

INSPECTION REPORT

EXMOUTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Exmouth

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113504

Principal: Mr A K Alexander

Reporting inspector: Dr Janet Mills
32072

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th March 2003

Inspection number: 249786

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Gipsy Lane Exmouth
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Lee
Date of previous inspection:	17 February 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Exmouth Community College is a very large split-site 11 - 18 comprehensive school, with additional adult and youth provision, that serves the seaside town of Exmouth and its rural hinterland. Of 2,327 students on roll, 346 are in the sixth form. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals, 8.8 per cent, is broadly average. Very few students are from ethnic minorities and fewer than ten speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs, 2.7 per cent, is similar to the national average. The attainment of students on entry to the college is similar to the national average.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

This is a rapidly improving school that provides a sound education with good features. The students make sound progress in the main college and good progress in the sixth form. The teaching is of a satisfactory standard. The quality of the environment for learning has been transformed over the last year, although much remains to be done. The leadership provided by the principal, supported by the governing body, is excellent and the college is managed effectively. The college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- The college has a growing number of subject strengths including English, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, design and technology, drama, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Of the subjects that are available only as an option for older students, chemistry, government and politics, law, media studies and leisure and tourism, are among the college's subject strengths.
- Where the teaching is lively and challenging, the students respond well and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good.
- The college makes good provision for students with special educational needs.
- The relationships between students and between students and teachers, are good and founded on respect.
- The staff, students and parents are committed to improving the college.
- The college's relationship with its partner primary schools is very constructive.
- The governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college and work closely with the principal to improve it.
- The firm leadership and ambitious vision of the principal are having a very positive effect on the college and are enabling it to improve at a fast pace.

What could be improved

- The consistency and reliability of assessment and target setting and the use of this information to raise standards and to guide learning and the planning of teaching.
- Students' overall rate of attendance and attitude to their own learning.
- The quality of the environment for learning.
- The planning of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, personal, social, health and citizenship education and students' spiritual and cultural development.
- The college's timetabling of subjects, in order to promote the efficient use of teachers' and students' time.
- Health and safety procedures by:
 - ensuring that staff are trained in child protection procedures;
 - carrying out an overall risk assessment; and
 - improving the procedures for evacuation of the buildings in case of emergency.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection in February 1997. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better has increased. Development planning has improved. There has been

progress with ensuring a prompt start to lessons, although this is difficult when teachers need to change site between lessons. The provision for ICT is much improved. On the other hand, standards in several subjects and assessment practice have not kept pace with improvements nationally and the provision for personal and social education needs further attention. The progress of the college has accelerated substantially since January 2002.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with all schools			Key
	2000	2001	2002	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	*	

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

The college's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 were above average in English, average in mathematics and well below average in science. In comparison with other schools nationally, since 1999 results in English have improved, while those in science have fallen and those in mathematics have remained much the same. However, the standards in Year 9 science have now improved; during the inspection they were close to the national average. In general, the standards in the non-core subjects are also close to the national average. They are above average in geography and below average in citizenship, modern foreign languages and music. Girls achieve higher than boys in geography and modern foreign languages. The majority of students make sound progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

The students who took GCSE in 2002 had also made sound progress over the key stage, but achieved results that were below average. The strongest GCSE subjects were English literature and geography, where the proportions of students gaining at least a grade C were higher than nationally. Of the three subjects taken by almost all students, English language was the strongest, followed by mathematics and then science. The pattern of girls' and boys' results in most subjects was similar, but girls were more likely to achieve one of their higher grades in drama and boys were less likely to do so in mathematics. As seen in the inspection, the majority of students make sound progress in their studies over Year 10 and Year 11.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Students, including those in the sixth form, have favourable attitudes to the college and consider that it is improving. The opening of a new footbridge between the Gipsy Lane and Green Close sites and the improved security at the Green Close site, have led younger students to feel more secure at college.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students are generally considerate of each other in classrooms and when they move around the college. They show respect for the college environment and equipment.
Personal development and relationships	Students work effectively in groups and share equipment sensibly. They show respect for each other and for adults and say that the adults at school respect them. Opportunities for students to develop independence in their learning are limited.
Attendance	The overall rates of attendance are unsatisfactory. Students' punctuality is good.

The friendliness, helpfulness and openness of students are among the strengths of the college. Poor attendance, coupled with a limited range of teaching strategies in some subjects, constrains their development of independence as learners.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The teaching of students in Years 7-11 in English, mathematics, science and ICT is sound. Across the curriculum, one lesson in five is very good and at least one very good lesson was seen in almost all subjects. While there is non-specialist teaching of some classes in some subjects, the teachers are expert in their subjects and most plan their lessons thoroughly. However, there is too little variety in the teaching styles used in some departments, teachers' questioning of students is not as targeted, focused and challenging as it might be and homework is used inconsistently across the college to extend students' learning. ICT skills are taught well in several subjects, but the teaching of numeracy and literacy in subjects other than English and mathematics respectively is less well developed. Students with SEN often learn well, as do students who are following an alternative curriculum in Key Stage 4.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is satisfactory. The college plans to increase the range of vocational courses in the sixth form.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The college provides effectively for its students with special educational needs.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The college provides well for the moral and social development of students, but provides insufficient opportunity for them to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness. Students are not being prepared by the college for life in multicultural Britain.
How well the college cares for its students	Staff show appropriate concern for the needs of the students and are good role models. The arrangements for encouraging good behaviour and promoting attendance are effective. Further attention is needed to health and safety issues including the training of staff in child protection and the evacuation of buildings in case of emergency.

The college works effectively with parents and carers. The college is right to plan to increase the range of vocational courses available in the sixth form. Statutory requirements are not met in ICT in Year 11, in music because ICT is not used in lessons in Key Stage 3 and in citizenship, which is not covered rigorously in Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	The principal and senior managers lead and manage the college effectively, efficiently and energetically. The vision of the principal for the college is ambitious and remarkable progress has been made with achieving it during his first year in post.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body has an unusual depth and breadth of skills and experience. It discharges its responsibilities very effectively.
The college's evaluation of its performance	The evaluation of the college which the principal provided prior to the inspection is accurate.
The strategic use of	The match between financial planning and educational priorities is very good in the main school and good at post-16. The college uses its resources well and

resources	it has good systems for ensuring that the principles of best value are effectively applied.
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The college is fully staffed and its teachers are committed to their work. The accommodation of the college has many weaknesses and is dispersed over two sites with a large area, but is managed and utilised effectively. Display is used effectively to promote learning in some departments, for example in mathematics. The learning resources in some subjects are good, but they are weak in some other subjects including music.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support available to children as they settle into the college. • The progress made by their children in most subjects. • The expectation that their child will work hard and achieve his or her best. • Their children's enjoyment of college. • Feeling comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem. • The leadership and management of the college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantity and quality of homework. • Information about how children are getting on. • The closeness of the relationships with parents. • Some students' behaviour, which on occasion extends to bullying. • Children's progress in some subjects.

The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents and that the progress made by students is better in some subjects than others. The inspectors judge that the use of homework to support learning is satisfactory in some subjects, but not in others. Students' behaviour during the inspection was generally good, with the small number of cases of unacceptable behaviour dealt with effectively by managers. However, a few students show insufficient respect for the personal space of their peers and their behaviour in corridors and on staircases during lesson changes is not always as considerate as it might be.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11 - 18 community college has 346 students, of whom 225 are in Year 12. One half of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and a few others join from other schools. Three quarters of the sixth formers are studying for AS and A2 qualifications and the college is planning to increase the range of vocational courses available.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful for many of its students and makes cost-effective use of the resources available to it. The quality of teaching is similar to that found nationally and three-quarters of the lessons observed were at least good. The learning that results from this teaching is satisfactory overall, but lower among students whose attendance is poor. The examination results of students in Year 13 in 2001, the most recent year for which national comparisons are available, were average and reflected good progress during the sixth form years. The results of male students entered for A and AS qualifications were higher than those of female students. The sixth form is led and managed effectively and the additional courses available from 2003 are intended to meet a wider range of students' needs and aspirations.

Strengths

- Students generally make sound progress during the two years of the sixth form.
- English, media studies and theatre studies are among its subject strengths and the quality of provision in chemistry, geography, government and politics, law, mathematics, psychology, Spanish and leisure and tourism, is good.
- The college offers a reasonable choice of subjects for students who want and are suited to, an academic course in the sixth form.
- The academic and personal support provided to sixth formers are sound.

What could be improved

- The consistency and reliability of assessment and target setting and the use of this information to raise standards and to guide learning and the planning of teaching.
- Students' overall rate of attendance at lessons.
- Students' ease of access to computers during personal study.
- The range of the curriculum, so that there are more options available to students who are less suited to an academic course.
- The planning and timetabling of the personal development curriculum, so that time is not lost from subjects.
- Health and safety procedures by:
 - carrying out an overall risk assessment; and
 - improving the procedures for evacuation of the buildings in case of emergency.

Further aspects for improvement are included in the subject reports.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	Satisfactory. Standards achieved are close to the national average and result from the good planning and encouragement of the teachers and the positive attitude of students towards learning.
Business studies	Satisfactory. The students are motivated and the staff are dedicated and experienced. The systems for providing students with feedback on their work and monitoring their response, need to be refined in order to raise students' achievement.
Chemistry	Good. Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and teachers have very good subject expertise.
English	Very good. Students achieve well because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations. Students have very positive attitudes to their work.
Geography	Good. Good teaching, high expectations and the enthusiasm of both teachers and students have resulted in high attainment and good progress in independent learning.
Government and politics	Good. Lively and informed teaching produces a strong interest in the subject and an intelligent response from students, who achieve well.
Law	Good. The teaching provides students with comprehensive and up-to-date coverage of the English legal system. They achieve well.
Leisure and tourism	Good. The teaching of leisure and recreation, leisure and tourism and travel and tourism advanced courses, show a high level of insight into the leisure, tourism, recreation and travel industry. Students' achievement is satisfactory.
Mathematics	Good. A wide range of courses and modules is available and the teaching is good overall. Students achieve well.
Media studies	Very good. The teaching is very good, learning flourishes and students make the most of their potential.
Music	Satisfactory. A growing number of students are continuing music in the sixth form and they achieve well in those lessons where practical music making takes place alongside detailed academic work.
Physical education	Satisfactory. The teachers have good knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses and students' achievement is satisfactory. Some students do not appreciate that much of the course is not practical in nature.
Psychology	Good. Imaginative teaching of this popular subject has produced a good student performance overall. Steps have been taken to correct the recent more disappointing performance at AS level.
Spanish	Good. The range of languages available at post-16 is enhanced through the recent addition of Spanish. The teaching is good and students are making good progress.
Theatre studies	Very good. Students work hard to make the most of their talents in performance and achieve well. Teaching is frequently very good, with newly qualified staff contributing well to the department's success.

Inspectors also observed some lessons in other subjects, including art and design, child development, citizenship, computer studies, design and technology, economics, graphics, health and social care, history, religious studies and sociology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are guided carefully in respect of their choice of subjects and courses in the sixth form and receive effective support from their subject teachers and individual support from their tutors. Students use the Internet and other resources effectively when deciding which courses to apply for at university, but many have little direct experience of the campuses of universities more distant than Exeter and Plymouth.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is led and managed well. The success of courses is reviewed and action taken where necessary. The additional courses to be introduced in 2003 are likely to meet more students' needs and aspirations. The organisation of the college timetable, which requires students to miss subject lessons in order to attend lessons in personal development, needs to be reviewed. Equality of opportunity is promoted actively by staff, but the extent of the gender imbalance on some subject courses suggests that more needs to be done to ensure that students' choices of subject are not influenced by gender stereotyping.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The help received from teachers should they have difficulty with their work. • The quality and challenge of the teaching. • The help and encouragement received with studying and researching topics independently. • The range of courses that they can choose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice about what to do after leaving college. • The support and help available from the college should they have personal problems. • The timetabling of personal development, which currently can clash with lessons in other subjects.

Of the 346 students in the sixth form, 182 returned their questionnaires. Over four-fifths of these students enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join them. Inspectors agreed with the first three positive points raised by the students, but agree with the college that a wider range of courses is needed. The lack of certainty about what to do after leaving college was felt mainly by Year 12 students and relates to weaknesses in the planning of personal development. Students who were interviewed during the inspection all felt that there was an adult to whom they could talk should they have personal problems, but this was more usually a subject teacher rather than a tutor. The timetabling of personal development lessons is 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. In September 2002, a new cohort of 400 Year 7 students entered Exmouth Community College with attainment that was close to the national average. At the end of the previous academic year, the attainment of Year 9 students had been broadly average in the core subjects and generally below average in the non-core subjects and the outgoing Year 11 students had obtained GCSE results that were below average both in respect of average points and the proportion of students obtaining grade C or above in five or more subjects. But this is not an account of a college where standards decline as students move through Key Stage 3 and then Key Stage 4. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE in 2002 reflected their own results at the end of Year 9. Inspectors found that standards in several subjects, including science, have risen since 2002. There are signs in many subjects that students' results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 will be higher in 2003 than they were in 2002. It is the case that standards at Exmouth Community College generally did not keep pace with improvements nationally in the years following its previous inspection in 1997. But over the last year the college has begun to improve at a rapid pace. Its standards are now sound overall and rising. Given the quality of its leadership and the commitment shown by its staff, governors, students and parents, it has the capacity to achieve high standards within the next few years.
2. Currently, nine per cent of students claim free school meals. This is substantially below the proportion that is entitled to them. Historically, parents of students at Exmouth have not claimed free school meals, because until September 2002 there were few outlets for food on site and students in all year groups were allowed to go out to buy food locally, or to eat packed lunches on the streets or in Phear Park, which lies between the Gypsy Lane and Green Close sites. Following consideration of the proportions of pupils taking free school meals in partner primary schools and the number of Year 7 students who entered Exmouth from each of these primary schools, inspectors believe that the proportion of Exmouth students who are entitled to free school meals is at least 15 per cent. Given the seasonal nature of much of the local employment, it may be markedly higher than this. In these circumstances, there is little case for comparing the results of the college routinely with those of other schools where only 9 per cent of students claim free school meals. Given the absence of other, more suitable, tables, the results of the college are generally compared in this report with all schools nationally.
3. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportion of students who achieved the national standard of at least Level 5 was well above average in English and average in both mathematics and science. The science results were unsatisfactory given students' attainment at the end of Year 6, while the English and mathematics results were good and very good, respectively. The proportion of students who achieved the higher standard of at least Level 6 was above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. Considered in the light of students' attainment at the end of Year 6, the English results were very good, while the mathematics and science results were unsatisfactory and poor, respectively. Thus English emerges as the most successful of the three core subjects, in that students built most effectively on their prior attainment and were relatively likely to achieve the higher grade of Level 6 or above. Since 1999, the average points in English have risen, in comparison with other schools, while the results in mathematics have remained similar and those in science have fallen. This reflects differences in the quality of provision in the subjects and the low curriculum time available for science during 2002. The differences in boys' and girls' performance at the end of Year 9 were similar to those nationally.
4. During the inspection, standards in Year 9 were still highest in English, followed by mathematics and then science. However, the lead of English is diminishing following improvements in the provision for science and mathematics. Standards in the three subjects are now sound, but there remains some underachievement among high attainers in mathematics and science and low attainers in English.
5. In the eight other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Year 9 in 2002, teachers judged the overall attainment of students as above the national average in geography and Information and communication technology, close to the national average in art and design, design and technology and PE, below average in history and music and well below average in modern foreign languages. Boys

underachieved in design and technology and PE and both boys and girls underachieved in history, modern foreign languages and music. The assessments that teachers made in ICT were not closely aligned with national standards. Overall, however, the attainment of the current Year 9 in the eight non-core subjects is higher than that of the previous Year 9. Inspectors judge that the current attainment of students is above the national average in geography, below average in modern foreign languages and music and average in the other five non-core subjects.

6. In the GCSE examinations of 2002, the results were below average in respect of boys' and girls' average points, the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grades and the proportion of students gaining one or more result at grade G or above. That said, the proportion of students gaining at least five results at grade G or above was average, as was the proportion of students gaining at least five higher grades when students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is taken into account. Since 1999, the trend in comparison with other schools nationally has been one of more students gaining results at grade G or above, but fewer students gaining higher grades.
7. There were some marked differences between subjects. The subjects in which students were most likely to achieve relatively well were drama, English language, English literature, French, geography and PE. The pattern of girls' and boys' results in most subjects was similar, but girls were more likely to achieve one of their higher grades in drama and boys were less likely to do so in mathematics.
8. The attainment of Year 11 students seen during the inspection generally exceeded that reflected by the examination results in 2002. It is average in mathematics and science and above average in English.
9. As students move through the college from Year 7 towards their assessment at the end of Year 9 and also from Year 9 towards Year 11, they now make sound progress overall. Students make good progress when teaching gives them opportunities to learn independently and through working in groups, is well planned over time, pacy, demanding and supported by well-chosen homework. Progress is unsatisfactory in a small minority of classes where the challenge is too low and fails to build up as students' work develops.
10. Standards of literacy across the curriculum and in different subjects are variable. A number of teachers and departments promote wider and more accurate use of vocabulary, through the use of key-word lists and reminders. Some show good practice in certain areas, for example through note making and discussion. However, there are too few expectations that students will present their findings orally and gain confidence by doing so. Research, information finding and group collaboration occur in a number of contexts but without a shared climate of literacy development. Senior managers have discussed the need for a more co-ordinated approach, which now needs implementation.
11. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is satisfactory within the mathematics department. Here the National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented with numerical warm ups at the start of lessons that are usually linked to the objectives of lessons and help consolidate students' learning. The teaching of numeracy in other subjects needs further development. There were some instances of numerical work in lessons in history, science, design and technology and geography, but these were mainly rudimentary. There is a teacher responsible for numeracy in every department, but the teaching of numeracy is not embedded within schemes of work, or the routine teaching of subjects other than mathematics.
12. There is a discrete ICT course in Key Stage 3. The use of ICT in other subjects varies. It is very good in media studies, geography and art and design and good in other areas such as mathematics and provision for students with special educational needs. The use of ICT in other subjects is limited. Generally, staff expertise is good and most staff are able to provide appropriate help to students when ICT is used. However, it is sometimes difficult for teachers of other subjects to gain access to computer rooms when required. Although two new ICT teaching areas are in the course of construction, this new provision will only improve access until the end of the current college year, as the establishment of discrete ICT teaching in Year 11 from next September will increase the need for rooms.
13. The progress of most students who are gifted or talented is satisfactory overall. Recent developments in provision, both within and beyond the normal college day, have the capacity to speed their progress further in due course. These include lessons in Latin in Year 7 and an additional course in mathematics for approximately 30 students, from the summer of Year 7 to the end of Year 9, with a faster pace and a wide range of challenging materials.

