of understanding primary sources and speaking were developed well. However, higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently stretched as teachers do not have such consistently high expectations. For instance, in studying the Plague in Year 8, students of lower ability and those with special educational needs were supported in their learning with suitable materials, but these were also given to the more able. Consequently, they were inadequately challenged and stimulated and some became inattentive. Lessons are generally well structured, with objectives clearly shared with students. This leads to good learning because students know where the lesson is leading. However, some lessons lack pace and so students' learning is constrained. Imaginative assessments at the end of the lesson are being introduced to measure students' understanding, though this is not yet common practice. Marking is done frequently and consistently well in order to explain to students their weaknesses and to give valuable advice. Students in Year 11 are aware of their current and predicted grades.

179. Students make satisfactory progress in lessons as a result of the teaching they receive. Students' achievement in response to the good teaching they now receive in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory because they have some catching up to do from their earlier years. Students acquire knowledge and learn the important new skills of enquiry, communications and organisation. This is also promoted by the students' interest in the work and their good behaviour. It is encouraged by the teachers' good relationship with them and their good management of students that keep them on task well. Any faltering of concentration occurs

when the lessons lack pace and activities are not sufficiently stimulating. Literacy skills are extended by using glossaries and writing frames, but further development is required. Those with special educational needs in the mixed ability groups make satisfactory progress in their of average and lower attainers learning as they are supported with materials produced by the department. The learning is slower, this occurs because methods and materials are not fully provided to support them in the demanding tasks of analysing and interpreting sources.

180. The department is satisfactorily led by an enthusiastic head of department. He has made an important contribution to the satisfactory level of improvements since the last inspection. Priorities for raising achievement reflect those of the college, especially in promoting thinking and enquiry skills. These are emphasised in the schemes of work, which are in the process of revision. There is now a better programme of outside visits, which is used well as a resource to stimulate interest in the First World War in particular. However, Years 7 and 8 do not yet benefit. There are now sufficient books for students in all years. The assessment procedures are now more reliable in Years 7 to 9. Although assessment information is used well to set individual targets in Years 10 to 11, target setting is not yet in place in earlier years and information is inadequately analysed to guide students on how to improve. Although written into lesson plans, ICT is not systematically used in all classes to enrich the subject and provide an additional resource for enquiry work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good, particularly in helping students to be critical and assess their own work.
- The ICT curriculum is very well linked to the wider college curriculum. This has improved the learning within the subject, especially for students in Years 7 to 9.
- The department is exploiting new technology well and this has resulted in improving attitudes to and interest in the subject across all year groups.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- Raising students' attainment in graphics and in control in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the process of monitoring students' progress to minimise the possibility of underachievement.

181. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in response to the good teaching they receive and the improved provision and leadership in the subject area. Students currently in Year 11 now receive good teaching and are catching up in their studies after a period of some underachievement in their earlier years and are presently achieving satisfactorily. Literacy skills represent a barrier to learning for lower attaining students and this is recognised by the department and strong efforts are being made to reduce this.

182. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are around the national average and similar data for 2002 suggests that students' standards are average. Results in the GCSE examinations for 2001 were below the national average though there has been some improvement in recent years. These represented unsatisfactory achievement based on attainment on entry to Year 10. Because of curriculum changes there are no results to report for 2002. The target minimum grades based on recent course work reflect a continued improvement in attainment among students currently in Year 11.

183. Standards in the work seen are at least at and sometimes above the national average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement when compared with attainment on entry. In Year 7, students are promptly challenged to develop their presentational skills through use of appropriate commercial software and this strengthens both communication and organisational skills and leads to good learning early in the students' experience of the subject at the college. More able students are aware of the need to evaluate their work. Students of all abilities can access the Internet and use search engines effectively. During Year 8, students consolidate their applied numerical skills and those of middle attainment and above can explain and apply basic cell formulae. Some higher attaining students can successfully undertake more ambitious projects, including calculating surface areas in an exercise on energy conservation. Students become increasingly independent and less reliant upon their teachers. For example, in a Year 8 class students set up a data-base dealing with nutrition and showed good research skills in finding and critically reviewing information for themselves. By the end of Year 9, standards are around the national average with database skills well developed. The above average quality work of higher attaining students in a Year 9 lesson on web page design was strengthened by the fact that some had undertaken independent work during lunchtimes without being directed to do so. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Through Years 10 and 11 skills, knowledge and understanding continue to develop satisfactorily. However, their knowledge and understanding in the area of graphics and work on control are under represented and do not yet reach the national average. Achievement overall is satisfactory because these students had to catch up from some earlier underachievement. Nevertheless, students can undertake more ambitious work including the desk-top publishing of promotional leaflets. The progress made by students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students is good because of the match of curriculum activities and well-considered teaching.

184. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The majority of lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. There is excellent communication between staff within the department and those responsible for other curriculum subjects. Challenge in lessons is high, for example in a lesson dealing with measuring nutrition where numeracy skills were put under particular scrutiny. The match between staff skills and the demands of the ICT curriculum is now good. Work is well matched to the abilities of students and this enables both students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented to make good progress. In a Year 11 class for example, good extension activities relating to spreadsheet work were provided. There is a very good emphasis on developing literacy skills through the use of high quality software that extends knowledge well beyond the normal 'word wall' approach. This is complemented by activities that encourage students to be reflective in their writing as well as being technically accurate. This particularly helps the progress of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. Homework is used well to deepen and extend learning for all students and is both challenging and well used in subsequent lessons. Learning would be better if teaching now gave increased prominence to the development of oral skills. There are relatively few opportunities for extended speaking by students within lessons.

185. Extra-curricular enrichment is good. There are well-attended after-college clubs and the ICT suites are available before, during and after the normal college day and are utilised well by students. Nevertheless, links with work experience and the opportunity to see the application of ICT in the workplace could be enhanced. There are good opportunities also for parents to take a more active part in the learning of their children through participation in an out-of-college club.

186. Attitudes to the subject are good. As a result of good class management and well - structured lessons which focus on topics which support students in other subjects of the curriculum, motivation is strong amongst the majority of students. Students of all levels of attainment are keen to succeed and this enthusiasm is supported by a careful focus on self-evaluation and review. Students consider themselves well supported in their studies.

187. Leadership and management are very good and this is reinforced further by the close and productive involvement of the head teacher. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been completely re-written and conform to best practice and this is already having a positive effect on attainment within Years 7 to 9. Co-ordination of ICT is much improved due to close links with senior management and other curriculum leaders who meet regularly to plan strategy and review progress. Teachers are clear as to the developmental issues to be tackled. There has been well-focused investment in good quality resources including both software and textbooks. The acquisition of interactive whiteboards has been beneficial in increasing lesson pace the quality of subject input by teaching staff. Use of ICT facilities is now monitored in a more consistent fashion, though the records kept need to include details of the specific skills being taught. Reporting to parents is very good and gives a clear indication of students' attainment and what needs to be done for standards to be raised further, including students' own self-evaluation.

188. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and the department has a very good capacity to improve further. The department and college have focused sharply on the criticisms made in the last report. ICT is now offered as a separate subject. External accreditation arrangements have been refined, though the impact of this cannot yet be measured. Standards are rising and there is now a strong and well-founded vision for the future development of the subject with an appropriate emphasis on curriculum development. Because of improved management, there are now effective links with all areas of the curriculum. The quality of reporting is now more developed and meets statutory requirements. Students have a clear view of what they need to do to strengthen their academic performance. There is still a need to raise attainment of all students and especially those in Years 10 and 11, particularly in the areas of control and graphics. The increasing amount of information available about students' attainment is not yet analysed in a sufficiently structured fashion to tackle the needs of students close to particular grade boundaries and those who appear to be achieving less well in ICT than in other curriculum subjects.

**Key Skills:ICT**

189. As a consequence of the college's considerable investment in staff training and the development of resources, together with strengthened staffing arrangements, other subjects of the curriculum make a very good contribution to the students' development in ICT in Years 7 to 11 and to the improving standards reached. The college has had good regard to the principles of best value in organising training and much has been achieved by the use of in-house training skills.

190. A major instrument in achieving progress has been the development of a vibrant, high quality intranet for the college. This offers a wide array of features and is particularly strong in enabling access by students to English and science topics. Students are confident users of computers to communicate information, handle data and use on-line materials and work in mathematics and science contribute to their knowledge and understanding of modelling and sensing. More investment in control equipment has meant that developing application skills are evident in this area also.

191. The co-ordination of the development of key skills in ICT by subjects across the curriculum is very strong. As a result, students use ICT effectively in almost all subject areas. The use of ICT in art and design, history and physical education is not as well developed, however. The college is aware of this and ambitious plans to improve this situation are well advanced. The acquisition of additional computer hardware is needed to make access by sixth form students more adequate outside lessons.

192. At breaks and lunch times, computer facilities are used well and support the development of independent learning skills well. The ratio of computers to students is adequate but, for this to be maintained, further investment in equipment will be required. Progress since the last inspection has been very good as a result of good leadership and management, which has strengthened co-ordination arrangements and strategic approaches to future curriculum development.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and younger students learn well as a result.
- The majority of students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 with special educational needs achieve well because their courses are appropriate to their needs.
- The department's management and new specialist teachers are beginning to have a good impact on standards in Years 7 to 9.
- The department's good use of ICT and its commitment to helping students outside college hours are effective in promoting good learning.

### Areas for development

- The raising standards in French in Year 11, which are currently below average.
- Improving the unacceptable behaviour of a few students in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensuring more consistent use of the foreign language by teachers and students during lessons.
- Giving more challenge for higher-attaining students.

193. The modern foreign languages department has suffered in recent years from low morale and a rapid turnover of staff. This has taken its toll on standards, which have been consistently lower than those of most other subjects in the college, and well below the national average. New leadership, however, is beginning to reverse this situation. The department is now up to strength with specialist teachers and is working better as a team. Teaching overall is satisfactory, but is good in Years 7 to 9 and students learn well as a result. Standards among these younger students show that they are achieving what is expected of them. In Year 11 French, however, standards are still below the national average and a number of students lack motivation and are underachieving.

194. GCSE results in 2001 at grades A\*-C were well below the national average in French. In German and Spanish, where numbers were fewer, results were in line with the average. Nearly all Year 11 students took one of these languages at GCSE and all of them achieved at least a grade G. For many students this represented satisfactory achievement and was in line with their predicted results. At the higher end, however, very few students were awarded grades A\*, A, or B. Girls did better than boys by a much greater margin than nationally. Results in French in 2002 were slightly lower than those of 2001.

195. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9. At this stage the positive impact of the department's now greater stability is beginning to be felt and most students are achieving satisfactorily given their attainment when they entered the college. The good teaching that students now receive is making up lost ground from earlier years. Although boys are often more ready to volunteer answers in class, girls generally perform better because they are more accurate in their writing. Students with special educational needs are doing as well as expected because in Years 8 and 9 they are in smaller sets where the work is well suited to their needs. In Years 10 and 11, students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because the courses they undertake are tailored more to their needs. Teaching does not always challenge more gifted students and as a result some of them are not achieving as well as they could. However, standards among high-attaining students beginning German in Year 9 are well above average. They already have an accurate grasp of some difficult points of German grammar and their pronunciation is good. Teaching here is very demanding.

196. In Year 11, standards in French are below the national average overall. Students' attainment at this level has been affected by staffing difficulties in the past and many are under-achieving because of this. Standards in the smaller groups of students doing German and Spanish are in line with the national average, because teaching has not lacked continuity. Students with special educational needs doing the entry level French certificate are achieving well and responding positively to the more appropriate demands of the course they are on. Most students can express an opinion in the foreign language and higher-attainers qualify these opinions by giving reasons for them. Although a number of students can form full sentences in French, most have real difficulty with correct pronunciation to the extent that they are not always easy to understand. All students would benefit from systematic help with pronunciation and sentence-building. More opportunities to read in the foreign language would help in this respect. As in the case of younger students, girls in Year 11 are generally reaching higher standards than boys because of their greater attention to detail and better grasp of the complexities of grammar.

197. Teaching of French is satisfactory overall, as is learning. In Years 7 to 9, however, it is good. Teaching of German and Spanish is good. Of the lessons seen, half were good or very good. A small proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory and does not promote sound learning. This occurs principally in Years 10 and 11 where disrupted teaching in the past has made students sceptical of new teachers. This puts a particular strain on inexperienced teaching. Teachers are mostly very successful at managing students and creating a quiet learning atmosphere. They get on well with students and treat them with politeness and respect. In turn students work hard, respond well and behave sensibly. Lessons start and end well so that students know what they are going to learn, and are able to say what they have learnt afterwards. The very best teaching is brisk and challenging, using the foreign language and expecting students to use it, and ensuring that students of all levels of attainment are kept suitably busy. Teachers use a good variety of methods and materials to arouse students' interest. In a very good Year 10 French lesson, for example, students built new sentences by choosing words and phrases on cards and hanging them on a line stretched across the classroom. This engaged pupils' enthusiasm, involved everybody and led to very good learning. By the end of the lesson students formed full, accurate sentences.