14. The attainment of most students with special educational needs is well below national expectations when they enter the college. Although they make good progress towards targets, students are frequently not able to meet national expectations by the time they leave the college. However, as a result of skilled teaching, they meet targets in their individual educational plans, which are suitably challenging and developmental so that the students' progression is secure. Many are now taking advantage of the alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4. They make good progress towards national vocational qualifications through joint study with a local college.
15. Students with specific learning difficulties also receive high quality support from staff who understand their needs and equip them with strategies to help themselves and therefore succeed as independent learners. As a result they achieve well in examinations - with concessions where appropriate - and successfully move on to further study. Last year, for example, one student gained three A grade passes at A-level and is now studying art at university. Several other recent leavers are successfully following training in vocational areas including thatching and golf.

Sixth form

16. Of the 305 students in the sixth form during the academic year 2000-2001, 168 were following GCE A-level and AS courses, 77 were taking Advanced GNVQ courses, 39 were on Intermediate Vocational Courses, 20 were taking Foundation Vocational Courses and one was taking GCSEs. The average points score that students in Year 13 achieved in advanced qualifications (A-level, AS, AVCE and Advanced GNVQ) was above the national average. In respect of A-level and AS qualifications it was above average in the case of male students and average in the case of female students and overall.
17. All students who took A-level in 2001 passed in art and design, communication studies, computer studies, English literature, design and technology, French, German, physics, religious studies, sociology and sports/PE studies. The average point scores that they achieved were above the national average in computer studies and geography and well above average in communication studies, mathematics and sociology. The numbers of students entered for some subjects were small. Thirty-one students entered communication studies, but the next most popular subjects were geography and mathematics with 16 students.
18. The results for 2002 show some improvement over the figures for 2001 but, without national figures for comparison, it is not possible to judge the significance of this improvement. All students who took A-level in 2002 passed in art and design, chemistry, economics, German, government and politics, history, further mathematics, media studies, music, physics, religious studies and theatre studies. All students who took AVCE courses passed in travel and tourism (double), leisure and recreation (single) and media studies (double). The most popular A-level or AVCE subject was media studies with 30 candidates, followed by English and psychology with 29 candidates, and biology and mathematics with 22 candidates. Of the subjects with at least ten candidates the highest average point score was obtained in media studies, followed by art and design, English, chemistry, mathematics, geography, psychology and travel and tourism (double).
19. All students who took AS in 2002 passed in chemistry, English, French, history, further mathematics, music, physical education, religious studies and theatre studies. The most popular AS subject was media studies with 51 candidates, followed by English and psychology with 40 candidates and law with 34 candidates. Of the subjects with at least ten candidates, the highest point score was obtained in English, followed by theatre studies, media studies and law.
20. In addition to AVCEs, vocational results included five passes (including one distinction) in the BTEC National Diploma in early years, 24 NVQ results and 78 NVQ key skill results.
21. The college offers computer studies at AS and A-level and provision for teaching ICT to meet the requirements of key skills in Year 12.
22. The attainment of students as seen during the inspection corresponded closely to the pattern of examination results described above and did not fall below the national average in any of the 15 subjects on which the inspection focused.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

23. The attitudes of the vast majority of students towards their learning are good. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and returned questionnaires confirmed that their children enjoy attending the college. The great majority of students enjoy their work and want to do well. They listen attentively, follow instructions well, settle quickly to the task given and, when given the opportunity, contribute well to lessons. These positive attitudes are particularly apparent in lessons that include practical work. Students maintained their concentration throughout two-hour double design and technology lessons that were taught well. They tempered their enthusiasm with self-control during drama lessons that required them to develop a clown character (in Year 7) or to rehearse individual performances for a practical examination (in Year 10). They behaved responsibly when working in pairs and groups in a range of subjects.
24. Students' behaviour is generally good. The great majority of students behave very well in lessons and as they move around and between the sites. They are polite and talk to visitors with ease. They show respect for people, property and buildings. They walk sensibly and typically with due urgency, over the new footbridge between the Gipsy Lane and Green Close sites, keeping to the left even when there is no teacher in view. Although they have to wait to be served at the various canteens at break and lunchtime the queues are orderly and noise levels are acceptable. Students state that instances of bullying are rare and that the college has appropriate procedures to deal with any incidents that may take place. The success of the college's approach to behaviour has resulted in the number of exclusions being more than halved within 12 months. That said, a residue of the behavioural problems that led to the incidence of almost 300 exclusions during 2001-2002 remains. A few students arrive at some of their lessons determined to be uncooperative and to cause embarrassment to their teacher, or delay their arrival to lessons. Some students do not show sufficient respect for the personal space of their peers when moving round some of the buildings between lessons. The jostling that takes place at these times can lead some students to feel intimidated. Although a large number of bins are situated around the grounds, the caretaking staff have to spend too much of their day clearing up after students.
25. Several students with specific or general learning difficulties also exhibit challenging behaviour. The staff generally manage this problematic behaviour well as it arises, but in some classes there is too much calling out and inattention and the learning of the whole class suffers.
26. Students develop good personal relationships as they engage with the ethos of the college. They form constructive relationships with other students and with teachers and act with consideration of the feelings, values and beliefs of others. When given the opportunity, students work well in pairs and groups, co-operating over their work and learning from each other. Students respond well to new opportunities to show that they are responsible. Over 100 of the current Year 10 students volunteered to serve as mentors of new Year 7 students.
27. Overall, the attendance of students is unsatisfactory. The work of the education welfare officer has been instrumental in continuing to improve rates of attendance since the last inspection. Some students with especially poor attendance are receiving individualised support that is proving effective. While much of the other absence is due to illness, some of it is due to holidays. Although it is understandable that some families working in the local tourist industry may wish to take some family holiday outside the college's summer holiday, the practice of taking holiday during term-time is more widespread than this and constrains the attainment and progress of some students.
28. The recorded attendance level is reduced by various initiatives designed to provide a curriculum relevant to the needs of particular students. In particular, this involves students being educated off-site, benefiting from extended work experience, or being reintegrated into college gradually. Consequently, the attendance of students at their education is a little higher than that recorded, although it remains unsatisfactory. The rate of unauthorised absence is in line with that of other schools around the country. Punctuality at the start of the college day is good. Registration takes place promptly.

Sixth form

29. The college does not collate attendance figures for the sixth form, although it plans to do so when electronic registration is introduced after Easter. It calculated the rate of attendance at registration on two days of the inspection at 72 per cent and 81 per cent respectively. In fact the rate of attendance at sixth form lessons during the inspection, at a little below 90 per cent, was higher than that at

registration. Even so, this is a low rate of attendance. Clearly, the judgements that follow about lessons and meetings relate to the students who were present in college.

30. Students show high levels of concentration in lessons and are prepared to put time and effort into improving their work. They show consistently good relationships with each other and with their teachers. There is a relaxed, mature atmosphere which creates a positive learning environment. During a Year 13 mathematics lesson, for example, students helped each other when considering how to answer practice examination questions. Nevertheless some students do not carry out as much personal research as they should and rely unduly upon resources provided by the teacher. Some Year 12 students are still learning how to work independently and during a business studies lesson chatted casually to peers when using the computers.
31. Through the pre-inspection sixth form questionnaires and through interviews during the inspection, students state that they are pleased to be in college and interested in their work. They are satisfied with their course, enjoy college life and would encourage others to join the sixth form. They are pleased with the range of courses that they can choose from and think the college helps them to settle well to sixth form work. They consider that the teaching is of a high quality and that the staff expect them to work to a high standard. They are particularly pleased with the help and guidance provided by the teachers if they have any difficulty with their work. This support and encouragement with their studies enables them to develop their research and other skills to enable them to work independently. The inspectors generally support all of these positive comments, but consider that the college could do more to develop students' autonomy as learners. Many of the students expressed concern that the 'rolling timetable' for personal development leads to them missing subject lessons. Inspectors share this concern and note that the college's current arrangements for timetabling personal development are not intended to be permanent.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the college. The teaching was at least good in three lessons out of five and unsatisfactory in fewer than one in 20. One lesson in six was very good. While the teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is equally effective overall, there is some variation in the quality of teaching between year groups. In most subjects, Year 7 has less very good teaching and more unsatisfactory teaching, than any of the other years. The highest proportion of very good teaching was observed in Year 9.
33. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Since 1997, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen to a third of that in the previous inspection and the proportion of teaching that is very good has trebled.
34. Boys and girls are taught equally effectively and several departments are experimenting with different forms of gender groupings, in order to try to raise the achievement of boys.
35. Students with special educational needs are taught very effectively. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall for students with learning difficulties, with some teachers continually challenging students to reflect on their work, improve it and explain the methods used and the decisions taken. Teachers make very good use of specific strategies to promote the students' concentration and accuracy. A major feature for all students is the study of words, their composition and the setting of this work into context so that, for example, students understand the root of the word 'autobiography' and can identify other related words and their meanings such as 'automatic'.
36. Students who have been identified as gifted and talented benefit from a range of strategies in different subjects. For example, in geography these students are highlighted in some teachers' markbooks and set special extension work. A Year 10 mathematics group receiving special provision greatly valued it and all spoke of wanting to study A-level mathematics.
37. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is particularly the case when they are teaching their main subject, but also applies when, as is often the case in lessons in English and RE, for example, they are teaching a subject other than their main specialism. The teachers' good subject knowledge gives them confidence in planning lessons, explaining new material to students including able students and answering students' questions. It also leads some teachers to engage students through the academic role models that they present. For example, in a Year 7 Latin lesson for

students who have been identified as gifted and talented, the scholarship and enthusiasm of the teacher proved infectious.

38. Some teachers provided good role models through their use of ICT. For example, in a Year 11 art and design lesson, the teacher's artistic and technical fluency in demonstrating the use of several vector and pixel design packages was picked up by the students, who were soon using demonstration to explain points to their peers.
39. The quality of teachers' written planning of lessons varies, as do the formats that they use to record it. However, many teachers have thought carefully about what they want students to learn and how this new learning will build upon what they know already and lead to worthwhile learning in the future. For example, a Year 7 design and technology lesson in which students were manufacturing model aeroplanes was planned so that students developed confidence in using a tenon saw and chisel to cut out a 'halving' joint, as well as the ability to explain what they were doing and why, so that they could use these skills again in the future.
40. Careful planning helps to ensure that many of the classes where teaching is split between two teachers are disadvantaged minimally. It also leads to the good use of time where some students are delayed because they have needed to change site. For example, a Year 10 geography lesson that compared growth and development in New York and Calcutta began with useful scene setting based on the teacher's impressions of New York during a visit: Central Park, an anti-racism march in the Bronx and so on.
41. The best planning also draws on and fuels, students' motivation. For example, a Year 7 German lesson was thoughtfully planned to channel students' early enthusiasm into successful learning. The lesson was conducted almost entirely in German, with very good use of visuals and gesture to support meaning and at a lively pace. Explicit objectives for learning were set as were the ground rules for behaviour. The students interviewed each other in German about their favourite sports and the resulting data were pooled on a grid and analysed by the whole class. This outcome was possible because the language that was needed and students' confidence in using this language, were gradually built up during the lesson. The teacher's high expectations were rewarded by the students' motivation, their clear pronunciation and their firm grasp of the structures and vocabulary needed for independent work in future.
42. The quality with which teachers question students varies widely. In a few lessons, whole classes are kept on their toes by and learn at a fast pace from, questions that probe and develop the understanding of individuals. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson on exothermic and endothermic reactions, careful targeted questioning by the teacher gradually brought more and more students into a demanding scientific discussion. In some other lessons, the questions are mainly closed and unchallenging and many students do not trouble to answer them.
43. While basic skills in literacy were often taught effectively in English lessons and numeracy in mathematics lessons, it was rare for them to be taught effectively in other subjects. However, there were exceptions, for example a Year 8 food technology lesson, when key words including adjectives were drawn upon effectively. Graphicacy was modelled for teachers as well as students in a Year 11 assembly that, within the week's theme of health, monitored and recorded the pulse rate of two students, one a smoker, as they recovered from exercise.
44. Most teachers manage students very well. On the very rare occasions when there was significant disruption to learning through the inappropriate behaviour of students, this was not a direct result of weak teaching, senior managers intervened appropriately and promptly and parents were informed.
45. The thoroughness with which teachers assess and mark students' work and use assessments to help students to make progress, varies between subjects and between classes in some subjects. While there is some very good practice, assessment and marking need further development throughout the college.
46. While there is some good practice in the use of homework, it is not used consistently to consolidate and extend what is learnt in lessons and to prepare students for future lessons, in several subjects in all year groups. In some classes there is no homework for students who have completed work during the lesson, or there is too much use of tasks that fill students' time, rather than moving their learning forward.

Insufficient monitoring of homework across year groups can result in students having several similar tasks to complete, for example drawing posters, in different subjects within a short space of time. Some students do not use their contact books effectively to record the homework that has been set and some of this ineffective use of contact books is not picked up by tutors.

47. Students respond well to opportunities to discuss ideas with each other, to carry out practical work and to work in pairs and groups. In many lessons in drama and PE, for example, as well as in some lessons in other subjects, students learnt well through work in groups. In many lessons in art and design and design and technology, for example, they learnt well through carrying out practical work within a clear theoretical framework and within a well-judged context of rigorous and challenging teacher intervention. In some of these lessons, students evaluated each other's work rigorously and frankly, qualities that were much appreciated by their peers. The range of teaching strategies used in some other subjects needs to be broadened. In some lessons, students spend too much time waiting for their turn to speak to a teacher individually during whole class work, carrying out uniform tasks individually, or waiting for their peers to complete a task so that the lesson can move on. The students become passive and placid, rather than active and engaged and valuable opportunities for learning are lost.

Sixth form

48. Teaching in almost all the sixth form lessons observed was at least satisfactory and almost one in every four lessons was very good or excellent. Nearly all the teachers in the sixth form also teach extensively in the main college and the characteristics of the good and very good teaching in the sixth form and the main college have many common features. However, the average rate of attendance at the 75 classes observed was below 90 per cent and so the impact of the teaching on students' progress is not as high as it should be.
49. The teaching in each of the 15 subjects reported upon was satisfactory or better overall. The teachers are secure in their subjects and, in English for example, draw on their extensive subject knowledge to motivate and challenge students, including high attainers and to enable them to make progress. Lessons in subjects including music, for example, integrated practical and theoretical work effectively. Much of the teaching actively encourages students' development of independence and autonomy as learners and some students work out learning strategies for themselves, such as making pencil notes on their work in the light of teachers' marking, or when teachers make observations to the whole class. However, access to ICT was too infrequent in several subjects including biology and chemistry and some teachers carried out too much preparatory research work that students should have been learning to carry out themselves.

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

50. Overall, the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 provides a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities. The provision for students with special educational needs is good.
51. The curriculum for all students in Key Stage 3 includes lessons in all the National Curriculum subjects except citizenship and also includes drama and religious education. Statutory requirements are not met in Key Stage 3 in respect of provision for citizenship, or the use of ICT in music.
52. In Key Stage 4 a curriculum of English, mathematics, science, ICT, RE, PE, a technology subject and a modern foreign language is taken by nearly all students and this is expanded by a range of option choices that include GCSEs in dance, drama, art and design, music, PE, media studies, history, geography and child development and a small range of further vocational courses. These include a GNVQ in ICT and VGCSE in health and social care. Statutory requirements are not met in Key Stage 4 in respect of provision for citizenship, or the provision of ICT for students in Year 11. The National Curriculum has been disapplied in some subjects to enable a few students to follow an alternative curriculum in Key Stage 4.
53. The college has begun an audit of cross-curricular provision in citizenship, but the programmes of study are not in place.