198. In too many lessons, however, teachers do not use the foreign language consistently enough or insist that students use it for everyday requests such as asking to borrow a pen. As a result of this, students do not hear enough of the language and are not making the progress they are capable of in the skills of speaking and listening. Some teaching also relies too much on the spoken and written word and gives students too little visual stimulus or opportunities to drill and practise new points of language. At times higher attainers could be



given more to do, taking away written prompts sooner and obliging them to commit more to memory. Homework, too, could be more graded to give these students more to complete.

199. A particular strength of the teaching in the department is its good use of assessment to track the progress students are making and set them targets for improvement. As a result of this, students in Years 7 to 9 are well aware of the levels they have reached and what they must do to get to the next one. This is also beginning to happen in Years 10 and 11. Equally strong is the department's use of ICT to keep students interested and reinforce the work they do in the classroom. In a Year 11 French lesson, for example, two boys gave a very good presentation about French adjectives using PowerPoint on the recently acquired interactive whiteboard. Teachers ensure that the department's accommodation also has a positive effect on standards. Grouped together, spacious, well-appointed with very good displays of students' work, the classrooms create a good environment for learning.

200. The two-week timetable, while giving a fair allocation of time to foreign languages, causes very long gaps between some lessons that are unevenly distributed throughout the fortnight and this disadvantages the teachers. A number of classes, for example, have their weekly allocation of French in two lessons on the same day. In a Year 8 lesson, higher-attaining students came in to the second French lesson of the day reluctant to work and restless from the start. Less work was covered, relationships were strained and standards, together with students' achievement, were reduced as a result.

201. The large majority of students are well disposed to learning a foreign language. They listen attentively, concentrate well and, when given the opportunity in activities such as pair-work, they work independently and co-operate well with each other. On the rare occasions when teaching is unclear or poorly managed many of them become bored and restless. Behaviour then deteriorates and becomes unacceptable.

202. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Now that staffing is up to strength it is possible for the head of department to manage more effectively by developing ways of improving teaching and learning. To this end lessons are now systematically observed and books checked. Longer term planning, left to one side in the recent past, has restarted with the appointment of a senior member of staff as line manager. Support for new teachers is very strong and staff are beginning to work in harmony as a team. Teachers are very committed to helping students and run study visits abroad, e-mail links with European schools and after-college classes in Spanish and German. Since the previous inspection the modern foreign languages department has made satisfactory improvements. Standards at GCSE have not improved and the reservations in the previous report about the insufficient use of the foreign language in class still apply. However, students now have a much better idea of performance and how to improve it. Resources are now sufficient and up to date. Above all, the department is fully staffed and, with effective leadership, is now well placed to continue improving.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students gain very good examination results.
- The well-structured schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 lead to good progress.
- The good teaching and overall good attitudes of the students result in good standards of work particularly in the quality of singing in the classroom.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a need to develop the use of ICT to improve learning.
- The range of extra-curricular activities needs to be broadened.
- Curriculum links with contributory schools need reinforcing to secure continuity in teaching
- The unsatisfactory behaviour of a few boys in Year 9 needs to be tackled more effectively.

203. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, all four students gained A\*-C results. This number is too small to make valid comparisons with the national average, but the results follow the trend in recent years, where students have gained 100 per cent grades A\*-C. Currently, ten GCSE students are in Year 10, and nine students in Year 11. This meets the suggestion made in the last inspection report, to raise numbers opting to take GCSE music courses. There is now a wider range of musical ability by these students. The most recent end of Year 9 assessment shows students to be attaining slightly above the national average. Very thorough teaching, together with the good attitudes of most students, contributes to the good progress and good standards achieved by the end of Years 9 and 11.

204. Work seen during the inspection confirms that students are achieving slightly higher than the national average by the end of Year 9. All are achieving well and the more able musicians are achieving very well. Most students start Year 7 with standards of musical literacy and awareness in line with the national average. There is a strong emphasis in Year 7 upon students gaining a firm grounding in skills, enabling them to successfully appraise, compose and perform. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students can compose melodies, using keyboards and can add a range of chord accompaniments. Low attainers are successful, using simple note values, and a small range of notes of the treble clef. High attainers can compose confidently, using such advanced techniques as moving to other keys in the middle of their music. Performance skills are well developed. In one Year 9 class, students learnt to play an arrangement of Elvis Presley's "Love me tender" in four separate parts, each of varying ability, and then performed the arrangement fluently by the end of the lesson. They had not seen the music before that lesson. The quality of singing is good. Attention to vocal training through exercises leads to well-projected, tuneful and confident singing. One Year 8 class successfully learnt, and performed in three parts, the African song "Babethendaza" in one lesson. Standards of listening and appraisal are high, because students have a secure knowledge of instrumentation, form and style to make informed comments about the music they hear.

205. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a broader range of musical ability, when they start the GCSE course, than there has been in the past. Teachers are working hard to try to maintain the very high levels of success they have had for many years in examination results. Students in Year 10 have, one month into the year, already assimilated considerable musical skills and knowledge. They understand, and can use, key signatures with up to four sharp or flat keys. They know many Italian terms, and have a good knowledge of instruments of the orchestra. They are making a good start with more complicated composition techniques. Students in Year 11 have well developed listening and appraising skills, and very good aural

perception. They can make informed judgements about music from periods ranging from the baroque to the Twentieth Century. Gifted and talented students achieve very well because of the background and positive attitudes they bring to their lessons. There are no students with special educational needs studying music. The volume and range of work stored in Year 11 students' portfolios, demonstrates the amount they get through, and why they achieve well.

206. The overall quality of teaching is good, and there are some very good features. Programmes of study for Years 7 to 11 are very carefully structured, systematic and thorough, and this principally contributes to the reason for a good quality of learning in each year. Lessons are taught at a fast pace, and this keeps most students tightly focused. Specially prepared, informative worksheets are used which enable students of all ability to achieve by the end of each lesson. Teachers take great care to use music which will appeal to the students, and which will encourage them to develop their own musical technique. Examples were the "Star Wars" and "Jaws" music in a lesson on film music, Rock and Roll music in a performance lesson, and attractive African music in a singing lesson. Students are challenged and praised. The good achievement made through Years 7 to 9, is due to the fast and thorough way in which new musical concepts are introduced, the high expectations of the teachers, and the good attitudes of most of the students. Carefully prepared tasks for students having special needs, and those who are talented, in practical work, enable all students to achieve well in lessons.

207. Overall, students have good attitudes to music lessons in all years. Behaviour too is good and this helps to produce an atmosphere in lessons where good learning can take place. There are a few disaffected, attention-seeking boys in Year 9 and they need a wider range of approaches including better arrangements for the use of music technology and the use of headphones in order to maintain their attention.