54. Personal, social and health education (known in the college as personal development) is taught for one lesson a week on a rolling programme, so that a lesson in another subject is lost when it takes place. It is taught by form tutors from Year 7 to Year 11 and the programme includes sex and relationships education, the promotion of healthy living and eating and attention to the misuse of drugs. It also includes careers education and guidance. During the inspection 11 lessons were observed, of which three were unsatisfactory or poor. This reflects inadequate planning for the subject.
55. Latin has been introduced for gifted and talented students in Year 7, Spanish is offered as an additional class in Year 9 for able students and there is some additional specialist provision for able mathematicians. The provision of Latin enhances the curriculum of the students who take it, but the arrangements for teaching Latin in Year 7 partly by withdrawing students from lessons in modern foreign languages currently causes some disruption to the teaching of upper sets. The college recognises this and intends to relocate Latin outside the normal college day from September 2003.
56. The schemes of work for most subjects are broad, balanced and up to date. For example, the science curriculum has recently been restructured as part of the drive to raise standards and its breadth of coverage is good. The majority of students follow a double science course in Key Stage 4. The Key Stage 3 English curriculum incorporates aspects of the National Literacy Strategy, but further attention to the teaching of literacy skills in English is still needed. There is a good balance between language and literature in the Key Stage 4 English provision. The art and design curriculum is broad and balanced and includes a good quality programme for computer-based artwork. There is a full range of options within the design and technology curriculum in Key Stage 4. However, the cross-curricular planning of literacy, numeracy and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in subject schemes of work is at an early stage of development.
57. The college's provision for students' moral and social development is good but the provision for their spiritual development is unsatisfactory. This is similar to the findings at the time of the last inspection. The provision for cultural development has deteriorated and is now unsatisfactory, particularly with respect to preparing students to live in a multicultural society.
58. In respect of moral development, the college sets clear expectations of high standards of behaviour and acceptable conduct. Most departments encourage students to consider moral issues. In a sixth form media studies lesson, students considered how the media tries to control its audience and recognised the relevance of George Orwell's '1984'. Geography includes a case study on the morality of the Canadian government changing the Inuit way of life. Year 7 students study poetry relating to the slave trade in Africa in English lessons. Students are generally self-disciplined and this makes for an orderly college. The staff are good role models and the overall positive approach of the college to encouraging students' moral development is evident in the way all adults deal with students.
59. The provision for encouraging the social development of the students is good. The college values its members and encourages students to integrate well both at work and at play. This approach results in very positive relationships between students themselves and between students and staff. Subject departments provide a variety of opportunities for students to work together. Drama enables students to work on school productions, physical education has a variety of sporting activities that develop a team spirit and design and technology lessons provide many opportunities for co-operative working. Opportunities to relate to students of other tutor groups and different ages are provided by the year and college councils. Students mix socially outside college with sports matches against other schools and colleges and during residential visits. Awareness of the wider community is also addressed with, for example, collections for charities at home and abroad.
60. The opportunities for students to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness are unsatisfactory. In addition, statutory requirements in respect of collective worship are not met. As well as providing time for reflection, weekly assemblies help students to feel a sense of belonging to a whole community and to celebrate the contributions and achievements of others. Nevertheless, assemblies rarely refer to a deity, or have a religious character. Tutor periods provide no sense of spirituality with references to the theme of the week and the thought for the day almost invariably being limited to them being stated without further discussion. One of the thoughts for the day during the inspection was opaque and not recalled by students questioned within five minutes of its statement. There are few planned opportunities for spiritual development throughout the curriculum. Opportunities for spiritual development sometimes arise with, for example, a glimpse of awe and wonder

at the counter-intuitive properties of a bonding material during a Year 8 design and technology textiles lesson and, in history lessons, references to the beliefs of Plains Indians about land and the scale of bereavement during World War I. Faiths including Christianity and Hinduism are introduced in religious education, but even most of these lessons lack a spiritual dimension because of the way in which material is presented.

61. The provision for cultural development is unsatisfactory. There is support for students' local cultural background within subjects such as English, art and design, music, history and geography. This extends wider afield with case studies of India and Japan in geography; some aspects of French and German society in modern foreign languages; foreign foods in design and technology; and references in art and design to art materials from Africa, or used by North American Indians or Australian Aborigines. However, students learn too little about cultural diversity in the UK and are not prepared culturally to live in a multicultural society. The glimpses of non-Western cultures that are provided in some lessons are so brief that they are more likely to reinforce than challenge cultural stereotypes. Opportunities to address ethnic and cultural diversity in a more considered and sustained way, for example during the existing geography field trips to the West Midlands, remain underdeveloped.
62. The college has invested in resources and staffing to support students for whom the conventional curriculum is not always appropriate. In Year 10 there is an alternative curriculum for a group of 24 students who spend three days each week in the college and two days on other activities including NVQ courses at a college of further education. The good range of provision includes options in construction, motor vehicle studies, hair and beauty, outdoor leisure, agricultural education and horse studies. This is coupled with opportunities for outdoor education including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The success of these programmes can be seen through the very positive impact on the students' rates of attendance.
63. In Year 11 there is an NVQ group of about 30 students who spend three days in work experience placements and two days in the college where they have lessons in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Most work towards a qualification in key skills. Many of these students do particularly well in the work experience, where they show considerable confidence. During a monitoring visit, the students seen spoke positively about work experience. Some of the present group of students have already been offered permanent work as a result of their achievements during a work placement. In lessons in English and ICT, most students worked well and achieved good results. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting the learning of these students when they are in college. When moving between lessons at college, students interact maturely and sensibly with adults and their peers. In previous years, students following this course have achieved considerable success with a range of qualifications which do not contribute to the place of the college in league tables. The provision for these students is very good and is organised very effectively by the co-ordinator for the course. This post holder has a heavy workload, with responsibility also for several vocational courses in the sixth form.
64. The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided for students with special educational needs are good and students' needs are well catered for. The college meets all statutory requirements and recommendations. The system of students' individual education plans is effective and links well to students' class work. Where individual arrangements for students are necessary these are established efficiently.
65. There is a wide range of sporting, dramatic, artistic and musical extra-curricular activities available. The extra-curricular provision in music includes swing bands, a balalaika group and students' pop music bands. Within subjects there are opportunities for travel and visits to other countries. Recently a group of Year 11 and post-16 students travelled to Rome during an annual art study visit. Journeys organised by the design and technology department include industry visits and attendance at national exhibitions. Departments including design and technology make their facilities available to students after school and on some Saturdays, to enable students to make additional progress with their coursework projects. ICT is a major provider of extra-curricular opportunities, with computer clubs at break times, lunchtimes and after school. There is a club where students learn how to make jewellery. Despite the unquestionably wide range of extra-curricular activities available overall, the college does not monitor how many of its students participate and whether there are areas of need that are unmet, for example a choir or DJ skills in music.
66. Community college status affirms the college's close relations with the local community. During the inspection, a lunch was held for representatives of the community and individuals including primary

headteachers, fundraisers, a police officer and governors spoke enthusiastically about the college, its contribution to the community and its recent improvement. Around 2,000 people from the locality use the college's facilities to pursue adult and continuing education. The community education arm of the college has its own venues and facilities that can also be accessed by teachers with groups of post-16 students. This provides considerable benefit for the students. The work placement programmes are a beneficiary of the good relations established between the college and local commerce and industry. In another aspect, the role of the college as a focal point for a number of the town's sports clubs, means that close links are engendered between those clubs and the college to the benefit of the students and teachers. The college also has good links with the town's youth theatre group. The college's facilities are made available to the youth theatre group for the preparation and rehearsal of productions. The drama department of the college has strong links with the Northcote Theatre in Exeter.

67. The quality of partnership with local primary schools is very high. A very good liaison structure allows the college early access to assessment information on incoming students. This helps the college organise supplementary programmes in order to raise attainment levels, some of which begin before pupils leave primary school. Partner primary schools participate in a rolling programme of courses run by the college. These include a technology course where Year 6 pupils visit college for a day per week for six weeks in order to participate in technology lessons with Year 9 students. The geography department works closely with partner schools on curriculum content and the college provides specialist geography teachers to support primary school geography field trips. The college encourages its partner primary schools to access its facilities. In addition to the workshop sessions and summer school classes run by the college, it also encourages partner primary schools to make use of some of the sports facilities of the college, such as the Astroturf pitch. The college support for primary pupils' music is strong. The Exmouth Primary Music Centre is based at the college and provides a rehearsal venue for an orchestra formed by some of the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils from local primary schools. The Literacy Summer School for Year 6 students who will be joining the school in September offers a good extra-curricular programme organised with partner schools. In addition to the links with further education institutions, the college has good links with initial teacher training institutions including the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth.
68. Provision for careers education is good overall. In the main school, careers education and advice are provided by the head of careers and staff from the local Connexions service. Students also have personal interviews with staff from Connexions if required. The level of support and advice provided is good. Much of the initial work takes place in personal development lessons, but other events such as industry days in Year 9 and work experience, which currently happens in Year 10, serve to give students a good introduction to the world of work. The vast majority of students obtain work experience placements. Work experience diaries are maintained and provide a good record. All students are visited by teaching staff during their work experience.
69. The college careers resources area houses a wide range of literature and provides access to computers for students' use. Very good provision has been made for clerical support for the head of careers and to assist with the organisation of work experience. Visiting speakers provide a good introduction to various aspects of work. The local Rotary Club provide mock interviews for students to give them experience and these are successful. The head of careers has also set up a system of mentors drawn from the local community, who provide good support and advice, particularly for students in Years 10 and 11 who experience difficulties in coping with college life. Careers education and advice are well organised by the current post holder.

Sixth form

70. The post-16 curriculum is satisfactory overall. A wide range of academic courses is complemented by a range of vocational courses that the college plans to expand. Students have a weekly lesson of personal development that is timetabled, as in the main college, on a 'rolling' weekly basis. They attend a tutor period on Monday morning and participate in a cycle of one to one meetings between tutors and students that are scheduled for the beginning of the college day on Tuesday to Friday. Some of the post-16 programme is twilight provision.
71. All the subjects of the National Curriculum including citizenship may be continued to AS and A2 in the sixth form, although the uptake for modern foreign languages is very low and the range of technological subjects does not include food technology. Additional subjects that are available include further

mathematics, use of mathematics and social sciences such as economics, government and politics, law, psychology and sociology. Some subjects, for example media studies, are available at both A2 and VCE. Other VCE courses include business studies, travel and tourism, leisure and recreation and health and social care. The NVQ programme includes provision in animal related work, car mechanics, care, catering, horticulture and retail and warehousing. Young Enterprise and key skills courses are available.

72. The statutory requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form is not met. The college states that it aims to have day conferences for sixth formers, a form of provision allowed by the agreed syllabus, but these have not been arranged. The statutory requirement in respect of collective worship is also not met.
73. The personal development curriculum for sixth formers is planned less thoroughly than is often the case. On occasion, there is a sense that the 'rolling' lessons are seen as a time for carrying out various necessary activities, rather than as part of a progressive curriculum. For example, during the inspection the personal development lessons in Year 13 were curtailed so that a year group photograph could be taken.
74. Post-16 students have access to a range of extra-curricular activities and visits and contribute to some of the activities run within the community college for younger students, by acting as paid leaders. The art and design department organises regular evening classes in life drawing for post-16 students and a group of Year 12 students recently took a production on tour in local primary schools. Some post-16 students support lessons for younger students, or act as mentors to them. However, there is no prefectorial system or requirement that post-16 students engage with the main college and so opportunities for sixth formers to develop their social skills by working with younger students and for younger students to benefit from the role model provided by successful sixth formers, are missed.
75. Students are encouraged to take part in work experience and many do so. While most placements are local, some students stay with relatives and friends in other parts of the country. As in the main college, advice and support are available from the Connexions service, although some students, particularly in Year 12, feel that these are less readily available. Visiting speakers, including some former students of the college, help to expand students' picture of working life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

76. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff show appropriate concern for the needs of the students and provide good role models to encourage their development. The college has good arrangements for inducting students into the college and for encouraging good behaviour and the arrangements for promoting attendance are satisfactory. The procedures for monitoring students' academic performance and personal development and for providing educational and personal support and guidance, are also satisfactory. The procedures for supporting students' personal development are unsatisfactory.
77. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are unsatisfactory. The provision for first aid is appropriate with a fully qualified dedicated first aider always on duty, records kept of any treatment and letters home to parents as appropriate. The college has three designated persons for child protection and its procedures are generally effective. However, these procedures do not meet all legal requirements. The level of knowledge varies and some staff were unable to identify the designated persons or to detail the action to be taken in the event of suspected child abuse. The college has not offered recent training to its staff and this omission has left them under-equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle such problems with confidence. While there is no suggestion that the college is unsafe, the arrangements for overseeing health and safety have weaknesses. The facilities manager is notionally the co-ordinator for health and safety but her duties are limited to preventing and removing any hazards around the site. This she does assiduously and ensures that her staff have appropriate training and follow good and safe practice. As far as the rest of the college is concerned, the heads of department are responsible for ensuring safe practice is followed in their subject areas. However no-one has the responsibility of ensuring that they do so or that they are fully implementing changes in practice and regulations (though the facilities manager properly forwards to them any guidance received from the local education authority). These arrangements also leave open the possibility that other areas of college life are not properly taken into consideration. Two examples of unsatisfactory practice were noted during the inspection. First, the external door to an unoccupied science preparation room was left unlocked and ajar. Second, while the procedures for evacuation include buildings being checked to

ensure everybody has left the building, the responsibility for this is placed on whoever is the senior colleague present at the time and not on designated staff who have had proper training.

78. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress have recently started to be improved. National test results from primary schools and information from the college's own assessment procedures in Year 7 are used to build up a profile of the students' attainment when they enter school. This is to form a baseline for tracking students' progress over their time in the college. The procedures for the assessment of attainment vary between individual departments; some are more advanced than others. In design and technology, for example, there is a well established system based on their own assessment template that uses National Curriculum levels, records of progress and students' self-assessment with targets for improvement. In the majority of departments, the assessment information is less advanced than this and not yet used effectively to inform lesson planning. The tutors receive details of the students' progress and attitudes in each subject area and this enables them to provide interim reports to parents. The college's planned development of the assessment and recording system will enable the tutors to have fuller information more frequently so that they will be able to provide further support and guidance to their students.
79. The monitoring of progress of students' personal development is less structured and relies mainly on the subject teachers' and tutors' own knowledge of the individual students as no formal recording system is in place. The programme of personal development is led by the heads of year and delivered by the tutors. The co-ordinator is a part-time teacher with a full teaching programme for religious education. The planned programme is relevant to the particular stages of the students' education and covers such matters as health, drugs, study skills, work experience and bullying. From the lessons seen during the inspection there is considerable variation in the quality of the teaching. While they were often satisfactory, some lessons were unsatisfactory because the tutors do not have the appropriate subject knowledge. The registration periods at the start of the day are well used by the tutors for registration and administrative matters but the main benefit for the students is the opportunity to chat to their friends.
80. The tutors and heads of year usually stay with their students as they move through the college from one year to the next. The support for students in Year 7 is particularly strong. The college visits the students in the partner primary schools in both Years 5 and 6 and assesses their needs and talks to them about the transfer process. Year 10 mentors support the incoming Year 7 students during their first year at the college. The mentors are well trained and provide good help to the younger students with any problems that may occur. In the summer holiday period before the Year 7s arrive the college runs summer schools for various groups of students. Students throughout the college can consult the on-site counsellor and the college pays for the services of a second educational psychologist.
81. The procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour and for preventing any oppressive behaviour are good. The code of conduct and classroom expectations recognises the needs of the students and reflects the philosophy of the college. The college's approach is also used to recognise good work and effort. It has a good balance of rewards and sanctions, emphasising the use of praise. The good work stamps build up to congratulation slips, merit certificates and commendations. Letters are sent home at various stages. The sanctions for unacceptable behaviour similarly escalate and include time-outs and different levels of report. Staff generally adopt a consistent approach. Though any bullying or name-calling is rare, the college takes appropriate action if it occurs.
82. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory and have a number of good features. A deputy principal is responsible for monitoring the level of attendance. The heads of year are particularly involved in monitoring and supporting students with low attendance and have a very good understanding of the students and their family circumstances. Registers are taken by the subject teachers and the departments monitor attendance in their areas. This helps them to identify students whose attendance is starting to deteriorate so that they can, for example, provide additional classroom support or modify the curriculum. The college employs its own education welfare officer who provides excellent support. As well as working with families of students in the college, part of her time is spent with families of students from the partner primary schools. This arrangement means that she has an extensive knowledge of siblings with attendance problems and ensures she knows students newly arriving into the college in Year 7. Other initiatives include persuading local retailers not to serve students at times when they should be at college. The college has set itself realistic targets for improvement in attendance but it has not yet set targets for each tutor group to help emphasise the importance among students and staff.

83. The assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are very good. From the time they enter the college, students' achievements are identified, measured and recorded. Although some records are over-descriptive initially, the setting of targets leads to improvements in the staff's recording of what students know, understand and can do. The college understands the necessity of ensuring the precision in such documentation and all files are maintained immaculately with new information entered immediately.
84. The arrangements for supporting students with special educational needs are managed and co-ordinated well. Teachers and other staff who work highly effectively as a team take decisions on intervention, strategies and target setting through a shared and informed view. All staff work to agreed policies and practices but there are difficulties over the deployment of teaching assistants with too few in science and too many in history.

Sixth form

Assessment

85. Assessment in the sixth form is generally more advanced than that in the main college, although some inconsistency in the practice between subjects remains. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are sound and the diagnosis of and provision for individual students' learning needs are good. Assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow the requirements of the awarding bodies.

Advice, support and guidance

86. Advice, support and guidance are sound overall. Students' choices of some subjects are more gender-stereotyped than is often the case. In order to improve equality of opportunity to students in this respect, staff need to analyse sources of careers advice including literature and aspects of the main college curriculum for examples of bias and consider how gender stereotyping could be countered. Students are inducted effectively into the sixth form. The guidance provided to sixth formers on careers and further and higher education is satisfactory overall. There are routine opportunities for students to research the higher education courses that are most suitable for them, although visits to universities outside the south west of England are infrequent. The procedures for monitoring and improving students' attendance are satisfactory on balance. The procedures for ensuring students' health and safety require improvement, in the same ways as in the main college.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

87. In their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors the great majority of parents said that they are pleased with the work of the college. The inspection team supports many of their positive comments which are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Parents say that the college is well led and the teaching is good. Their children like coming to college and generally make progress as a result of the support they receive. The college expects them to work hard and helps them to become mature and responsible. They feel comfortable approaching the college with any questions. Some doubts were expressed about the amount and quality of homework and the inspectors conclude that, in the main college, the work the students are expected to do at home is unsatisfactory, although there is good practice in some subjects. A few parents also feel they are not well informed about the progress of their children and the inspectors agree that the quality and timing of the full written reports are inadequate. Some parents also feel the college does not work closely with them though the inspectors conclude that the college works hard to inform parents about the college and that the new voicemail facility for all teachers is an improvement. Nevertheless, there is a shortage of information on what is being taught. A few parents were also dissatisfied with the level of behaviour in the college. The inspection team observed that only in a small number of lessons did the behaviour of some students limit the progress of others in those classes. Students generally consider that bullying is infrequent and usually dealt with well by the college. At the meeting with the inspectors, mention was made of unsatisfactory progress in some subjects. Overall, the inspectors consider that the students make satisfactory progress though there is some variation between subjects.