208. The music department is capably managed and well led. The head of department works closely with visiting instrumental teachers, who contribute to the life of the department, and who are much valued. The department needs to continue to broaden its extra-curriculum provision, and its provision and use of music technology. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Assessment procedures have been improved, though they need to relate more closely to the National Curriculum levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9. Members of staff are gaining computer expertise, and a new computer has been obtained: it is not yet operating. Although the accommodation is slightly better than at the last inspection, there are unsatisfactory features affecting the quality of students' learning. Keyboards still have to be given out and collected each lesson: in two Year 9 lessons observed, this manoeuvre took almost fifteen minutes in total, and unsettled a few of the less focused boys on each occasion. Although there have been discussions on the subject, curriculum links with feeder schools, as suggested in the last report, have still to be established.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The 2002 GCSE results have risen dramatically, reflecting good achievement by students of all levels of attainment, in response to good teaching.
- Students' positive attitudes help to ensure a good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular sport, which provides opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and development of teaching has not yet led to a consistent approach that is seen in some of the very good teaching practice that exists.
- The marking of students' theoretical coursework is not effective enough.
- Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities have not yet been completed.

209. Students enter the college with average standards in physical education. By Years 9 and 11, students maintain average levels of attainment in the practical-based curriculum followed by all students. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their prior attainment. However, many students in Years 10 and 11 follow externally accredited courses, and they mainly achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the last two years, GCSE results have improved significantly to become amongst the highest in the college. However, there are curriculum and accommodation issues to be resolved that have hindered students' achievement in practical activities.

210. The latest teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that students attain standards in line with the levels expected. This is confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. The 2001 GCSE results were broadly average, but students did better in physical education than in most of their other subjects. In 2002, GCSE examination results rose dramatically and all students gained a grade. Boys do better than girls in the examination.

211. In the work seen in the inspection, students in Year 9, including those with special educational needs, attain average standards in team games. Most pupils are competent in a range of skills and understand the principles of play in games, but only high attaining pupils develop more advanced skills and have an effective understanding of rules and tactics in play. The performance of high attaining students in these games is well illustrated by the success enjoyed by college hockey and basketball teams both locally and on the wider national scene. Most students know how to warm up, satisfactorily, but few classes do this independently. Students' knowledge and understanding of which muscles they stretch is often insecure, and some are unclear about what happens to their body during exercise. Students' literacy and numeracy skills develop, satisfactorily, in the majority of lessons. In a dance lesson, students showed a good understanding of the actions that words may stimulate in terms of composing a dance. Expectations of students to evaluate their own and others' performance are inconsistent. Students are encouraged to observe and improve the work of others in some lessons, but this is sometimes at a superficial level. Students' evaluation of their own work is not yet central to their learning. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, and some have their own physical education action plans. They thrive on the supportive learning environment and make progress at the same rate as their peers. Overall, students of all levels of ability make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9.

212. In Year 11, standards in practical activities are average, overall. In games, students currently in Years 10 and 11 have not had the benefit of the outdoor artificial surface facilities

that the college has recently acquired. Overall standards in hockey remain low. In netball, Year 10 girls perform well. Most students achieve a quick change of speed to defeat the opposition, and develop their skills effectively through strategic play in the game. Boys make good progress in football as they work at developing an effective cross pass. They have good ball control, and understand the strategic use of cross passing, even though low attainers experience some difficulty in putting this into a game. Students undertaking the practical-based core course achieve satisfactorily overall. Their peers who take externally accredited courses mainly achieve well. In Year 11, all students have the opportunity to opt for a course leading to external accreditation. Students taking accredited courses in trampolining, table tennis and martial arts are in the early weeks of the course and their performance is currently below the levels expected. The unsatisfactory curriculum organisation for trampolining, and previous lack of facilities for table tennis, account for the students' low starting point in these activities. Students' working towards the Junior Sports Leader Award are achieving well in their preparation and planning for work in primary schools. Independent learning skills develop well, as students adopt responsibility for aspects of the lesson. Students' GCSE practical work is generally above average, demonstrating good levels of achievement. Their written coursework reflects a range of abilities, but attainment is generally above average. Year 10 students can confidently undertake an investigative research task into the way different newspapers report sport and give convincing reasons for their findings. Students do not use ICT sufficiently in their coursework.

213. An extensive programme of extra-curricular sport provides very good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in their chosen sports, both in college and beyond. Individual students gain representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, national level in athletics, cross-country running, rugby, hockey, football and badminton. College teams are also successful locally and further abroad.

214. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of students in Years 10 and 11 focuses more sharply because more students are preparing for external examinations. However, while teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, there is some good and some very good teaching. All teachers have good specialist knowledge, clear objectives that they share with students and they prepare their lessons well. Organisation is often of a very high standard, so that learning progresses smoothly with maximum activity. There are examples of very good planning, but some teachers do not plan to include all four components of the National Curriculum in their lessons. Opportunities for students to develop their observation skills, to evaluate their own and others' work and learn more about the effects of exercise on the body are inconsistent. The development of numeracy and literacy skills is not always planned and opportunities are lost for students to consolidate key words and extend their use of the specialist language of the subject. On occasions, planning fails to provide sufficient progression in tasks that build on students' previous learning, as seen in rugby and hockey, where low attainers were disadvantaged. When tasks are not matched to students' abilities, higher attainers are often insufficiently challenged. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and use a range of strategies effectively to give students a share of responsibility for their learning. Teachers use questions skilfully, to probe students' knowledge and understanding, and maintain a brisk pace. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 basketball lesson, where students were challenged both physically and intellectually and made very good progress, and a Year 10 netball lesson, where students' learning about attacking skills was particularly good. Target setting could be used more effectively to create a demanding pace of learning. The marking of students' GCSE coursework is regular and encouraging, but students do not receive sufficient information to know what progress they are making, or how to improve their work.

215. The relationships between teachers and students are very good. This, together with the teachers' good management, contributes to students' prompt arrival, good behaviour and high levels of participation in lessons. Students relate positively to the enthusiasm of the teachers. They are well motivated, and have good, and often very good, attitudes to the subject. This is reflected in the good physical effort they put into their work and the very good support for extra-curricular activities. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, such as taking part in the Junior Sports Leader Award scheme.

216. Leadership and management are good, ably supported by a strong, committed staff team. There is very good leadership, providing vision and a clear sense of educational direction, exemplified by the new outdoor sports facilities and the recently acquired Sports College status. There has been a drive to raise standards, reflected in the notable improvement in the GCSE results. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Time to review and consolidate the day-to-day work of the department is required in order to ensure that new schemes of work, assessment procedures and the monitoring and development of teaching and learning are effective in raising standards of attainment further. Health and safety risk assessments have also to be completed.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good and results in very good learning.
- There is excellent use of ICT in Year 8.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Specialist teachers are not used enough and the non-specialist teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not effective in maintaining good levels of achievement.

217. Religious education has not been offered as a GCSE option, apart from one group in 2000. Standards then were above average for the small number of students who took the subject.

218. In the work seen in the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement throughout the first three years. In Year 7 students gain a good knowledge of the use of symbols in modern life and know the significant symbols that are used to represent the ideals of the major world religions. They have a good general knowledge of Christian and Hindu beliefs and can refer to these in discussions. Students in Year 8 can sort, select and prioritise information with regard to emotional, spiritual, and other interests when forming personal opinions on the nature of pilgrimages. In Year 9 students demonstrate can demonstrate the power of words, for example on how to make tolerance more powerful than intolerance. This exercise, as with almost all exercises in religious education, makes a good contribution to students' literacy skills. There is excellent use of ICT in Year 8 where students prepared a Power-Point presentation on the topic, "Who are the Jewish people?" The very good technical support ensured that all students made excellent progress.

219. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards at the end of Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of students when account is taken of their attainment at the start of the course. In Year 11 students can reflect on the concept of life after death and can look seriously at the evidence for and against this belief

and make a personal response. They know the position of the atheist, agnostic, Christian, Hindu and Sikh with regard to this topic. This study gives them good opportunities to reflect on ultimate questions of the meaning of life. In Year 10 students studying relationships and conflict do so largely in moral and social terms without enough reference to religious teachings and philosophies. Students, therefore, do not know these dimensions. Standards and the levels of achievement of students in the present Year 11 have been adversely affected by staffing difficulties last year when different supply teachers did a significant amount of teaching in Year 10. This resulted in a lack of continuity and some missed work.

220. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9. In these years the teaching is done almost exclusively by the specialist teachers who have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use this to ensure very good learning takes place. They use very good strategies and exercises to get students to think for themselves. They teach the skills of analysis clearly from Year 7 onwards and so students learn skills that are useful in all other subject areas. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Much of this teaching is undertaken by non-specialist teachers. These teachers have good class management skills and show a commitment to the subject. However, in many cases they do not relate the study closely enough to religious teachings. Topics are examined in social and moral terms only with little exploration of the spiritual and cultural aspects. There is good use of statistics in Year 10 to highlight information on what influences young people in reaching personal decisions in life.

221. In all years teachers make good use of diagrams and illustrations to convey information and ideas succinctly. Throughout the age groups, teachers are careful to plan to ensure that all students make equal progress. In all years there is good individual support for students with special educational needs and there are extension exercises and open-ended work to stretch the gifted and talented. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls.

222. Students have good attitudes to this subject in all years. They listen attentively to their teachers and ask and answer questions appropriately. They are alert and perceptive for the most part. Students in Years 10 and 11 show good initiative by asking questions and making perceptive comments that lead to a greater understanding for all. They speak freely and honestly about their personal opinions. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no need for the inducement of an examination to make the subject relevant to the students.

223. There is good leadership and management in the subject. Planning is done in good detail and is concise and clear. The head of department provides lesson plans for the non-specialist teachers and this supports their teaching to a good extent and ensures a consistency to students' learning. The subject continues to make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying all these aspects formally as they arise in the teachings and practices of the major world religions. This is particularly good in Years 7 to 9. The specialist teachers are not used to the full and this weakens provision for the subject. There is satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is an improvement in the time given to the subject in Years 10 and 11. There is now better use of artefacts to illustrate aspects of the major world religions. There is impressive use of ICT to extend students' learning in Year 8. However, the fact that most of the lessons in Years 10 and 11 are now taught by non-specialists means that teaching provision overall is not as good as at the time of the last inspection and this lessens the impact of other improvements.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

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

### Strengths

- There was a significant improvement in provision at the start of this college year with new staffing appointments made.
- Resources are used well in lessons to give effective support to students' learning.
- Students' attitudes are good.

### Areas for improvement

- The combining of business studies and ICT has led to planning that is not sufficiently subject based for business studies.
- Teaching methods need to take greater account of students' learning needs.

224. Standards in work seen are below average. The level of students' achievement is satisfactory when account is taken of their attainment when they started the course. Numeracy and ICT skills are stronger overall than literacy skills. All students use ICT well, for example when completing a balance sheet exercise. However, the combined provision of business studies with ICT means that the planning is not sufficiently subject specific relating to business studies as a separate subject. Case study evidence is not well used in writing except by higher attainers. Lower attainers are confident in deducing whether their own characteristics make them suitable to be a sole trader but are less confident in applying their knowledge to a case study. GCSE results were broadly average for 2001 but results in 2002 were not of the same standard. In both years, girls' performance was better than boys' in terms of the proportion gaining grades A\* - C. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and, where appropriate, activities reflect the needs of different groups. Resources are used well including ICT and provide a clear framework for students' learning. Lesson introductions are used well to stimulate learning. In one lesson introduction, a true/false quiz activity was effective in consolidating the learning of new terminology. Teaching methods are not always sufficiently varied to meet all students' learning needs. There is insufficient use of whole class discussion to clarify areas of common misunderstanding and insufficient use of explanation through demonstration, for example when studying data on balance sheets. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New management and teaching appointments have had a very positive impact as shown by students' good attitudes. There are good systems in place to show students how to improve on their target grades.



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

In the inspection, 5 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	6	67	62	0	15	1.3	1.5
CHEMISTRY	6	50	86	33	41	1.8	2.8
BIOLOGY	6	50	83	17	34	1.2	2.6
PHYSICS	5	100	85	40	40	2.6	2.8
BUSINESS STUDIES	13	77	86	23	27	1.9	2.4
DRAMA	11	91	N/A	0	N/A	2.0	N/A
HISTORY	4	25	93	0	42	0.8	3.0
LAW	5	80	N/A	0	N/A	1.4	N/A
ENGLISH LITERATURE	5	60	93	0	36	1.0	2.9
FRENCH	1	100	90	0	46	3.0	3.1

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
MATHEMATICS	5	100	87	20	43	5.2	5.8
BIOLOGY	12	75	88	25	34	4.33	5.3
CHEMISTRY	6	100	90	33	43	4.33	5.9
OTHER SCIENCES	2	100	90	0	30	5.0	5.2
PHYSICS	4	100	88	25	40	7.0	5.7
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY	2	50	91	0	30	2.0	5.4
BUSINESS STUDIES	6	100	92	0	32	4.33	5.5
DRAMA	8	100	99	13	38	5.0	6.6
GEOGRAPHY	8	88	92	0	38	2.5	5.7
HISTORY	6	0	88	0	35	0	5.5
LAW	12	92	87	8	34	4.0	5.3
ENGLISH LITERATURE	8	75	95	13	37	4.3	5.9

***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
BUSINESS	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13.5	10.5

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on business studies.