88. Overall, the college has established satisfactory links with the parents though there are weaknesses. The principal sends newsletters home two or three times a term outlining the various activities that the students are involved in and providing general administrative information. This general information is enhanced by the high quality 'Reporter' paper produced by the media studies department and distributed to all parents and to the wider community. Other letters refer to more specific matters. The parents' guide provides useful information for new parents. The contact book is designed to include information about a student's targets for the term and the homework set during the week. However, this is often incomplete and, although it includes merits awarded to students, it rarely contains any messages from staff or parents. It is therefore widely under-utilised as a means of communication and the college is reviewing its use. Information about progress is provided on several occasions during the year both in writing with the full and interim reports and with the meetings with tutors and, on a separate occasion, subject teachers. Nevertheless, only some two-thirds of parents come to the meetings with staff. The annual reports on progress provide only limited information. The statements about each subject often have very general statements providing no information about what the students know and can do and any targets are often equally unspecific. One weakness, which is recognised by the college, is the 18-month gap between the full reports for Years 9 and 10. The interim reports helpfully summarise progress with grades (which are also on the full reports) for attainment, homework and personal qualities but provide no comments to explain further. Parents of students with special educational needs are fully involved in the setting and review of their individual education plans.
89. Parents' involvement makes a satisfactory contribution to the achievement of the students. Students are generally happy in college, work hard and are keen to learn. These attitudes reflect the extent to which parents encourage their children to respect the college and the education it provides. It is apparent to the college that parents provide a range of help at home. Some provide extensive support by, for example, ensuring an appropriate learning environment for homework and providing resources such as computers. Parents of students with special educational needs are very supportive of their children. They have an excellent relationship with the staff in the college, they support their children at home and come to the meetings in college. The college obtains ideas to help it improve from the replies to questionnaires, for example, about uniform and after parents' evenings. Parent governors are supportive of the college and help to shape its future. The parents' association is run by a small but active group of parents providing catering at evening meetings and organising social and fund raising events. Some parents have helped with refurbishment of buildings.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

90. The college's aims and values are well articulated, shared with staff, parents, governors and students and embedded in the life of the institution. At the heart of these values lie the promotion of learning, good relationships and mutual respect and responsibilities to the wider community. The ethos of the college reflects these important values, although there is still too little of a work ethic among many of the students of the college.
91. The principal and senior managers lead and manage the college effectively and efficiently, promoting high standards and high-quality teaching and learning. The academic and support staff are very committed to the college and work hard to make it successful.
92. The recently-appointed principal provides the college with leadership that is outstanding. Building on the experience gained during his previous headships and the foundations laid by his predecessor and senior staff, he has acted decisively and promptly to promote the improvement of teaching and learning by, for example, making very frequent visits to classrooms; reorganising the college day so that there are fewer lesson movements and more teaching takes place in the mornings; reducing the number of students travelling between sites through the zoning of accommodation; easing the difficulties faced by staff and students travelling between the college sites through the opening of a new footbridge; introducing a new, smarter, uniform; and making over 120 improvements to the quality of the environment for learning. The principal has a very strong presence throughout this very large institution and students speak of feeling that they know him and that he knows them. The brief visits that he makes regularly to all classrooms contribute significantly to his presence throughout the student community and also help all teachers, including those who work part-time or who are newly qualified, to feel supported in their work.
93. The energy and focus of the principal's approach are carried through into the work of the senior management team. An SMT meeting held during the inspection was characterised by the careful and

thorough presentation of ideas for consideration, a high level of debate with contributions from all those present followed by summarisation, the intervention of the principal in order to articulate links with other college initiatives and the agreement of action that is to be monitored and followed through. In short, a great deal was accomplished in a brief space of time.

94. The members of the leadership team and heads of department, have a clear understanding of their roles and how these relate to those of senior managers and the vision of the principal. The roles of head of department and member of the leadership team, have now been separated in almost all cases, to allow individuals the opportunity to carry out their responsibilities thoroughly. The leadership and management of subjects are never less than satisfactory. Heads of department follow the principal's lead in making frequent visits to classrooms. In some departments these visits need to be lengthened so that, for example, students engrossed in independent work nevertheless notice that a visit has taken place.
95. Delegation to postholders at all levels of the college is well established. At times, delegation is so embedded that senior managers have to collect information from heads of department about practices that they might have been expected to manage strategically. For example, when preparing for the inspection, senior managers needed to ask heads of department how they divide students into teaching groups within the blocked time that they have available. The grouping of students for teaching did not emerge as an issue in this inspection. Indeed, heads of department often use their discretion over groupings creatively, for example to experiment with the effect on attainment of having some all boys groups in Key Stage 4. However, it would be constructive for senior managers to have the knowledge needed to guide practice in grouping in future and to ensure that students do not have an unduly disjointed experience of grouping in different subjects. Very occasionally, communication within this very large institution is not as effective as it might be. But this is typically because the recipient of a message has actively taken some initiative in respect of its interpretation that proved to be misplaced, rather than because messages are forgotten or ignored.
96. The college development plan is a comprehensive, well-judged and ambitious document. The ten priorities for 2002/2003 are curriculum structure and school day; inclusion and behaviour; attendance; ICT developments; implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy; to apply for and attain specialist college status; staff development; assessment; self review and evaluation and implementing a five-year building strategy. There is a helpful summary of costings and a calendar of implementation is included. Good progress has been made with the 127 actions listed.
97. The pastoral management structure of the college, which is based on year groups, with heads of year, deputy heads of year and tutors who often move with their year groups from Year 7 to Year 11, is one of its strengths. Despite the size of the institution, students feel that there are teachers who know them.
98. The management of the special educational needs provision within the college is very good and draws on the commitment from all staff in the college to raising standards of teaching and learning. Many useful strategies have been recently introduced and procedures which reflect the requirements of the new code of practice have been set up effectively. Students achieve well in lessons because of the knowledge, expertise and effective co-ordination of staff.
99. Data, including a wide range of assessment results, are starting to be used effectively by senior staff to monitor and evaluate the performance of subjects and the college, diagnose strengths and weaknesses and take effective action to secure improvements. A cycle of department reviews has begun and has already included some departments that appeared to be under performing. The wider monitoring of teaching by senior managers is carried out frequently, but is at an early stage of development. Many of the reports are descriptive rather than evaluative; they deal with the ingredients of lessons, rather than their effect. The system for performance management of teaching staff is in place.
100. The governing body is unusually experienced and skilled. Governors are very knowledgeable about the progress of the college and the governing body discharges its responsibilities very effectively.
101. The college makes effective use of ICT for management and organisation. The college intranet contains a large amount of information which teachers need to use and this provides a valuable resource for the staff. Good use is made of email for communication between staff. There has been considerable

investment of money and time to establish the administration network and this has proved to be a very wise investment. The use of new technology is very good.

102. Very good financial planning ensures that the educational priorities, identified in the college development plan, are fully met. Specific grants are all used effectively for their designated purposes. The governors' budget committee and 'Value for Money' sub-committee ensure that the college applies its resources well and have effective systems in place for monitoring and reviewing expenditure and for ensuring that the principles of best value are applied.
103. Strategic resources are very well used. Priorities for the improvement of the learning environment for all students have been clearly identified by the leadership team and supported by the governors. The college has successfully obtained additional capital funding for a new building that will include an assembly hall. The construction of the new footbridge has already had a very significant impact on the faster and safer transfer of students between the two sites and behaviour in transit has improved. Maintenance budgets have been very well used to secure improvements for example in the designated areas for eating, in the painting and refurbishment of classrooms and in the acoustics of one of the halls. Standards fund grants have been very well used to support students' learning through the behaviour support unit, the employment of additional teaching assistants and investment in computer hardware.
104. The college has a full complement of teaching staff and the match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. There are sufficient qualified and trained staff to teach all courses effectively at the levels required except in religious education. However, continuity of teaching is difficult to achieve in some dozen English classes which are taught by more than one teacher. In religious education a significant proportion of lessons are undertaken by nine non-specialist teachers and this constrains the quality of the teaching and learning. Although there are sufficient support staff in most subjects, they are insufficient to cover all students' learning needs in English, science and modern foreign languages.
105. There are effective induction programmes for newly qualified staff and for staff new to the school. Induction is particularly effective in drama and geography. The school is an effective provider of initial teacher training in a number of subjects and drama will also take postgraduate trainees next academic year.
106. Most departments identify needs and plan for continuing professional development of teachers. However, in English and geography such planning is largely limited to developments within the various syllabuses and planning for inservice training in religious education is inadequate. Appraisal and performance management are ongoing in all subjects except religious education; the procedures are particularly effective in mathematics.
107. Learning resources are at least satisfactory in the main college with the exception of music where more tuned percussion instruments are needed; they are very good in ICT and good in business studies, history and geography. Post-16 learning resources are good in most subjects, very good in ICT but again unsatisfactory in music where there are deficiencies in computer software and hardware. The reorganisation of the accommodation for English, so that students in Key Stage 4 are taught at Gipsy Lane, will help with the allocation of books between the Green Close and Gipsy Lane libraries. However, the loan rates are currently low and diminish from Year 7 to Year 11. Some subjects, notably geography, make good use of the library facilities that are available.
108. The college covers a very large geographical area that is split between the Gipsy Lane and Green Close sites and which contains many buildings that are not integrated and many routes that are open to the elements. On days when students have assembly, some tutor groups register outside in the playground before entering one of the halls. Students in Key Stage 4 are still permitted to leave the college sites at lunchtime because of lack of accommodation and insufficient access to food and students in Key Stage 3 who, since September 2002, have been required to stay on-site at lunchtime, shelter under marquees. Although many of the teaching and public areas are still in a poor state of repair and are in need of decoration, the school has engaged in a considerable programme of redecoration and refurbishment since the arrival of the new principal. Two painters and a handyman have been appointed. There has been an audit of provision for students with disabilities. The 124 projects completed over the last 14 months include painting, replacement of flooring, refurbishing and replacement of key equipment, fencing and security around the Green Close site, maintenance of the grounds, re-roofing, the creation of areas where students can shelter at lunchtime and the replacement of display areas. A timetable has been

set for further work. In addition, the college has approval for the construction of a purpose built block for visual and performing arts teaching. The opening of a new footbridge between the sites, during the week before the inspection, has done much to make the poor accommodation of this college more tolerable for students and staff. That inspectors judged the accommodation in almost all subjects to be supporting teaching and learning to an acceptable level and is testimony to the commitment, ingenuity and flexibility of the college staff.

109. There have been recent reviews of the timetable to maximise the use of the teaching spaces between the two sites. Teaching was reorganised in September 2002 so that students in Key Stage 3 are mainly based at Green Close and students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 are mainly taught at Gipsy Lane, but students still have to change site frequently to use specialist facilities and staff move site frequently. In particular, some geography teachers make up to 15 site changes per week and one teacher works in 12 different teaching rooms. The changing areas in PE are in poor condition.

Sixth form

110. The sixth form is well led and managed. Students receive sound individual advice when choosing sixth form courses. The advice that is available when they consider whether to apply for higher education is also sound and supplemented by a range of Internet and paper resources. Students attend a university convention held at Exeter University and there are links with Plymouth University. However, there are few organised visits to universities outside the south west of England, or occasions when students feed back on such visits to their peers and so students, particularly students who would be in the first generation of their family to go to university, are not completely aware of the full range of opportunities open to them.
111. Senior managers are aware that the curriculum which is offered does not fully meet the needs of all students and have worked to introduce a broader curriculum from September 2003. This will include more vocational courses, in particular courses that prepare students for the employment opportunities that are available locally.
112. Students frequently have insufficient access to computers for personal study. The accommodation in the Telfer block is among the best appointed in the college, but some of the rooms are too small for the larger groups of students.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

113. To improve and build upon the sound education that students already receive, the governors and senior management of the college should:
- I. raise standards further by improving the consistency and reliability of assessment and target setting and using this information to guide learning and the planning of teaching.
(Paragraphs 45, 78, 88)
 - II. improve students' overall rate of attendance and attitude to their own learning.
(Paragraphs 27, 82, 90)
 - III. continue to improve the quality of the environment for learning.
(Paragraph 108)
 - IV. improve the planning of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, personal development, citizenship and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
(Paragraphs 10, 11, 43, 53, 54, 57, 60, 61, 73, 76, 79)
 - V. refine the college's timetabling of subjects, so that departments can promote the efficient use of teachers' and students' time.
(Paragraph 109)

VI. improve the health and safety procedures of the school by:

- ensuring that staff are trained in child protection procedures;
- carrying out an overall risk assessment; and
- improving the procedures for evacuation of the buildings in case of emergency.

(Paragraph 77)

Sixth form

i. Raise standards further by improving the consistency and reliability of assessment and target setting and using this information to guide learning and the planning of teaching.

(Paragraphs 45, 78, 85)

ii. Improve students' rate of attendance.

(Paragraph 29)

iii. Work to improve the access of students to computers during personal study.

(Paragraph 112)

iv. Implement the plan to increase the range of the curriculum from September 2003.

(Paragraph 111)

v. Organise the college timetable so that time is not lost from subjects for personal development.

(Paragraph 31)

vi. Improve the health and safety procedures of the college by:

- carrying out an overall risk assessment; and
- improving the procedures for evacuation of the buildings in case of emergency.

(Paragraphs 86)

In addition to the key issues above (also referred to in subject sections), other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the college's plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 9, 12, 24, 25, 30, 42, 46, 47, 49, 51, 52, 60, 65, 72, 74, 75, 87, 88 and 106 and in subject sections.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	276
	Sixth form	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
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Years 7 - 11

Number	4	44	128	87	12	1	0
Percentage	1	16	46	32	4	0	0

Sixth form

Number	0	18	38	17	2	0	0
Percentage	0	24	51	23	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1,981	346
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	174	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	113	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	4

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	62
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	104

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2001-2002.

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the 2001-2002	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	219	211	430

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	159	147	139
	Girls	185	155	139
	Total	344	302	278
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (66)	70 (72)	65 (63)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (31)	40 (42)	20 (19)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	114	139	127
	Girls	161	159	139
	Total	275	298	266
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (60)	70 (71)	62 (56)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (21)	43 (32)	20 (18)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for 2001-2002	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	218	198	416

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	86	189	204
	Girls	91	179	191
	Total	177	368	395
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	43 (46)	88 (86)	95 (94)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	33.4 (35)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	49%
	National	N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	65	59	124
	Average point score per candidate	190 (16.6)	220 (15.1)	208.9 (16.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	54	47	101	19	11	130
	Average point score per candidate	154.3	199.8	175.5	92.6	103.6	96.7
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
2,166	273	8
0	0	0
46	3	0
7	0	0
4	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
6	0	0
4	0	0
85	8	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	131.09
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.78

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1,096

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	5,963,952
Total expenditure	5,943,056
Expenditure per student	2,582
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,418
Balance carried forward to next year	69,653

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	36
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31

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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	2,327
Number of questionnaires returned	260

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	59	7	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	32	59	5	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	53	16	5	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	65	16	6	2
The teaching is good.	12	68	8	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	49	28	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	48	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	36	55	5	3	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	50	22	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	30	53	4	2	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	61	8	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	40	12	4	13

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The standards are above average.
- Students' writing covers a broad and interesting range of forms, including creative and imaginative writing.
- More opportunities are now being given in lessons for students to speak at length, share opinions and defend a point of view.
- Students are introduced to an appropriate and challenging range of reading.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of basic literacy are not high enough.
- Half of the teaching is satisfactory, rather than good.
- The formative assessment of students' work requires improvement.
- Too many classes are taught by more than one teacher.

114. Standards in this subject are good overall. English is among the two or three highest-performing subjects in the college. Students in upper band groups in Years 9 to 11 do particularly well; standards in lower band groups are more uneven. Standards of basic literacy are too low and need to be improved further, especially at Key Stage 3.
115. Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 dipped to below average in 2000 and 2001 but recovered in 2002, when they were well above the national average. Last year, 84 per cent of Year 9 students attained Level 5 or above, compared with a national average (in 2001) of 66 per cent. Attainment in English was better than in mathematics or science. On the basis of the average points scored by Year 9 students, performance in the English tests was above the national average. Achievement was very good when compared with the same students' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion gaining Level 6 or above, 36 per cent in 2002, was a little above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. Girls did better than boys by about the same margin as nationally.
116. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2002, 62 per cent of Year 11 students gained a C grade or above in GCSE English. This was in line with the national average, as were the proportions gaining each grade from A* to C. Girls did better than boys by a similar margin to that found nationally; in GCSE English literature, the difference was less than the national difference, showing that higher-attaining boys do well in literature at the college. Students did better in English than in most other subjects and significantly so in English literature, although only 70 per cent of the Year 11 cohort were entered for English literature compared to 84 per cent nationally. There has been a steady improvement in these GCSE results over the past three years.
117. Standards of students' work in lessons and over time are a little less good than these results indicate, although, where the teaching is most effective, students of all levels of attainment produce very good and sometimes outstanding work. Most students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 and 8, good progress in Year 9, especially in the upper band and good progress from Year 10 to Year 11. Students who have special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress; they make good progress where their needs are carefully planned for by individual teachers.
118. The department has rightly identified speaking, listening and writing as areas for further development. More opportunities are now being given in lessons for students to speak at length, to share opinions and to defend a point of view. These opportunities vary, however, between teachers. Students overall, particularly at Key Stage 3, are less confident in speaking and less careful in listening than might be expected. Although most students read aloud fluently when asked to do so, many have had too little practice to enable them to do so with clarity and expression.
119. Students' writing covers a broad and interesting range of forms, including creative and imaginative writing. There is good use of redrafting and developing essays from notes, especially in examination courses at

Key Stage 4. Project work often makes varied and appropriate use of ICT and word processing. Students learn the technical vocabulary they need to analyse poetry, non-fictional prose and argument. Some of their writing for specific purposes, such as creating a travel brochure, showed sophistication and inventiveness, for example in Year 8. They also explore literary texts by writing from the viewpoints of characters in novels and plays. Basic literacy, however, is insecure and does not show enough improvement over time. In particular, standards of spelling and sometimes grammar and sentence structure, are below average at both key stages, even among otherwise high attaining students. The writing of boys in the lower band groups is marred by inaccuracies and use of non-standard English forms. On the whole, less capable writers show too little improvement over time.