#### Business studies

Overall the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

##### Strengths

- The new staffing appointments made at the start of this college year have strengthened teaching provision.
- Students' attitudes are good.

##### Areas for improvement

- The planned development of business studies alongside ICT does not take enough account of the subject needs of business studies.
- There are weaknesses in students' literacy skills and independent learning skills.

225. The department offers business studies at GCE AS and A2 levels. All students completed their courses in 2001 and in 2002. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average. However, students' achievement in relation to their starting points on joining the course are satisfactory overall, primarily because their attitudes are good and they receive satisfactory teaching.

226. GCE A-level results were below average in 2001. Results were similar in 2002, but there are no national comparators available yet. AS results for 2001 were below average. There were no AS candidates for 2002. Both A-level students and AS students in 2001 achieved satisfactorily compared with their GCSE results. No consistent difference was seen in the performance of boys and girls.

227. The overall standard of work seen of AS students during the inspection is below average, but reflects satisfactory achievement on the part of students when account is taken of their level of attainment at the start of the course. These students had only been studying the course for just over one month at the time of the inspection although the majority had taken the subject at GCSE level. Numeracy and ICT skills are stronger overall than literacy skills. Students use ICT well to present examples of the different research methods companies might adopt. Higher and lower attainers calculate fixed, variable and total costs. Strong numeracy skills enable students to interpret data correctly but only higher attainers use such data well in writing reasoned conclusions. Note-taking skills are weak, with students lacking initiative to take notes during discussion and when required to do so such notes often lack sufficient depth. Higher attainers evaluate well the use of financial information to different groups of users, but other students do not display sufficient skills in such extended writing tasks and answer too briefly. Recall of newly learned terminology is weak. There are currently no A2 students.

228. Teaching is satisfactory. There are some strong features. Secure knowledge is a strength. The use of resources is carefully planned and organised well. This gives students a clear structure for their learning. They provide a good basis for learning particularly at the start of lessons, with clearly set out definitions of new terminology plus detail to enhance learning such as the use of case study examples. Students respond positively to this framework. They are actively involved in learning at the start of lessons because of the

effective way resources are used. There are gaps at appropriate intervals in many of the handouts so that students are able to note important points from discussion. Secure knowledge ensures that class discussion is appropriately challenging, but students' weak note-taking skills limit their learning. Teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in monitoring this aspect of students' learning. Class discussion is often productive in giving students good opportunities to use and apply newly learned terms and concepts to real situations. Its impact on learning is limited because it too often relies upon voluntary contributions and individuals are not questioned sufficiently about their own learning. Teaching methods are varied to give students some good opportunities to consolidate their learning. In one lesson a group activity was very effective in giving students experience of applying their knowledge of marketing to an imaginary product devised by each group. The activity was further enhanced by the use of ICT to produce ideas for the new product. Time was used well so that groups reported back on their ideas to the whole class. Methods are sometimes less productive when different activities are not clearly distinguished in planning. In one lesson, writing and discussion activities were both less productive because discussion started too soon and before students had made full use of case study material in the writing activity. This limited the level of discussion.

229. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New management and teaching appointments had been in operation for less than two months at the time of the inspection. They have already had a positive effect. Developments in the monitoring of teaching and learning are taking place, involving the senior management of the college, but are at an early stage. Good student attitudes are evidence of the improvement, with students talking very positively of the provision compared with the previous college year. Development planning involving combining business studies and ICT into one department has provided a strong sense of direction. This includes accommodation plans to bring the two areas together in the very near future. However, planning does not sufficiently focus on subject specific priorities for the development of business studies. As part of the new developments, there has also been a strong emphasis on students' level of achievement. Good systems are in place to provide students with reminders of their target grades and how to improve further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

230. ICT was sampled in both AS and A level options which are currently offered. Two lessons were observed. Teaching is good with high expectations made of both A and AS level students. Students are well motivated and are at the appropriate point in the schemes of work. Standards are average and students are making satisfactory progress. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Group sizes are however very small and do not offer good value for money. Students' oral skills and their ability to learn from each other are restricted by the small numbers. The college should reconsider the viability of offering these two options in the sixth form.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education/sports studies.

### Physical education/sports studies

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

#### Strengths

- Students achieve well in physical education as a result of good teaching.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- The opportunities for leadership provided through the Higher Sports Leader Award have a very positive effect on students' personal development.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The marking of theoretical coursework does not relate closely enough to students' targets to give them sufficient information on how well they are progressing.
- The analysis and use of assessment information are not done sufficiently well for accurate target setting and for monitoring students' progress.

231. Students in Year 13 are the first group to complete a GCE AS-level course and go on to A2-level in physical education. The retention rate has been satisfactory. There are no students in Year 12 taking the AS course this year. In the 2002 GCE AS examination, for which there are no national comparisons, all students gained a pass grade. Most of the group started their A-level course with an overall GCSE performance that was below grade C. Their results indicate satisfactory achievement.

232. In the work seen during the inspection, students currently in Year 13 are producing work of below average standards. However, they are achieving well from a starting point that was well below average. Students are only three weeks into the psychological aspects of the A2 level course, and they already show a sound understanding of the material they are studying. In a lesson focusing on aggression in sport, they discussed confidently whether aggressive and unacceptable sports behaviour is a reflection of general behaviour within society as a whole. High attaining students described clearly what aggression is, and how it can be distinguished from assertion. They confidently volunteered examples of both and put forward their views in a logical way. Lower attainers are content to test their knowledge and understanding against the teacher's examples. In group work, students accurately identified and listed the cues that could trigger an aggressive response and suggested ways of controlling aggression. Students' communication skills develop satisfactorily through opportunities to discuss their work. In a biomechanics lesson, the students found difficulty in understanding the terms velocity and acceleration, and using formulae to carry out calculations on the winner's times in a triathlon. The mathematical calculations involved would not have been successfully completed without the direct intervention of the teacher. Students' mathematical skills were not up to the task required, on this occasion. Written coursework is immaculately presented. The students are proficient in using ICT and use these skills effectively in recording their personal fitness projects.

233. It was not possible to observe any practical coursework during the inspection. There are no college teams for this age group, but provision is made to introduce students to local community sports teams. The three female students play in a local netball league team, for example, and there are very good opportunities for sixth form students to pursue individual sports through the extensive extra-curricular programme at the college. Three students are

also participating very successfully in the British Sports Trust's Higher Sports Leader Award and the Millennium Volunteers Scheme.