120. The range of reading that students are introduced to is appropriate and challenging, although independent reading and research decline as many students move up the college; the librarians, for example, report a decline in borrowing from the two libraries after Year 7. The teachers of some groups make too much use of photocopied worksheets, which can lead to a narrowing of students' reading experience. As was found at the time of the previous inspection, upper band groups from Year 9 onwards tend to receive a broader and richer diet, except where the teaching is planned to obviate this among students of more limited prior attainment. The department does well to support and encourage students working at the C/D borderline in the run-up to GCSE and they make good progress.
121. The quality of teaching was at least sound in nine lessons in ten and at least good in nearly half. There is some excellent teaching in the department, the strengths of which need to be more widely shared. In the few lessons where too little learning took place, this was because of poor behaviour and strained relationships in the classroom, for example among some lower band groups in Year 9. It reflected at times the dispersed nature of the accommodation and the time it takes for teachers to move between teaching rooms at either end of the campus. In a well-taught lesson on persuasive language, students were challenged to think, enquire and research for themselves, within an open-ended framework. They were actively involved throughout in purposeful speaking, listening, reading and writing, encouraged by well-displayed examples and specific targets to achieve. Most lessons are carefully planned in relation to their content, but learning objectives are often too broad and general. Students are not always clear about the purpose of activities nor how the outcomes will be assessed. In the best lessons there was a productive sense of shared enthusiasm and challenge.
122. The sound teaching is methodical but has less variety. It is characterised by prescriptive tasks, sometimes not well matched to students' prior learning or aptitude. Students demonstrate what they know and can do, but do not always have their learning extended. The pace is sometimes too slow, with insufficient challenge. Students are read to, but do too little reading aloud themselves. Marking of students' work and the setting of homework, are at best excellent but there is too much variation in rigour and in the extent to which students are informed of the levels they have achieved. Nevertheless, students enjoy their English lessons and have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
123. This large department of some 22 teachers is efficiently managed and led. Delegation is, in the main, effective although job descriptions need to be clearer about the extent of individual accountabilities and how these are to be monitored. The strengths are the teachers' commitment, enthusiasm and teamwork. An appropriate range of policies has been drawn up, but there is as yet no policy on raising standards of literacy within the department or across the college. Two areas where improvement is needed are: greater use of assessment information to guide the teaching and planning; and using the outcomes of monitoring to spread effective teaching and inform staff development. Some teachers need more guidance and support than they are receiving at present.
124. Development planning is gaining momentum, with the help of LEA literacy consultants at Key Stage 3. Action plans, however, need to have more specific timelines, success criteria and performance targets. Clear priorities for further improvement need to be identified, including, where possible, minimising the adverse effects of the dispersed accommodation and the large number of shared classes. The latter is at present a major constraint. Nearly two classes in five have more than one teacher, with a higher proportion in Year 7. An imminent vacancy is being advertised, but there are signs that the subject may be understaffed, especially when the widely spread nature of the buildings and teaching rooms is taken into account. Two support assistants are allocated to the subject and they make a valuable and developing contribution: these are too few, however, for a college and department of this size.
125. Despite these constraints, the teachers cope well and morale is good. Improvements made since the last inspection are at least satisfactory and are ongoing. The areas that merit further development are:

raising standards of basic literacy; increasing the proportion of good teaching; continuing to improve formative assessment; refining action planning and staff development planning; and reducing the number of classes taught by more than one teacher.

126. Media studies is a popular and expanding option at GCSE. Facilities are good, but those for ICT, which are well used especially for project work, are dispersed. The subject currently forms part of the English department but will become independent from the start of next school year. Results at GCSE in 2002 were close to the national average, although a much larger proportion of the cohort was entered than is the case nationally. Students learn the conventions of film, television and advertising, producing their own videos and newspapers and mastering technical vocabulary. Students concentrate well and enjoy their studies. They value the opportunity to show initiative and are well motivated. Higher attainers show good knowledge of media techniques and methods, although average and lower attaining students do not sufficiently develop their ideas in coursework. The teaching is thorough and systematic, encouraging independent learning. Classroom relationships are good and expectations are high.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- GCSE results are improving and now match national standards.
- The relationships between staff and students are positive.

Areas for improvement

- The timetable constrains learning and needs developing to maximise teachers' energies.
- The students need more help with developing their thinking skills.
- Formative assessment needs further development across the department.

127. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, the percentage of students achieving at least Level 5 in the national tests was in line with the national average. The progress that students had made since the end of Key Stage 2 was satisfactory.
128. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, the proportion of students gaining a GCSE A*-C grade was close to the national average. Students had made satisfactory progress since the end of Year 9.
129. The college has a good entry policy of entering all students for an examination in mathematics. In both key stages high attaining students take part in an extended course. This has enabled them to be stretched and better prepares the Key Stage 4 students for A-level. Over the three years since 2000, girls' attainment at Key Stage 3 has been higher than that of boys. In Key Stage 4 in 2002 boys were less likely to achieve one of their higher results in mathematics. However, academic standards have improved since the last inspection.
130. The standard of the work seen during the inspection in Years 9 and 11 was average. The students' books covered a wide range of topics and showed that the whole range of levels were being addressed within each mathematical area. The curriculum has depth and students experience difficult problems. A good example of this was in a Year 9 bottom set lesson on indices, where both the notation and level of approach were of a good standard. The success of this lesson was best described by a student "Wow I got them all right!"
131. The department has correctly identified the performance of students in their coursework as a weakness. Work needs to be done to increase students' attainment in this area so that it is line with the other components.
132. The quality of the teaching and learning is good. In a high performing Year 10 group, students were working independently to determine the equations of motion. There was an excitement in the air as principles were discussed and equations appeared. Students valued the lesson and enjoyed the academic argument. In another Year 11 lesson students were endeavouring to complete the square and deal with surds. In doing so they were not afraid to offer answers and methods without fear of failure. This

created a positive learning atmosphere. In a less successful lesson a student's question was met with "you'll have to take my word for it" and a chance to reinforce learning was missed.

133. Much of the interaction in lessons was between teacher and student. There was little encouragement of independent thinking in the majority of lessons and few instances of students discussing mathematical ideas. The department is strong enough to give time to reflective conversations and a more problem solving approach to learning, that will, in turn, enhance mathematical thinking.
134. The presentation of students' work is generally satisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, but it is not yet consistent across the entire department. In some classes, although students were issued with rulers, they did not use them and preferred to draw free hand. This often led to poor quality work and lack of respect for the subject which was also expressed in graffiti on books. In other lessons, presentation was given status and teachers spoke to students who were not being neat or setting out their work correctly. In these lessons the quality of learning was higher. Marking is inconsistent. The best books had supportive and formative comments in them. In other cases books were not marked or had cursory ticks. The department should now develop good practice among all its members. The teachers are all clearly committed to improving the quality of work and will respond well to the development of a formative marking policy.
135. Homework is set regularly and generally marked. Students also report that they get homework and that it is marked.
136. The department has purchased small white boards for the use of each student. These were used to very good effect in most Key Stage 3 classes to develop numeracy skills, which are satisfactory. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is satisfactory. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented with numerical warm ups at the start of lessons. The content of these starters was usually linked to the lesson objectives and helped consolidate learning.
137. Calculators are used appropriately and accurately. Where ICT was used well it was very effective. In a very good Year 10 lesson, *Omnigraph* was used to help with transformations. This resulted in lots of "Wow" from the students and they achieved a good level of learning. However the opportunities to use ICT were not always taken, for example, in a lesson on finding a root by iteration. There are impressive displays of ICT reflecting its use within the curriculum. However its use is limited and the department has insufficient access to computers on a regular basis.
138. Students with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. Provision for their learning is very good. There is effective joint planning between support teachers and teachers. There were some very good lessons in the lower ability sets in Key Stage 3. The teacher used a variety of strategies and materials to keep a group of students on task, some of which were challenging. The mathematics department also has a good teacher assistant working with them and her work made a positive contribution to the learning experience of the students.
139. The department needs to develop differentiated activity across both key stages in order to stretch all abilities. This should raise achievement. There was some underachievement when the students were kept together going through questions. In lessons where some students were allowed to work faster than their peers the progress was better.
140. Students were generally well motivated and have a good attitude to learning. The mathematics area helps to reinforce this feeling by its organisation, display and the way students are valued. Their responses were at least satisfactory in all lessons in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The students' behaviour only deteriorated in lessons that lacked challenge. In these lessons the pace was poor and students were not stretched; some wasted time waiting for the teacher to set them more work. In the weaker lessons there was little planned interaction between students by teachers and most conversations were directed at the teacher. On the occasions when students discussed ideas they were able to consolidate their learning.
141. The quality of leadership and management is good. Although it is a large department, members work together well. The head of department has organised it so that it is a cohesive and effective unit. Their work, however, is limited by a poor timetable which has put extra stress on an all ready hard working department. Time was lost by both staff and students travelling to another site between periods 1-2 and 3-4. This does not facilitate effective learning. There is a handbook and there are detailed schemes of

work that include guidelines on use of resources on the intranet. It should be further developed to include strategies for teaching within the schemes of work, rather than just being a content list. Departmental members value the head of department's support. This trust has enabled him to take part in monitoring of teaching that colleagues find supportive.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge to develop students' understanding in most lessons.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities across the school are good.
- Lesson planning addresses the needs of the curriculum effectively.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is generally good.

Areas for improvement

- Involve all students more actively in lessons.
- Improve the strategies for assessing how well students are doing in lessons.
- Focus classroom monitoring more on identifying the good practice in lessons and share the outcomes to improve standards across the department.

142. In 2002, the standards reached by students at age 14 were below average compared with most schools. The percentage of students reaching the higher levels (6 and 7) was well below average when set against their prior attainment at age 11. Girls' attainment at the end of Year 9 was closer to the national average than that of boys. Standards in science were lower than those in English and mathematics. Between 1999 and 2002, standards declined in comparison with national trends. The performance of boys declined more than that of girls over this period. Test results indicate a degree of underachievement, particularly among boys.
143. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, most students were entered for the GCSE examinations in double award science; most of the remainder took the single award examinations. Standards in GCSE science were below average in 2002; they had declined since 2001. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades was below average, significantly so for girls. Very few students gained the highest grades (A*/A) when compared with most schools. Boys' results were better overall than those of girls. The performance of both boys and girls in science was worse than in most other subjects in the college.
144. Nearly all the students taking the entry level certificate in science at the end of Year 11 in 2002 achieved the highest grade.
145. Over the past few years, the science department has had considerable difficulty covering for teachers absent through long-term sickness. Short-term solutions were often unsatisfactory and as a result the quality of teaching and learning in a number of lessons was adversely affected. The department considers this to have been a feature behind the poor attainment of some students in external examinations during this period. While this situation is still not entirely resolved, the teaching and learning seen during the inspection were generally satisfactory.
146. Another factor that the department considers to have had an affect on results was a reduction in the teaching time for science in Year 9 between 2000 and 2002. This change was introduced to provide more time for a second modern foreign language. The time allocation for science during this period was below the national average. This policy has been revised and the teaching time in Year 9 is now slightly above average.
147. The department has welcomed the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Science Strategy. The considerable support that teachers have received from the local education authority consultants is beginning to have an impact on learning in Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence shows that standards in these years are improving, with most students in Year 9 currently working around the level expected for their age. This represents satisfactory achievement for most, although some boys could do better.

148. Many teachers are beginning to use the national framework as a guide when planning their lessons; they are now clearer about what students are expected to learn. Similar lesson structures are being used across the department and more planned activities are being introduced to help students recall and understand scientific concepts better. In many cases questioning is becoming more searching, which is helping to develop students' thinking skills. Those teachers who are particularly comfortable with the new strategy are beginning to include some aspects of the framework in their lessons in Years 10 and 11; this is also having a positive effect.
149. Inspection evidence confirms that students' attainment on entry to the college is around the national average; in most Year 7 lessons, students were developing their scientific knowledge and understanding at the appropriate level. For instance, in a lesson on acids and alkalis, most students used the correct scientific vocabulary confidently to explain what they were doing and were beginning to develop competent observational skills.
150. By the end of Year 9, although attainment levels are still close to the national average, students are more confident when carrying out and recording investigations; they demonstrate a better understanding of scientific principles. Most students make satisfactory progress. Standards in Year 9 are now better than those achieved in the national tests in 2002. For instance, in a good lesson on energy changes, teaching was effective in challenging students' understanding and, as a result, students made good use of their observational skills to distinguish between different reaction types. The National Key Stage 3 strategy has yet to be adopted fully; at present, some teachers are less ready to make the necessary changes in their classroom practice.
151. Standards in Year 11, on the evidence of inspection, were average. The improving standards in Year 11 and also Year 10, reflect the positive effect of an increased number of investigations and students' positive attitude to practical work. For example, higher attaining students in Year 10 were confident in setting up an experiment to demonstrate acceleration of a moving object. They took results and plotted a graph, but had difficulty in explaining the shape of the graph. While coursework is improving, evaluation of results is still a weakness and because of this the students cannot fully link their results with their predictions. Lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11 are well supported in lessons and find the challenge of the entry level certificate matches their needs. For example, a class of below average attaining students produced an indicator from red cabbage and then used it to categorise a variety of liquids as acids or alkalis.
152. While students make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy, these are not taught systematically. Students' writing is poor in many cases, particularly among boys. Students are careless when drawing diagrams. This coupled with poor presentation does not allow the books to be good tools for revision. Students' books are regularly marked with comments praising effort, but there is an inconsistency in comments actually informing the students how to improve. Although students cope adequately with mathematical work, many lack confidence in handling numbers and require considerable encouragement to persevere.
153. In Years 7-9, many boys, in particular, find difficulty concentrating in lessons and sometimes underachieve. The college is looking to the National Key Stage 3 strategy to have a positive effect on this. In some lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11, boys tend to dominate and teachers need to find ways of involving girls more actively in the work.
154. The department makes adequate provision for students with special educational needs. They are well supported in lessons by teachers and learning support assistants, but the work they are set is sometimes too difficult. The learning support assistants and teachers make good use of appropriate individual education plans. These have specific literacy and behavioural targets that are sometimes supplemented with specific subject targets. While the learning support assistants provide very good support there are not enough to support a department of this size. Provision for gifted and talented students is adequate, but there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to extending their learning. There is a range of enrichment activities and the department has very strong links with Exeter and Plymouth Universities.
155. In the college as a whole, behaviour is good. However, students' response in lessons is only satisfactory. While students usually concentrate on their work and are keen to learn, some do not listen well and lose interest easily. Particularly when there was over direction by the teacher, students were

not engaged by their work and their independent work was minimal. There was some challenging behaviour, but teachers usually dealt with this effectively. Relationships are good and students co-operate well when working in groups. However, many older students tend to be rather placid and rely too much on their teachers for guidance; as a result they fail to find things out for themselves.

156. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching. A number of lessons were at least good, particularly in Years 7-9. In these lessons, students knew what was expected of them and the work contained a good balance of challenge and support. In a very good Year 8 lesson, for instance, students were required to find the best way of insulating a container of hot water. The teacher organised this as a competition between groups; students joined in enthusiastically and, as a result of the teacher's careful planning and skilful delivery, began to appreciate the role played by air layers in insulating materials. Where lessons are less effective, teachers fail to match the work to the needs of their students and attempt to move the lesson on too quickly without assessing students' understanding sufficiently. As a result, students become confused about what exactly is required of them and they lose interest easily.
157. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan well using a variety of resources to produce good opportunities for learning. They are all subject specialists and have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Lessons are generally brisk, but in some there is poor management of time and activities at the end of a lesson are too hurried resulting in the teacher not being able to discuss with the students how much they had learned. Lessons generally engage students throughout. For example, a study of inherited diseases captured the interest of Year 11 students and generated lively discussion on the moral issues surrounding genetic counselling. Because of this, students were able to express their opinions clearly using the appropriate scientific language. Clear learning objectives are identified and shared with students, but not always adequately reviewed at the end of lessons to assess how much the students have learned. Students learn best in lessons with a high level of challenge and pace. For example, Year 10 students were given some information about tongue rolling. The teacher then challenged them to explain the nature of the gene that caused tongue rolling. This resulted in a good discussion and formulation of ideas using appropriate scientific language. In some lessons, a significant minority of students are not prepared to take responsibility for their learning and consequently too little learning takes place despite the efforts of the teacher.
158. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities in science are good. The schemes of work from Year 7 to Year 9 have been rewritten to incorporate QCA material. In Years 10 and 11, double and single award co-ordinated science are offered along with the entry level certificate for less able students. Science also has a part to play in the alternative curriculum offered to students who cannot cope with the more formal GCSE course. However, for a department of this size, there is insufficient technical support. Despite better provision, too little use is made of ICT for scientific purposes such as remote sensing and data logging.
159. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking the students' attainment and progress throughout the school and there is effective target setting from Year 7 using a variety of predictors. However, there is insufficient use of formative assessment on a day-to-day basis particularly with reference to the lesson plans specifically matching students' needs.
160. The previous head of department was promoted to a more senior post in the college over a year ago. Since then oversight of work in science has been just part of his wider responsibilities. While the college has now appointed a new head of department, who is expected to start in a few months time, several previous attempts to make an appointment were unsuccessful. As a result, the leadership of the department is only satisfactory. While management is generally effective, developments have been lacking. Changes have been slow to take place and a number of decisions have been delayed pending the appointment of the new head of department. This has resulted in the overall improvement since the last inspection being unsatisfactory. However, there is an obvious determination among staff to continue to raise standards, with potential areas for development having been identified. Although planned monitoring of teaching occurs, this needs to be focused more on identifying the good practice that exists in the department. Better sharing of individual teachers' strengths would assist others to become more at ease with the changes occurring through the national strategy.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Attainment has improved since the last inspection and is above the national average in Key Stage 4.
- The curriculum provision has improved since the last inspection.
- Achievement is good in Key Stage 4.
- The teachers have good subject knowledge.
- There is high quality ICT provision within the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of drawing skills is not sufficiently systematic and effective.
- Speaking and writing are not sufficiently well structured across each of the key stages.