234. The quality of teaching is good, and students learn well as a result. One lesson observed was very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, and effective teaching promotes good learning through stimulating, well-paced and demanding lessons. Careful planning is used effectively to provide students with a clear structure for learning. In a lesson about aggression in sport, each student was given a resource pack, which provided stepping-stones in the learning process. A variety of tasks, which actively involved the students, extended the depth of their understanding of the topic and led to very good progress. Skilful questioning is used well in all lessons, but the teachers need to be more demanding in raising expectations of the quality of students' verbal responses, including the appropriate use of the specialist language of the subject. The marking of students' written coursework is satisfactory, but fails to give sufficient indication of how students are progressing, or what they have to do to improve their work.

235. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and the students respond well to the support and guidance they are given. They are well-motivated, prompt to lessons and have very good attitudes to the subject. Although tentative in putting forward their ideas in front of their peers, students always respond positively, consolidating their learning and applying what they have already learned to new work. An example of the female students' commitment to their work is that they take every opportunity to help the teachers in lessons with younger students and extra-curricular activities, thereby gaining a wealth of valuable knowledge and experience.

236. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There have been some important improvements since the last inspection. Raising standards of attainment is central to the department's development plan. A particular strength of the management of the sixth form is the quality of support and guidance given to the students, and the wide range of opportunities for personal development within the department. Developments in the monitoring of teaching, learning and students' progress are at an early stage. More emphasis is required on the analysis and use of assessment data to set individual targets and to monitor students' progress. This is particularly important, because students enter the sixth form with lower attainment than is often the case.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus of the inspection was on drama.

### **Drama**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The commitment of the specialist drama staff.
- Good teaching overall, enhanced by some aspects that are very good.
- The very good attitudes of the students help to produce good learning.
- Good progress made by students across the two-year course.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- To raise standards even further.
- To further raise students' awareness of conventions of the theatre.

237. The 2001 GCE A-level examination results were well below the national average, but were as predicted, based on the attainment of students when they started the course. All students gained grades sufficiently high to take them on to the courses in higher education. Results in 2002 showed an improvement, but there are no national comparators yet. There are no drama students currently in Year 12. All those currently in Year 13 who took GCSE in drama, gained A\*-C passes at that level. Two additional students to the course did not take drama at GCSE level. Of the thirteen students on the course, who took AS level in the most recent examinations, six of them gained A\*-C results. This demonstrates good progress. The retention rate for the course is very good: only one student, who had learning difficulties, left the course, and college, at the end of Year 12.

238. The standard of work of students currently in Year 13 are above average. During the inspection, they were observed developing a dramatic theme over five full periods on one day. Through the day, they had to create and perform a series of presentations about eating disorders and the impact of the media and advertising. Intellectually, the students tackled the task very thoroughly, and with a great awareness of the subject. They demonstrated considerable creativity in the approach they took to their group work, making an effective use of imagery. Carefully planned under-statement was used to dramatic effect. All students spoke clearly and confidently in their presentations, and individual students demonstrated outstanding features, including the generating of dramatic emotional responses during rehearsals and during the performance. Three students included music in their presentation, and accurately improvised three-part harmony singing to great effect. Two students moved particularly well, and made a studied use of space. The fact that none had benefited from having drama lessons as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9, frequently revealed itself, despite their best efforts. Progression between activities, and stage movement were sometimes stilted, and students occasionally positioned themselves inappropriately during freeze framing. This demonstrated the need to raise students' awareness of techniques used in drama and the more general conventions of the theatre. The good overall progress made across the five lessons was demonstrated in the fifth lesson. Their confidence developed through the day, they cleverly tried and tested various hypotheses, and their final performances were fluent, imaginative and neatly presented.

239. Teaching is good overall, and has many very good features. The teaching of Year 13 cares demonstrates a depth of care for the students and they reciprocate in showing great respect for the quality of teaching they receive. The teaching indicates a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the students, as demonstrated when each was given appropriate and challenging objectives for the day. Only the individual students knew those objectives, so that there would be no sense of embarrassment, and their learning became well-focused as a result. Lessons are very carefully prepared, and appropriate resources used: the short video of a young lady talking about her problems with bulimia, for example, had noticeable impact upon the quality of the students' learning and the work they produced. The tight rein kept on timing and teaching that challenged and criticised in a positive way, engendered a good learning atmosphere. References were frequently made to the live theatre, to illustrate points: the use, for example, of space on the stage, was referred to in a performance of "Macbeth," which the group had attended, and acted well to reinforce and consolidate earlier learning.

240. The students have very good attitudes to their studies. Nine of the twelve in Year 13 stated that they stayed on in the sixth form specifically in order to study drama in the college. They enjoy an easy, but respectful relationship with their drama teacher. They all admit that their confidence has improved since they started the A-level course. They feel that they are adopting a more creative approach to their studies in other subjects, and that the standards in those other subjects have been raised as a result. All the students enjoy responding to the challenge of the drama course, and are unanimous that it has fulfilled all of their expectations.

Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has a very clear sense of direction for the subject which centres appropriately on raising achievement strongly to reflect the college's mission statement.

## HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history, but law was also sampled. Law was examined for the first time at GCE AS-level in 2002. Standards were poor as all six students failed. These students are retaking the course in the evenings at Durham New College because there is no AS-level course running in the college. In the lesson sampled at A2 level, teaching was barely satisfactory. The teaching relied too heavily on exposition and hand-outs of information with very minimal student participation. The provision of text books is insufficient to encourage students in their own enquiry skills. Standards of attainment are below average.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good and this encourages good learning and an interest in the subject.
- Students have a good attitude and work well with each other and the teacher
- Teaching puts appropriate emphasis on tackling the students' weak literacy skills and encouraging them to work effectively by themselves.

#### Areas for improvement

- The raising of the level of attainment at GCE AS-level by developing skills of extended writing and critical evaluation.
- Improving resources so that students have their own books to encourage independent study and the development of an awareness of different viewpoints.
- Encouraging more confidence in lower attaining students by developing their speaking and discussion skills.

241. In the GCE A-level examinations in 2001, standards were in the lowest five per cent nationally. Of the six students entered, one passed. This was well below expectations and students did worse in history than in their other subjects. The results were partly attributable to inappropriate coverage of one topic in one of the examination papers, as well as problems with the new examination. In 2002, one student attained a grade D, which was just below expectations. There has been no marked difference between females and males in the last three years, but numbers are too small to be draw valid comparisons. GCE AS-level results for 2001 were well below average: one student gained an E grade from four entrants. This was well below expectations. AS results for 2002 have been the same, with students achieving far below their predicted grade. No A2 course is available this year, so there is no valid information about the rate of staying on. The one student who passed is repeating the AS year to improve the grade.