161. Attainment in art and design is good overall and slightly above the national figures for the subject. Current achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection.

162. Achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Students use a good range of media with confidence, and handle three-dimensional materials such as clay competently. They apply basic constructional techniques and have enough knowledge to plan the processes they wish to use for the decorative development of surfaces. Their use of ICT is good. In one Year 7 class, students were applying colour and gradated tones to create surfaces on a computer-based wire frame model. The higher achieving students were sampling sections of their digital photographs to use for the same purpose. Students acquire a satisfactory understanding of the art or artists from a range of cultures and art movements. One Year 8 class successfully applied their knowledge of Aboriginal art and symbol systems to create their own designs using common symbols found in everyday life. In another class, Year 9 students discussed the symbolism in Picasso's painting 'Guernica' as part of work on the theme of 'War'. Drawing upon their study in previous lessons, students offered considered interpretations of the imagery. They use collage, print and mixed media with satisfactory results. In one Year 8 class the students had very effectively combined all of these approaches into one piece of work based on the study of architectural facades. Students' work in sketchbooks is of variable quality. The sketchbooks of all three year groups show very large differences between the work of the higher and lower performing students. Drawing work is generally weak, although there are examples of good work among the higher performing students. However, too many pieces of work are unfinished or underdeveloped. The majority of sketchbooks show students have not made good use of written research to inform or underline their visual imagery. The higher performing Year 9 students make satisfactory use of a range of text based approaches to develop their ideas and their work.

163. Achievement in Key Stage 4 is good. Attainment at GCSE is slightly above the national average and current achievement shows this trend continues. Students produce good work in a range of disciplines. Work is generally stronger where students are involved in areas such as printmaking, ICT application and three-dimensional. In a Year 10 class the students' surface printing work allowed them to design a clear bold motif and cut the design into a lino block with a good level of precision and control. In another lesson, Year 11 students demonstrated a high level of skill in the use of drawing and painting software. The highest performing students had produced very high quality work, showed a very good understanding of the use of layered images and had employed a good range of software tools and controls to develop their computer-based work. They had captured, developed and integrated imagery using layers, opacity levels and effects tools. Within the class the range of activity was broad. Other students had creatively developed and manipulated imagery based on original hand-drawn work that had been scanned and transformed digitally. Another had developed ideas for a stained glass window, skilfully using a combination of vector-based and pixel-based design software. Other students in Year 11, experimenting with assorted materials as part of their exploration of 'surface', exploited and combined the qualities they found in a confident and inventive manner. However, there is a tendency for the students to be too reliant on the teachers for sourcing such work. There is some satisfactory work in areas such as painting and drawing. However, some of the weakest work relates to students' drawing. Students use a limited range of drawing methods and fail to exploit the media they select. In some classes this is also observed in students' painting, where students use simple unmodulated colour to fill in meagre linework. The resultant work does not adequately reward the time the students spend on it. Students' sketchbooks show they do well in developing research work. In general, students show a good use of critical and contextual studies to inform their own work. One student, for example, had made interesting studies of Edward Hopper's work taken into collage. Another had used ideas derived from the work of the artist Joe

Tilson as a springboard for a high quality piece based on boxed elements. Written research and critical reviews of the students' own works are included in the students' sketchbooks, although a broader range of writing strategies could be employed. The majority of students make good use of their sketchbooks, with those of even the weaker students showing they have paid attention to written research.

164. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject matter taught. The lessons frequently are broken down into stages that successfully lead the students through the more complex tasks. There is a good spread of expertise within the teaching team. This ensures the art curriculum includes a good range of studies with three-dimensional work and ICT. In Key Stage 4 and at post-16 the teachers have a good understanding of the examination assessment objectives and deploy that understanding productively. Teachers guide students effectively in their individual work and support them as they secure the relevant assessment objectives. Teachers' planning is well structured and effective and lessons build upon previous learning. The teachers plan the lessons in accordance with the departmental programme of study and there are clear learning objectives relevant to the levels of the students. Teachers use a good range of techniques, including practical demonstrations, to help students develop basic skills in handling media. However, the teaching of drawing skills is not sufficiently systematic or effective. Teachers use discussion well in developing students' understanding of art and artists. However, in general, language based work in relation to art and design (both written and oral) is not systematically structured across each of the key stages. There is insufficient use of frameworks from the college's literacy programme. Teachers use assessment and monitoring efficiently and a clear picture of students' performance is gathered and used by the department. Teachers have a good knowledge of the students and their work, particularly at Key Stage 4 and at post-16. This enables them to provide good individually focused teaching. Too much individual support, however, sometimes leads to the tendency to 'spoon feed' the students, whereas they may be better served by being pressed to develop a more independent approach to their research and study.
165. Students have a positive attitude to learning within the subject. In both key stages, they sustain concentration well and display an interest in their work. Students show a good level of confidence in their practical work. They organise their work and materials in a practised manner and most classes settle to work with the minimum of fuss. Students generally relate well to one another. Where students are engaged in a range of work in the same classroom, for example, claywork, painting, collage and print, as is typical in some Key Stage 4 classes, they generally work alongside one another in a supportive manner. For example, they allow each other adequate workspace and one student may stop work to help another needing an extra pair of hands in a particular task. Students also participate well in discussions and many appear confident in putting forward ideas. In the main, students relate well to their teachers and generally there is a positive momentum in art lessons that stems from that trust. One area of weakness however is the students' under developed capacity for extended independent working.
166. There is a good range of learning opportunities. Students in both key stages develop sculpture and three-dimensional work including relief studies. They use a range of media including clay, card, plaster and mixed media. Process based work such as printmaking is common also to both key stages. Students are given opportunities to study art and artists from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. ICT provision is of the highest quality. Students have good access to computers and a very good range of image-based software. In addition there is good access to the Internet for research work. Good extra-curricular opportunities are provided. These include an annual visit to the Tate Gallery, St Ives for Year 10 students and visits to local galleries and museums for all key stages. There is also an annual art study visit abroad. This year, for example, Year 11 and post-16 students visited Rome.
167. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are thorough and systematic. Key Stage 4 and post-16 students receive assessments for each unit of work and individual grades are predicted both within the subject itself and also based on students' performance trends across subjects. This enables teachers to intervene early when students underperform. Key Stage 3 assessment is linked directly to National Curriculum levels. Students are assessed regularly and attainment levels awarded. The department follows the college policy of establishing stages between levels to refine the grade awarded. In addition to the overall attainment recorded for each student the art department follows college policy by awarding grades to every student for four other areas of assessment – effort, behaviour, homework and personal organisation. This enables a more complete picture to be formed of students operating at all levels. Support for students with special educational needs is generally good. For example, in a Year 8 lesson a student with hearing difficulties was well supported by the class teacher and a specialist support teacher and was able to work satisfactorily.

168. The subject is led and managed effectively. There is a clear educational direction. Areas of concern reported in the previous inspection have been tackled systematically. Good strategic planning has improved the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The college has introduced a high quality ICT programme for art and design throughout all years. Responsibilities are delegated within the teaching team. The day-to-day running of the department is efficient. Teachers share a clear and common approach to teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3, where a clear standard curriculum has been established. At Key Stage 4 the specialist expertise of the different members of staff can be called upon by students engaged in individual work. There is systematic monitoring of art teaching through assessment moderation between teaching groups and through other quality assurance processes. Staff attempt to present the art studios as visually interesting places, despite the general shabbiness of the fabric of the accommodation. The lack of a sixth form studio continues to impede the college's capacity to offer a full range of art and design courses at this level, particularly the vocationally oriented courses that require higher levels of studio-based teaching time.
169. The department has improved since the last inspection. The schemes of work for Key Stage 3 have been improved. A very good programme of study for ICT within art and design has been introduced in all key stages and this has a very positive impact on the range of work undertaken by students. Students' attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The improvement in examination results that was beginning at the last inspection has continued and the college is now slightly above the national figures for the subject at GCSE A*-C.
170. However, the number of students going on to AS and A-level courses is still comparatively small. The accommodation is still dingy and generally unsatisfactory and some teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The college is auditing the provision for citizenship in subjects including history and geography.

Areas for improvement

- The statutory citizenship curriculum is not in place.

171. Citizenship as required by law is not yet in place. A teacher has responsibility for citizenship and is preparing for its introduction. The college is currently holding an audit across the curriculum. Returns are coming in but have not yet been analysed. The college has no substantive policy on citizenship and the way ahead is uncertain. It will not be possible this year to comply with the requirement to report to parents on students' progress.
172. Despite these weaknesses other subjects already make a mainly positive contribution. In history students learn about society and government in the past. They develop knowledge and understanding of important ideas such as power and rights. In geography students learn about different communities and how they organise their lives. Students in Year 8, for example, debate issues arising from Greenpeace's support for Inuit people in the Arctic. By stating their opinions both before and after the debate they also study what makes people change their minds. In Year 10 tutors prepare students for work experience. Sensitive but determined teaching ensures the development of social skills and the capacity for problem solving. Other occasions are less successful. As part of the programme of personal development in Year 9 students learn about asylum seekers. Poor teaching destroys the value of the lesson and leaves students not understanding the plight of asylum seekers and not wanting to.
173. Strengths to build on include the college council and the year councils. They are examples of participatory democracy. The courses at GCSE and GCE levels in the sixth form are examples of the successful teaching of citizenship. Although the college is behind in its implementation of the statutory requirement, arrangements are in place to allow the introduction of citizenship into the curriculum in the next academic year.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The subject is strongly led and managed, with a clear vision for its continued development.
- The systems for assessing students' attainment at Key Stage 3 are well developed, with students knowing what is expected of them, how well they are doing and what they can do to improve.
- Students show a very positive attitude to designing and making, where they work very well independently and in small groups and learn well from each other. Their behaviour is excellent.
- The high quality display of students' work stimulates creativity and establishes high expectations of what can be achieved.
- The range and quality of 'making' activities across the department is good.
- The department is implementing some effective strategies for raising attainment in design and technology.

Areas for improvement

- Students' standards of design, presentation and written work are not as high as their standards in practical activities.
- The higher attaining students at Key Stage 4 are not challenged sufficiently.
- The specialist accommodation for the subject should be reviewed with a long-term strategy for refurbishment and the rationalisation of teaching areas, to enable the more modern aspects of design and technology, such as CAD/CAM, electronics, control, food and textiles technology to be taught in a more appropriate environment.

174. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, teachers' assessment of students' work showed that the National Curriculum levels reached were broadly in line with national expectations. Students at Key Stage 3 design and make products in resistant materials, graphic products, food, textiles, compliant materials, electronics and control. They develop a good range of practical skills in making artefacts and are improving their design and drawing skills.
175. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is close to the national average. Examples of their assignments include: a model aeroplane in Year 7, an electronic rain sensor in Year 8, a fabric bag design and multicultural food topic in Year 9. This work is effective in developing their design experience. They test and evaluate their own products at stages of their development. Students are supported in planning their work by using well thought out worksheets. In a graphics assignment, students develop a range of drawing skills, such as two and three-dimensional sketching and these are developed further in other aspects of technology. In a Year 9 lesson for example, students applied their graphics skills to design a clock. Higher attaining students combine these skills well with annotations to explain each stage of their work. All students use a good range of technical vocabulary in their written work and when explaining their practical tasks. This was particularly effective in a Year 8 food class, where students were encouraged to use a 'sensory evaluation' wall display, when selecting the best words to describe particular taste and appearance characteristics. Lower attaining students apply their basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work. In the rain sensor project, students develop their knowledge of electronic control systems by using simple transistor circuits and learning how to make a printed circuit board.
176. Since the last inspection there has been a pattern of improving examination results over the last five years, although this faltered in 2002, when the proportion of Year 11 students who gained GCSE A* - C dropped overall and fell below the national average. The results in food technology were above the national average and those for resistant materials were broadly in line with national averages, having improved from the previous year. The results for graphic products, textiles and engineering were below the national average. The college has undertaken a detailed analysis of results and can show that the classes who achieved the lowest results were affected by unforeseen long-term absences of three key members of staff and the disruption the students experienced with temporary cover arrangements during an extended time. In spite of this "blip", the college is confident that the longer term pattern for improved examination results will continue over the next five years. The review also highlighted practical opportunities for raising achievement and the department has used the analysis to good effect to better inform teachers' planning, provide more focused support and establish improved systems to monitor students' coursework progress, with an earlier warning system when individual students start to fall behind schedule.

177. In Years 10 and 11, students make good progress in their practical work and often just satisfactory progress with their design portfolios and written work. In the classes seen, most students are working in line with national expectations, with many working at a high level in the practical elements of their courses. Students use a wider range of investigation and research skills and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. Some students develop work of high quality, including consideration of function, aesthetics and structural requirements. For example in resistant materials, students design and make a 'light unit' as a piece of furniture and have a good knowledge and technical understanding of joining techniques and the need for accuracy when making parts which have to be joined together. In food technology, students were able to talk about the strategies needed to ensure quality control over the preparation and cooking of their recipes. Many students work well to extend the depth and accuracy of their planning. They apply skills in numeracy when planning and making their products. When designing questionnaires in food and textiles technology, they collect and process the views and preferences of others. Students analyse data well when developing their own ideas and present it using ICT in the form of graphs and charts to show how it was used to influence their work. Some make good use of ICT in producing headings, labels, textual information and design diagrams in their design folios and using the Internet to research aspects of their coursework. Higher attaining students produce good quality products supported with accurate, well-developed plans. Students evaluate their work well against the specification they formed for the designs. Lower attaining students design products well suited to the courses but lack the quality of presentation normally expected at this level.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In four fifths of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better and in one lesson it was outstanding. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use imaginative methods, enabling students to understand basic skills. In a Year 7 resistant materials lesson, the teacher used an aeroplane project to develop students' basic skills of measuring, marking out, cutting, drilling and joining in wood, injection moulding plastic wheels, cutting a screw thread on a metal axle and using a strip heater to bend plastic for the windscreen. The students worked enthusiastically and learning was good. In a food lesson, good visual material was used to stimulate students' analytical and evaluation skills. The teacher intervened regularly to offer suggestions for improving their work and set 'time targets' to ensure all learning objectives were achieved by the end of the lesson. Most teachers plan their lessons well, identifying clear learning objectives and have high expectations of their students' behaviour and achievement. The pace of lessons is usually good. However, the higher attaining students in many classes are not always challenged sufficiently to extend their knowledge and skills. Middle attaining students and those with SEN make good progress because of the individual support that they receive. Some teachers succeed in stretching students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. Most teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary and highlighting activities which support the development of numeracy skills. Students form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. They show a very positive attitude to designing and making, where they are highly motivated and work very well independently, in small groups and learn well from each other. Their behaviour is excellent. In a very small number of lessons where teaching was less effective, students were allowed to work in an extremely relaxed manner and although this was popular with students and they seemed to be working sensibly, many were producing work at a lower than expected standard and underachieving.
179. Overall, the progress made since the last inspection has been good. Students now have a better understanding of the way things work. Disassembly activities have been incorporated into schemes of work for Key Stage 3, together with the introduction of tool tests and technical 'word banks'. Strategies have been put in place to improve the students' quality of graphic presentation, with staff receiving training in 2002 from a visiting expert to develop their knowledge, understanding and individual graphics skills. The quality of provision in resistant materials has improved. New staff have brought fresh ideas in this area, standards have risen and many more students are now selecting this option for GCSE. The department has worked hard to build upon the successes in each aspect of technology and share the good practice across the full subject. Joint moderation meetings have been introduced to achieve this. The curriculum time for teaching has been increased, with additional time made available for all students in Years 9 and 11. All lessons are blocked as a double lesson to maximise opportunities for extended practical work. The underachievement of boys has been considered in detail and following analysis of learning styles, the college has established systems to improve this. The long coursework projects in Year 11 have been broken down into shorter focused units, each with a deadline. Monitoring of coursework progress has improved and parents are alerted as soon as a student misses a deadline date. The final handing in date has been brought forward to enable sufficient time to concentrate on other

aspects of the syllabus and examination preparation. The college has made progress in modernising the range of opportunities for students, although it still has more to do. The department has recently been successful in gaining funding to develop CAD/CAM facilities, which will help to move the subject forward significantly. More work still needs to be done to offer increased opportunities for electronics, control and the use of "smart" materials.

180. The curriculum leader has worked very effectively with staff to improve the quality of planning and teaching. There is a clear focus on raising standards in what has become a strong subject. Leadership and management of the subject are very good, with a clear vision for its continued development. The systems for assessing students' attainment at Key Stage 3 are well developed, with students knowing what is expected of them, how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. The use of targets is becoming a stronger part of the work with students in most classes. The teaching accommodation is barely adequate, but teachers work hard to put up bright stimulating displays of students' work and organise the rooms to make the best possible learning environment for students. Funding for the consumable items to support students' design and practical work is below the national average and this restricts the variety and scope of the projects currently on offer. The technician team and associated learning support assistant are valued highly and make a good contribution to the provision of the subject. The college has set up some very good links with the local junior partner schools and is piloting a design and technology project, where Year 6 pupils visit the college on a weekly basis for half a term, to undertake a short course using college teachers and specialist facilities.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The attainment at GCSE is high.
- The teaching and learning are of good quality.
- Students' show enthusiasm for the subject.
- The number of students choosing to take GCSE drama is rising.

Areas for improvement

- More teaching space is required to cater for the rising number of students studying drama.
- Teachers need access to further professional training.
- Support staff are not always used to best advantage.
- The behaviour of some boys in Year 9 needs to be improved.

181. Attainment in 2002 at GCSE at grades A*-C rose well above national expectations. All (38) students passed within grades A*-C; 41 per cent attained grades A*-A, the highest rankings in the college. Girls attained very well; boys' attainment was well above the national average for boys; value added measurements are high. Attainment at GCSE over the period 1999-2002 has remained above the national average.
182. In Year 7 a good foundation is laid for future success. Students identify themselves with characters. For example in one good lesson students entered imaginatively into the world of the clown. They understand parody and know how to exaggerate gesture and movement for comic purposes. They understand that characters, even clowns, must suggest motives and reasons behind their behaviour. In Year 8 students learn dance movements which appeal to both boys and girls and which co-ordinate the body in graceful motion; students learn to overcome initial clumsiness in deportment. Students co-ordinate their own movements with those of others on stage. In Year 9 students in rehearsal show awareness of their audience; they are expressive in their speaking. Although misbehaviour by a small group of boys hinders progress within their class, the teacher's patient efforts ensure their performance has merit. The vast majority, however, display rhythm in theatrical performance and confidence in their speaking.
183. In Year 10 standards of work by both sexes is good. Students use 'body shape' to suggest emotion; they develop expressiveness in their speaking and know how to position themselves on stage to widen the vision of their audience. By Year 11 attainment is very good. Students' sense of timing is sure; performance is given a freshness and certainty; students in character relate easily to other characters. Students become absorbed in the world of drama allowing the imagination to mould movement and expression. They evaluate their performance in a determination 'to get it right'. Coursework portfolios

show accurate knowledge of major aspects of theatre; high attaining students show insight into the art of theatre. All students show good knowledge of stage design and of the skills needed by a play's director. They know how to use sound, lighting and costume design to enhance performance.

184. Teaching overall is good. It is less successful on the rare occasion when support staff are not used to best advantage and when poor behaviour by a small group of boys hinders achievement. Teachers have high expectations. They are interested in students' ideas so that students learn to use initiative and imagination in performance and learn improvement from mistakes. Teachers know the value of their subject and share their enthusiasm. Their appreciation of students' good work gives stimulus to improvement and engenders self-confidence. Lessons have a brisk pace and are pitched so that high attainers flourish and the initially uncertain learn the confidence to make their contribution. Students have positive attitudes; they enjoy drama; they work hard at rehearsal and learn to collaborate in corporate activity.
185. Leadership is very good. The head of department unifies the work of her team, some of whom are specialists in another subject. Management and organisation are very good; drama, for example, works closely with the dance teacher in choreographic work and design. Best use is made of drama halls but available teaching space is insufficient to meet the expansion in numbers. Induction of new staff is very successful. Appraisal of staff is underway. The department's choice of texts has encouraged the enthusiastic participation of boys who, like girls, often do better in drama than in other subjects. Theatre visits and workshops on lighting and sound further motivate students. A tradition of annual public performances has been established. The subject makes very good contribution to students' literacy skills and to their personal, social and cultural development. The department engenders a work ethic which contributes to the ethos of the college.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students reach good standards at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE level.
- The teaching is good and students respond positively.
- Fieldwork and ICT are incorporated very effectively into the curriculum.
- The leadership and teamwork in the department are very good, as is the commitment to raising standards.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress and a good quality of support from the teaching assistants.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is not included in lesson planning.
- Contributions to students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development and to the teaching of citizenship, are not identified in curriculum planning.
- The use of assessment data to set individual targets for students in Years 7 to 9 needs further work.

186. The standards reached by students at the end of Year 9 were above the national expectation in 2002, as reported in the statutory teacher assessment. Girls attain significantly higher standards than boys and the difference between them is wider than the national trend. The GCSE results for geography are consistently among the highest in the college and in 2002 were significantly above the national average. Girls' attainment was higher than that of boys, although they formed only one third of the total cohort. Individual coursework marks contributed positively to the overall grades. Students with special educational needs achieve well.
187. Students make good progress between Years 7 and 9 and the standard of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection was above the national expectation. All acquire a broad geographical vocabulary and use technical terms accurately and in context. Basic mapwork skills are well understood from Year 7, as are the changing location and function of settlements. Students in Year 8 describe geographical features in detail and explain the underlying processes, such as the upstream migration of waterfalls. They understand the interaction of erosional and depositional processes in determining river valley landscapes. By Year 9 they balance the positive and negative impact of physical and economic factors on the environment, as in their work on the westernisation of the Inuit peoples of northern Canada.

188. Students consolidate their achievement and continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10 they understand the concept of relative poverty in the cities of Calcutta and New York. By Year 11 they understand the impact of globalisation on changing patterns of farming and alternative strategies for flood prevention on the river Exe. Local resources are very well used for GCSE fieldwork projects, both for settlement and coastal studies. Students can set an objective, conduct their own surveys and analyse and present data to a high standard, using graphical techniques. Some evaluate their own methodology.
189. Students with special educational needs make good progress. There is good liaison and joint planning with the teaching assistants and individual education plans are used well. Teachers manage classroom behaviour well and this enables them to give additional help to individual students. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress but would benefit from the provision of more regular enrichment work, such as extended writing based on personal research. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in class. Both contribute willingly to discussions and respond to opportunities for reading aloud. The careful arrangements for setting allow most students to make good progress, such as the small all boys set in Year 10 and the team teaching in Year 11, but the very large top set in Year 9 makes group work difficult.
190. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. Planning is good both in content and in the use of a wide range of interesting resources. Explanations of new concepts are clear and concise and students are then able to apply them to unfamiliar areas, developing their understanding of both place and process. The teachers' enthusiasm for geography is shared with the students who are motivated and mostly sustain concentration. Homework is regularly set and marked and is integrated with the schemes of work. Assessment data are not yet used to set targets for improvement for students in Years 7 to 9, or to modify curriculum plans. In the very good lessons seen, expectations were high, lesson objectives were clearly stated from the outset and there was a brisk pace throughout. Students participate with enthusiasm in groups and pairs where they both challenge and support each other. In a Year 9 pilot project, students designed their own top trumps card game to illustrate contrasts in development and honest evaluation of their work was welcomed. In the few lessons which lacked momentum, oral instructions were not always clearly understood and discussions were allowed to drift, resulting in some boisterous behaviour.
191. The department makes a good contribution to students' moral and social development. They made judgements for example on the level of exploitation in jeans factories in the Indian subcontinent and suggested an employment charter. There is a good contribution to students' cultural development through the wide range of global and contrasting case studies, which encourage them to develop a sense of place through the eyes of the local people. There are insufficient case studies which focus on life in multicultural Britain. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Curriculum planning does not yet include sufficient opportunities to develop citizenship. Geography makes a good contribution to the teaching of numeracy. Statistical data from a range of sources is interpreted accurately and presented through a range of charts and graphs. Literacy skills are satisfactory but are not clearly incorporated into curriculum planning. Skills in ICT are very well developed and the department has an excellent intranet which includes fieldwork activities for absent students.
192. There are insufficient specialist rooms for teaching in the main college. Leadership and management of the department are very good and there are focused priorities for development. There is a strong sense of teamwork and clear commitment to the improvement of standards. Documentation is comprehensive and reflects college policies. The extension of the fieldwork and ICT programmes since the last inspection have been very good indeed.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- The contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of ICT.

- Contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship education, are not identified in teachers' planning.

193. At GCSE in 2002 92 per cent passed at A*-G which is close to the national average and 39 per cent passed at grades A*-C which is well below the national average of 58 per cent.
194. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average throughout the school and so achievement is satisfactory by the end of Years 9 and 11. By Year 9 higher attaining students maturely analyse recruitment posters from World War One and select images which appealed to guilt, patriotism or hatred of the enemy. Middle and lower attaining students understand the main features of the outbreak of war itself in 1914. By Year 11 higher attaining students record detailed notes on the types of opposition present in Nazi Germany and analyse differences between the lifestyle of the Swing Youth and the more altruistic motives of religious figures. Lower attaining students show a sound understanding of the Nazi ideology which led to the Holocaust.
195. Teaching and learning are good at both key stages. Teachers plan well and maintain a good pace to lessons, as seen for example in a Year 8 lesson where lower attaining students selected arguments to support or challenge the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots and in a Year 11 lesson where students were helped to use a model which would support independent revision at home. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Learning is helped by the positive attitude of students who persevere well with tasks set.
196. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the provision for students' spiritual development particularly in the study of the Holocaust and resistance in Nazi Germany, to moral development in its coverage of the world wars and to cultural awareness in its educational visits including a biennial trip to Munich. Citizenship education is promoted through study of many aspects of government, especially a Year 9 unit on 18th century elections and a homework on aspects of contemporary politics. There is a good range of tasks set to promote students' literacy and numeracy skills, for example on the meaning of specialist terms in a Year 7 lesson on castles, Year 9 analysis of trade in the British Empire and Year 11 coursework on Hitler's economic policies. Assessment procedures have developed satisfactorily to include specific assessments to measure students' progress and awareness of the need to accurately link these results to teacher assessments in Year 9.
197. Improvement since the last inspection is good as there is now no unsatisfactory achievement in Key Stage 3, the scheme of work addresses all the key elements of the subject and accommodation is now good. The previous report noted a problem with curricular time at GCSE which is now resolved. Areas for development are the need to use information technology to support student learning, the need to plan aspects of curriculum enrichment into the scheme of work and to ensure that current development in assessment procedure is maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Staff are very experienced teachers of the subject and work well together as a team.
- There is a well structured scheme of work in Years 7 to 11, which has good supporting material.
- There are very good resources for teaching the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of the progress which students make is not yet used sufficiently to inform subsequent teaching.
- There are insufficient details in the scheme of work of ways in which tasks are varied to suit the needs of different students.

- The scheme of work lacks details of how the department contributes to aspects of students' development, such as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and literacy and numeracy skills.
- Currently there are insufficient ICT teaching rooms to meet the demand from other subjects.

198. The standards by the end of Year 9 during the inspection were close to national expectations. Some work of a good standard was seen throughout Years 7 - 9. Most students in Year 9 are in line to achieve standards close to the national average by the end of the year. In Years 7 - 9, the attainment of most students – boys, girls and students with and without special educational needs is similar. Students make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3.
199. In 2002, the college judged that 69 per cent of students in Year 9 attained Level 5 or above, which is above the national average. However, the assessments in 2002 underestimated the national expectations in some respects.
200. The college did not offer examination courses in ICT in 2002. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen and in lessons are also close to national expectations with work of good quality from students following the GNVQ course in Year 11. One student has produced a very good piece of coursework on databases and showed clearly that he understood how the database was structured and how it could be used. The majority of students in the core ICT course and in the GNVQ option are achieving well. Students following the alternative curriculum also produce good quality work in ICT.
201. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The recently introduced discrete ICT course is planned well. The system for the routine assessment of students' work is good but more use needs to be made of assessment data to plan subsequent teaching. The provision of computers and ICT classrooms is very good, but in spite of this, it is difficult for other subjects in the main college to gain access to suitable rooms. There has been a considerable investment of money and work to establish a reliable computer network and this has been successful.
202. Overall, teaching is always at least satisfactory and the majority is good. Some teaching was very good. In Years 7 - 9 teaching was good in almost all lessons, very good in one and satisfactory in one. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was good in almost half of lessons, very good in one and satisfactory in the remainder. The quality of learning matches that of teaching, although in one lesson the quality of learning was better than the teaching because of the very confident way in which students worked.
203. Teaching was very effective in a Year 8 lesson where students were set the task of designing web pages. This lesson was taught with flair, and with valuable support from a Year 13 student and the group were quickly able to produce web pages which showed thought and imagination.
204. Where learning was good, lessons were well planned and proceeded at a brisk pace. Much of the teaching consists of individual help and advice given to students and this was always effective. Some staff encourage students to solve problems logically themselves. This is an effective strategy which enhances the learning. Teaching assistants provide good support to students who have special educational needs. High expectations are set by teachers and these were achieved by the majority of students. The majority of students are making good progress during Key Stage 4. Students in Year 10 following the alternative curriculum and those in Year 11 following the NVQ course, are effective users of ICT.
205. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has made very good progress in establishing the subject as a discrete taught course. The scheme of work is planned well and covers all elements of the programme of study, but contains insufficient guidance as to how to adjust work to meet students' needs. The scheme of work also lacks details of how the department contributes to various aspects of students' development, such as spiritual, moral, cultural and social development and literacy and numeracy skills. The intranet-based student guidance represents a lot of hard work, but is text based and some students find it difficult to follow. The large numbers of teachers involved in teaching the subject are led well and are co-ordinated effectively. All staff have appropriate knowledge and skills to support students' learning. The ICT support staff make a very valuable contribution to the work of the department.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Most of the teaching is good and some is very good.
- The department is improving, has good leadership and has identified key priorities for future development.
- The range of languages offered is being enhanced by the addition of Spanish.
- The accommodation at the Green Close site is good.

Areas for improvement

- There is still considerable underachievement by students as a result of staffing difficulties, particularly in German, in the recent past.
- The teachers' expectations of some classes need to be raised.
- Many students bring weak learning skills and limited commitment to lessons.

206. GCSE examination results in French in 2002 were inline with the national average, whereas those in German were well below. In both languages, the proportion of students with passes at the highest grades (A*-A) was very low. Results in French compared well with those in other subjects in the college; the performance in German was well below most other subjects.
207. Teacher assessment results at the end of Key Stage 3 showed that the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above was well below the national average, with the gap between boys and girls considerably wider than that found nationally.
208. In the work seen, attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 broadly reflected the assessment results of the previous year. Low attainers rarely reach Level 3 and few students are on course to reach above Level 5 across the four skills by the end of the year. In contrast, students in Year 7 in both French and German have made a good start; this provides a basis for higher attainment in subsequent years.
209. Attainment towards the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national expectation in French; that in German is still below. High attainers understand the spoken language well and speak with good pronunciation. Some readily recall vocabulary and structure and use them accurately to make sustained utterances or cope with a string of questions; others have a weaker grasp of grammar and need to resort to prompts when speaking. In German, students are prone to making basic errors in pronunciation and lack key words from Key Stage 3. The best writing is very good but more students need to extend their writing and use more complex language. Low attainers in both languages are still often working at the level of individual words and short phrases and often have uncertain pronunciation. Many students need to develop their listening and reading skills. The reading programme introduced in Year 9 provides some foundations for this.
210. Attitudes to learning are often good; most students are responsive and show interest. However, many bring weak learning skills to French and German lessons and few have the confidence to take the initiative or to ask questions of their teachers. Some students, though attentive when the teacher is speaking, do not value sufficiently the contributions of their peers. There are some students, especially boys, who show limited commitment and poor behaviour erodes the learning of others. Delayed arrival still too often prevents a prompt start to lessons. In contrast, there are examples of students across the ability range applying themselves well, co-operating with each other and showing enthusiasm. In some classes, boys applied themselves more effectively than girls, particularly where the task involved looking at how language functions, working out meaning from clues and patterns.
211. The department has experienced an unusually high number of changes in staffing, notably in German, in recent years. The effects of this on standards and attitudes cannot be remedied overnight. However, teaching was at least satisfactory in the lessons seen; this is a significant improvement on the previous inspection. Most of the teaching was good and in a fifth of lessons very good. The key features of these lessons were thoughtful planning, high expectations of students and a command of language teaching technique providing good support for learning as a basis for more independent use of language by students. In the less successful lessons, there was insufficient reinforcement of earlier learning and lower expectations were reflected in overuse of English.
212. The overall range of teaching strategies was wider than at the previous inspection; for example there is a commitment to using ICT and the overhead projector is used well. There is a core of very good practice in the department. For example, in a Year 11 upper set in German students were successfully challenged

to create complex sentences with subordinate clauses to express opinions about health issues. In a Year 9 lower set, including several students with special educational needs, students were enabled with effective guidance to identify types of film and express their likes/dislikes in German. There is scope to disseminate such good practice more effectively, for example through mutual observation of lessons.

213. The school has recently extended opportunity by offering twilight Spanish lessons for students in Year 9 so that students may study a second foreign language alongside French or German. The students are making good progress; much ground has been covered since September in the weekly class. They perform well in structured situations in both speaking and writing; they now need to tackle more open-ended tasks to build on this good platform. They are interested in knowing how language works, are motivated by this understanding and apply it well to reading and listening.
214. The teaching of Spanish has a number of strengths, not least the commitment and enthusiasm of the teacher. An experienced teacher of French without formal qualifications in Spanish, she is able to transfer much of her expertise to the Spanish classes which she took on at short notice following a sudden resignation. She has coped well in these circumstances and has made a good start. As a non-specialist, she recognises the need to consolidate her knowledge and is seeking appropriate staff development to meet this need.
215. The department is recovering well from the staffing turbulence of recent years. It is being well led through a state of transition by the acting head of department. Management is efficient; priorities focus on key issues and good progress is being made towards meeting them. Schemes of work have been revised since the previous inspection and are being refined further with a closer focus on the programme of study. Assessment has also improved; it is satisfactory overall and the best practice is very good. The department recognises the need to build on this, particularly in the ongoing assessment of students' speaking. Routine marking of homework and other tasks is satisfactory, but closer monitoring is needed to counter the remaining variations in practice.
216. The modern foreign language department's resources are satisfactory and in some respects good. The classrooms at Green Close are good, although there is a shortage of staff workspace. The main factors affecting efficiency are: the sharing of classes between two teachers, the withdrawal of students from French and German for Latin, the intermittent availability of learning support assistants for special educational needs and the lack of a base at the Gipsy Lane site which particularly affects the teaching of Spanish. The supply of textbooks is insufficient to provide one for every student on a permanent basis and headsets are needed for listening work in the ICT rooms.
217. The modern foreign languages team has a number of strengths and is working hard to overcome recent difficulties. The department is improving.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The head of department and the departmental team are committed and work hard.
- The links with the partner primary schools and the wider community are good.
- The standards achieved in some of the extra-curricular clubs are high.

Areas for improvement

- Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is below average.
- The provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 3.
- The opportunities for music making need to be widened using a wide variety of instruments including the voice, guitars, students' own instruments and tuned percussion.