242. Standards in work seen of the Year 12 AS students are well below average. As they entered the sixth form with GCSE results that are well below average and two of the eight students have not taken history at GCSE, their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points. The low initial attainment is hindering their progress, despite the good teaching they are currently receiving. Most have a satisfactory understanding of the main events and basic concepts studied in the first month of the course. Average and higher attaining students are beginning to acquire competent skills of note-making and recording of relevant evidence from a number of sources. These skills are less developed in lower



attaining students, who also struggle to write at length with appropriate evidence to support their arguments. The teacher is aware of these difficulties and is already using strategies to tackle them in the short time that he has been teaching the new class. Few speak freely and with confidence, though their enthusiasm for the subject is encouraging them to ask relevant questions, for instance in enquiring how Henry VII's attitude differed towards different nobles. More able students are beginning to develop more mature skills of analysing and evaluating important events. However, the lack of books limits the opportunities for research and understanding the viewpoints of different historians. Consequently, their ability and confidence to draw conclusions of their own on key issues is undeveloped.

243. The teaching that is now taking place since teaching arrangements were modified at the start of this academic year is good overall and is promoting good learning. The teaching is now undertaken by an experienced specialist who uses his good knowledge of the subject to plan stimulating activities based on the students' own enquiry. For instance, students had to research various issues concerning Henry VII and his treatment of the nobles. They were challenged to evaluate Henry's actions from various written sources well displayed around the room. Their findings were to be written up as an essay, using computers, thus developing their skills of extended writing and use of ICT. The students were encouraged to help each other. The teacher stretched their thinking and aroused their interest with frequent questions and explanations. This reinforced their understanding and promoted their speaking skills, though their confidence to challenge the teacher and each other requires much more development. As the students are beginning the course with weak literacy and study skills, the progress made at this early point in their sixth form careers is satisfactory rather than good, despite the good teaching. Students are productive in their work, as they know exactly what to do. Learning is less effective when there are limited resources for the students to use to develop their enquiry skills and to broaden their knowledge.

244. This good learning is also promoted by the very good relationship with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to plan stimulating lessons and to monitor and guide the students' progress. Marking is now done very thoroughly with helpful review sheets so that students know their weaknesses and how to improve. Students respond well, and most are developing the confidence to work by themselves. However, lower attainers find this difficult without the teacher's encouragement and guidance. They also collaborate well with each other and listen respectfully to each other's views. Their attitude to work is good; most students use time well and are productive in their work. Students expressed strong appreciation for the enthusiastic guidance given by the teacher and the stimulating variety of activities that were carefully planned.

245. The head of department provides clear educational direction for the subject in the sixth form, which is now promoting good learning. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. In displaying good organisation and strong commitment to the subject, the head of department sets high expectations of standards and effort. Students respect this and respond well. The setting of clear targets for students after assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement. Staffing has recently been more effectively deployed so that teaching is now better suited to the students' needs. The encouragement of the use of ICT, including the Internet, provides the students with stimulus and support for their undeveloped writing skills. However, written resources are too limited in quantity to encourage detailed, private study.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature. There are currently no courses in modern languages.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching that is well-matched to the range of students in the group and to the course requirements.
- The quality of written and oral assessment.
- Very good achievement by the students.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject.
- Very positive attitudes among students.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is a need to encourage students to participate more openly and be less reticent in their approach on occasions.
- More explicit use of assessment data to set targets

246. Results have fluctuated over time reflecting the varied standards of the students when they start the course. In the 2001 GCE A-level examination, results were well below average. In contrast, in 2000 there were three candidates: one gained grade A; the others grade B. There were no candidates in 2002. In the new AS-level examinations in 2001, three candidates all achieved low pass grades. In 2002 the average grade at AS-level was C, representing very good achievement for these students given their well below average standards on starting the course.

247. In work seen during the inspection standards are average, matching the same students' 2002 AS results and sustaining their very good progress. Most of the group started their GCE A-level course with an overall GCSE performance that was below grade C. In their GCE AS examination they achieved grades that were significantly higher than would have been anticipated by their GCSE results. This very good progress is evident across the attainment range with the one student whose starting point was just above average attaining an A grade. Most students have made the greatest gains in the depth of analysis that they bring to the study of literature. A scrutiny of the students' Year 12 work on Larkin's "The Whitsun Weddings," revealed very good progress in the organisation and length of their responses; in their assuredness in discussing themes; and in their depiction of how Larkin's reflections of experience are communicated through his use of language. Some would be helped to attain even higher standards by increasing the frequency of their references to language and their confidence when discussing ambiguous and sometimes contradictory judgements. The work at the highest level is typified by frequent references to the text, which are then used as a basis for detailed analysis of, for example, the factors that led to Antony's downfall. The quality of written expression and vocabulary to establish a cogent argument improved significantly during the year. Those whose standards are below average have made very good progress in the organisation of extended pieces. However, they tend to rely too much on a text's narrative structure when outlining their response rather than adopting a consistently analytical approach.

248. During lessons, the students work very hard and to good effect in making progress in their knowledge and understanding. Occasionally they are reticent and appear to lack the

confidence to initiate their own responses. However, on other occasions, students' responses are positive and thoughtful because the teachers are very skilled in developing methods that "take the students into the text" through a range of engaging and challenging activities. The students showed a secure knowledge of Iago's motivation when using the text to answer questions as they would if they were "in the psychiatrist's chair". In another lesson, they compared an extract from a Sassoon poem with Faulks' novel about the First World War, "Birdsong". The students' very good use of independent inquiry led to a very lively and highly participatory whole-class discussion about the impact of the writers' language on our responses. They frequently supported and modified each other's views, recognising both the spiritual and militaristic imagery in Faulks' writing.

249. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teachers' very good subject expertise ensures that the students develop the required skills of writing, analytical reading and response. A particular strength is the teachers' awareness of a wide range of methods that supports the students' learning. The students' conceptual understanding is subtly guided through well-constructed study guides, which exemplify the type of response needed in respect to themes and use of language. There are many strengths in the teachers' use of assessment. Written and oral feedback are both very good and greatly valued by the students. The work for each unit is guided explicitly by the requirements of the unit's assessment objectives. The students find this very helpful in their understanding of their learning targets. Despite the many strengths in assessment the students are not initially clear about their target grades and their progress towards them. The teachers set a very good example to the students. They are inspirational, enthusing and generous with their time when additional help is required and encourage students to aspire to their best efforts. A notable outcome is that all the students are frequent readers beyond the course. They regard the reading process as an important and relevant part of their lives. One had just completed reading 'Chocolat'; another 'Saint Joan'. The organisation of lessons and the outcomes in raising standards also confirm effective teaching and learning for all levels of attainment.

250. The overall leadership and management of the provision are very good. In addition to the contributions made by the teachers on the course there is active and effective support from the head of department. This includes professional development, tutoring students, support with curriculum development and the moderation of marking. This approach totally reflects the college's aim as set out in the mission statement of supporting achievement.