- The programme of regular extra-curricular activities needs to be expanded in order to meet the needs of a wider number of students in the college.
- The accommodation for class music and instrumental lessons is of poor quality.

218. At the end of Year 9 in 2002 the percentage of students at Level 5 or above was below the national average with both boys and girls underachieving at the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Year 11 in 2002 the percentage of students achieving A* to C grades was well below the national average.
219. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards at Key Stage 3. Although students in Year 7 and in some classes in Year 8, achieve standards in line with national expectations, a significant number of students in Year 9 underachieve both in their performance and composition work. When students are working to the appropriate level, it is in lessons where they engage in practical activities, create their own class performances and use a variety of instruments. For example Year 8 students had previously worked on some rhythmic patterns on percussion instruments as a class. In the lesson seen several students were asked to maintain a rhythmic accompaniment while the rest of the class sang an African song while using movement and dance to further enhance the overall effect. Standards achieved in this lesson were good. However, overall students do not make enough progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Students with special needs and talented students make better progress when the teacher takes into account their individual needs and instrumental skills through clearly differentiated activities.
220. At Key Stage 4 the picture is more varied with several students in Year 10 achieving standards well above the national average. For example, in a GCSE lesson one student performed a piece that he had composed using minimalist devices as a starting point. This composition showed real imagination and used a variety of complex harmonies, structures and melodic ideas. However, these standards are not sustained by all the students and many students in Year 11 are still underachieving. In several cases this was as a result of students who were not proficient in keyboard skills being asked to complete composition tasks using electronic keyboards.
221. The teaching of music is satisfactory overall. Of the 16 lessons seen seven were satisfactory and six were good. Some lessons were unsatisfactory but this was a reflection of their content, rather than any other factor. During the week of the inspection it was not possible to see a full range of teaching throughout Year 7 as nearly all these classes were involved in lecture/demonstrations given by a visiting Russian balalaika performance group. When teaching is good it is in lessons where there are a number of carefully planned integrated tasks such as performing, composing and listening and where expectations of what students are capable of achieving are high. In these lessons students make music using a variety of instruments, including the voice and tuned and untuned percussion, they are stimulated by suitable listening tasks and the language used by the teachers is of a high level. For example, all members of the department were not afraid to plan listening activities for Key Stage 3 students using a wide range of interesting material ranging from the work of Frank Zappa to music by Delius or Phillip Glass. Although the subject knowledge of all the teachers in the department is high, their understanding of how to maximise the opportunities for learning in music is sometimes unsatisfactory. For example, planning does not always make clear the learning intentions for each lesson and there are sometimes long periods in lessons when students are passive. Work is insufficiently planned to meet the needs of all the students in the class and students are unaware of what they have to do achieve higher standards. Students are always managed well and the behaviour of students is always satisfactory. In practical lessons student concentration, interest and enthusiasm in their work is much higher, their knowledge and understanding increase and real learning takes place.
222. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 because of the lack of provision for the use of ICT. Although one classroom is equipped with four computers, two classrooms have no such facilities and students do not have the opportunity to engage with the full range of music technology work. In the past year much has been achieved in the revision of the schemes of work. These show a good balance and new units have been developed which include opportunities to engage in a variety of material from popular and 20th century styles such as minimalism, blues and jazz to western classical and the music of other countries around the world. The most successful units show clear learning intentions and a depth of study. The long-term plan indicates a progression of ideas across the key stages and this allows for each teacher to contribute through their own ideas and strengths. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that there is a clear progression of skills and knowledge across each year group at Key Stage 3 as currently units can be taught out of sequence. At present and despite a useful self-assessment sheet for all students, no unit offers clear, detailed criteria for

assessment linked to the NC Levels which enables students to set themselves higher targets. At Key Stage 3 there was no use of tuned percussion instruments, guitars or the use of students' own instruments during the week of the inspection and there were limited opportunities for structured singing activities. There is an over reliance on the use of electronic keyboards for all work. There are good opportunities for students to broaden their class experiences with a range of extra-curricular activities including a swing band and a balalaika group. These achieve good standards and there are equal numbers of boys and girls who participate in these. These are highly valued in the community and contribute to a wide number of events in the area. However, the extra-curricular programme is not extensive for a college of this size and does not meet the needs of many of the students, particularly those wishing to develop through vocal work or those who do not play orchestral instruments. A college production takes place once a year and most recently the department worked on the musical "Cabaret".

223. The head of department is hard working and conscientious and is ably supported by two further members of staff. There is a shared commitment to improve and all the teachers understand how they can contribute to the departmental development plan. The subject has been well audited and the priorities for development are good and reflect the need to raise attainment at Key Stage 3. Further work now needs to be done on the lesson planning, the content of lessons and the strategic management of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. Although the main teaching rooms are of a good size and are well equipped with keyboards, the teaching rooms are not next to each other, there are no practice rooms or spaces for students to engage productively in group composition work during lessons, keyboard stations face towards walls and away from the teacher and the rooms in which the peripatetic instrumental teachers work are located at the other side of the Green Close site thus making communication with the head of department exceptionally difficult. This is also causing significant problems for the students and the loss of valuable teaching time. During one instrumental lesson a student had to walk some distance from their classroom to the instrumental store cupboard to collect their instrument, walk to the teaching room for their lesson, stand in the rain while previous students packed up, have their lesson and repeat the process in reverse. Some students were carrying their instruments with them throughout the college day. The head of department has a small office located in another building away from the teaching area. As a working space this can only be described as depressing.
224. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in two key areas; improvement in the quality of teaching and the attitudes and behaviour of students. Schemes of work have recently been redeveloped. There is still underachievement throughout the college but particularly at the end of Key Stage 3 and there is still an over reliance on the use of keyboards. The use of ICT remains underdeveloped.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**, with some very good features in dance.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning promote students' achievement.
- The attitude and behaviour of the majority of students lead to high levels of interest and enthusiasm in lessons.
- A good programme of extra-curricular activities enriches students' experiences.
- Performance in GCSE dance lessons is of high quality.
- The staff are committed and experienced.

Areas for improvement

- The students are not set individual learning goals and are not familiar with National Curriculum levels.
- The assessment of achievement is not linked closely with the planning of learning.
- Students are not engaged actively in PE through the breadth of the curriculum, or through the offer of additional forms of accreditation in Key Stage 4.

- The time for core PE at Key Stage 4 is low.
- The quality of the environment for learning remains poor.

225. Teacher assessment of Year 9 students in 2002 indicates that students were working at a level broadly in line with national expectations. Girls were attaining higher standards than boys. Evidence from the inspection shows boys and girls to be attaining similar standards, in line with national expectations.
226. During Years 7 to 9 students begin to apply skills with consistent accuracy both in PE and dance. In Year 7 basketball and hockey lessons students were refining their shooting and dribbling skills well. Students are also given opportunities to develop their creative and imaginative qualities. This was most apparent in a Year 9 gymnastic lesson where girls were contrasting and comparing sequenced movement with advanced aesthetic qualities. In another Year 9 gymnastic lesson lower attaining boys were highlighting their creative abilities, albeit with less aesthetic awareness than girls when linking movements into a group sequence. Students' imaginative acumen was further displayed in two Year 8 dance lessons when devising dances reflecting the theme of "tribal". Students were also beginning to understand key PE and dance terms such as choreography, canon and unison.
227. The accurate application of skills and creative awareness is transferred into Key Stage 4 where standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Boys and girls attain similar standards.
228. Results in GCSE PE have gradually improved and are now close to the national average. In 2002, 55 per cent of students gained an A*- C grade in PE. Examination success in GCSE dance apart from 2002 has been well above the national average for the last five years. Poorer results in 2002 reflected the different prior attainment of the group. Predicted grades for 2003, based on sound evidence, for PE and dance suggest that results will stay in line with the national average in PE and rise above it in dance. In both subjects practical attainment based on assessment of ongoing work is in line with or above average, whereas standards in theory work are far more variable.
229. In the two GCSE dance lessons observed levels of performance were high. Higher attaining students were understanding, performing and evaluating advanced choreographed movements with originality and proficiency. In a Year 10 GCSE PE theory lesson girls had a sound understanding of the respiratory system and the effects of smoking and exercise on physical endurance. In a Year 11 GCSE badminton lesson most students were combining and selecting advanced skills appropriately when beating an opponent with the overhead clear and drop shots.
230. In core PE lessons the majority of students perform skills accurately. In a Year 11 basketball lesson students performed basic dribbling, shooting and passing skills well.
231. Throughout both key stages low attaining students demonstrate very basic levels of skill acquisition, limiting the game that can be played. Students have an appropriate understanding of warm up activities on the body and take responsibility for the activity, an improvement on the last inspection. There is less appreciation of the links between warm up activities and students' developing knowledge of anatomy and physiology.
232. Students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. The achievement of students with SEN is good. The department has adopted a variety of teaching and learning styles appropriate to students' different levels. In a Year 9 basketball lesson the teacher set a series of short, appropriate, challenging tasks to develop low attaining boys' understanding of man to man defence. The majority of students work at a level in line with their age and level of prior attainment. Where progress is unsatisfactory and achievement very low it is generally linked to the ten per cent of students who do not participate regularly. All students make good progress in dance, achieving well. They recall previous learning and build on it successfully. The department is placing importance on developing students' literacy skills by promoting key words. Students' numeracy skills receive less attention.
233. The teaching of PE has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall. Dance is taught well at Key Stage 3 and very well at Key Stage 4. The high quality of teaching has a good impact on the pace and productivity in lessons. It enhances the learning environment and promotes progress and success for the majority of students taking part. The department is not yet engaging all students actively in lessons, as it does not give sufficient importance to assuring that all non-participants undertake some form of work. All teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject and the teaching of physical skills is good, an improvement on the last inspection. This was demonstrated in a core Year

11 trampolining lesson where students learnt to perform and combine movements well. Teachers' management of students and their relationships with students are good. This produces enjoyable lessons which promote high levels of enthusiasm.

234. The majority of students have good attitudes to learning. The majority of students are hard working and well motivated. Occasionally when lessons lack pace or classroom management is less than good some immature behaviour among a few students inhibits learning. Attitudes and behaviour in dance lessons are very good. Here, learning objectives are shared with students. In gymnastics and dance teachers offer the students the opportunity to plan aspects of their learning with success. Teachers give less time in PE to students' evaluation of their learning. Teachers generally have high expectations of their students and set appropriately challenging tasks. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the planning was weaker and some students had difficulty concentrating.
235. The PE curriculum and dance curriculum meet statutory requirements. The PE curriculum lacks breadth because of limitations in the college's facilities. A more exciting curriculum, which means seeking off-site provision, will offer the opportunity for all students to expand their physical and intellectual abilities. The time available for core PE at Key Stage 4 is low. Schemes of work do not reflect National Curriculum levels or explain how work should be adjusted in the case of low and high attaining students.
236. The PE department and the youth community programme provide a good range of extra-curricular activities which enrich students' experiences. Students have opportunities to participate in clubs, competitive team games and individual competition. There are high levels of participation and a significant number of students have gained local regional and national honours. Able students are encouraged to join local clubs. Staff give generously of their time. The school has forged strong links with its partner primary schools, with staff and students organising sporting events and offering additional coaching courses.
237. Assessment procedures are in place. They need to be developed to reflect National Curriculum levels and the information needs to be used to set individual learning goals for students.
238. Leadership of the PE department is satisfactory. There is an acting head of dance. Aspects of departmental documentation need to be completed by both departments. The PE department is providing a satisfactory education despite accommodation that is urgently in need of refurbishment. The dance department is providing a good education. The PE department is at a watershed. The roles of staff need to be clarified and a vision for the future needs be formulated. This will release the energy and potential to advance the department further. Teachers support each other well and work with commitment to the students and the subject.
239. There has been significant improvement in PE since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The new leadership of religious education shows energy and vision and the capacity to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Too many lessons are taught by teachers who are not specialists and in non-specialist rooms.
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment to measure attainment accurately and to set students targets for further progress.

240. The college enters candidates for the GCSE full course. In recent years results have fluctuated between being above the national average and below it, with no clear trend. In 2002 results were below the national average. In 2003 the school will enter candidates for the GCSE short course and for the full course.

241. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is at the national expectation. Students show sound knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions they study. In their study of Christianity, for example, students recognise that true forgiveness is very important but very difficult. In their study of Islam, students show that they know the main beliefs and understand how they make a difference to a Muslim's life. They explain how married life is different for Hindus and Christians because of their differences of belief. They understand resurrection and reincarnation as different interpretations of what happens after death. They apply what they learn from religion to themselves and to their experience of life. Most students make at least satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they have the benefit of individual attention from teaching assistants in the classroom. Attitudes are positive and behaviour is good as are personal development and relationships.
242. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is below expectations. Students now in Year 10 follow the GCSE short course with a view to entry at the end of Year 11. These students are making good progress. In Year 11 most students follow the GCSE short course but are not being prepared for the examination. These students lack the incentive that working towards the examination gives and their progress is unsatisfactory. The one teaching group in Year 11 that is being prepared for the short course examination is working at GCSE level and making good progress. In both years there are also students who have chosen GCSE full course as an option. The progress made by these students is at least satisfactory. Those in Year 11 are on the way to results that are at or close to the national average. Most are working at a level that will lead to grades A*-C in the examination. Attitudes and behaviour remain good in Years 10-11, as do personal development and relationships.
243. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. Teaching is better in Years 10-11 because more of the teaching is carried out by specialists and because some of it is directed towards success at GCSE. The weakest teaching is in Year 7 because these students lack the benefit of specialist teaching.
244. Planning of lessons is good. Most teachers have clear objectives and show sufficient detail in the sequence of activities. Teachers manage and motivate students well. They expect and achieve high standards of behaviour. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are adequate but the specialist teaching gives greater challenge and inspiration to students and raises their expectations of themselves.
245. Teachers make very good use of time. Lessons begin promptly. Students generally make a good effort and work at a good pace and so very little time is wasted. The presence of learning assistants is a great benefit. They are very good at giving students the extra help they need in order to succeed. Teachers' use of learning resources is also very good. These range from religious artefacts to well-chosen videos or well-written worksheets. In the best lessons teachers also use the students themselves as resources and as agents in their own learning.
246. Homework is an integral part of the schemes of work but not of the teaching. Teachers do not use completed homework as a starter to lessons or make clear to students how their homework emerges from and extends work done in class. Not enough use is made of completed homework to help students recognise how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
247. Assessment and the use of assessment are in need of substantial improvement. Assessment is currently more related to a notional average performance, with a below average and an above average, than to the scale of attainment. Teachers do not make enough use of level descriptors during lessons to show students what they can already do and what they need to do to improve. The use of targets could raise students' awareness and show them what they need to do to reach the next level of attainment.
248. Provision for moral and social development is good. Students have repeated opportunities to think about moral issues. Religious education promotes the capacity to consider good and evil and helps students to learn to distinguish right from wrong. Students also learn about society and how to live responsibly while respecting people who have a different point of view. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Some teaching lacks focus on the spiritual dimension of life and does not do enough to help students to gain in self-knowledge and self-esteem.
249. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The college has implemented a new agreed syllabus and revised its schemes of work. Students in Year 10 now follow a GCSE short course with a view to entry to the examination. The college has a commitment to improvement and the capacity

to succeed. The main obstacle to continuing success is the mismatch between the needs of the curriculum and available staffing. Non-specialists teach one third of the timetable, 30 hours a week. In Year 7 no students have a specialist teacher. Accommodation is also inadequate with one third of lessons being taught outside the specialist area in whatever room is available. The monitoring, evaluation and development of nine different non-specialist teachers in addition to the four specialists is inevitably difficult and unsatisfactory. That there has been improvement recently despite these obstacles is the direct result of very good leadership and management. Religious education now benefits from a new and very clear sense of direction.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A - E		% gaining grades A - B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	15	80		33		2.60	
Biology	21	90		29		2.57	
Chemistry	14	100		43		2.86	
Computer studies	14	79		36		2.29	
Citizenship	3	67		33		2.67	
Design and technology	9	56		11		1.33	
Economics	13	84		52		2.46	
English	40	100		63		3.58	
French	4	100		50		3.25	
Geography	20	90		30		2.60	
German	6	50		0		0.67	
History	6	100		50		4.00	
Law	34	85		44		2.62	
Mathematics	8	75		25		2.38	
Further mathematics	1	100		0		1.00	
Media studies	51	96		59		3.37	
Music	5	100		0		2.00	
Physical education	20	100		25		2.55	
Physics	14	86		14		2.50	
Psychology	40	63		10		1.45	
Religious studies	4	100		25		3.00	
Sociology	8	88		43		2.63	
Technical graphics	10	90		10		2.40	
Theatre studies	13	100		54		3.54	

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
Art	11	100		45		6.91	
Biology	22	91		23		4.73	
Chemistry	14	100		36		6.00	
Computer studies	6	83		0		4.00	
Economics	4	100		50		6.50	
English	29	93		41		6.41	
French	3	100		100		8.67	
Geography	13	92		38		5.85	
German	2	100		100		10.00	
Government and politics	4	100		75		6.50	
History	7	100		29		6.29	
Law	9	89		67		7.33	
Mathematics	22	91		45		5.91	
Further mathematics	3	100		33		7.33	
Media studies	30	100		53		7.13	
Music	3	100		0		5.33	
Physical education	15	73		0		2.53	
Physics	8	100		25		5.00	
Psychology	29	90		34		5.59	
Religious studies	6	100		17		5.00	
Sociology	11	91		0		4.00	
Technical graphics	7	43		0		2.00	
Theatre studies	5	100		80		8.00	
Travel and tourism double	12	100		17		5.00	
Leisure and recreation double	18	78		0		2.44	
Leisure and recreation single	4	100		0		3.00	
Business studies double	12	83		25		3.67	
Business studies single	3	67		0		2.00	
Media studies double	8	100		63		7.50	
Media studies single	4	75		25		4.50	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and biology.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards at A-level are consistently high.
- A good range of courses and modules are available.
- The teaching is good.
- The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent.
- The range and variety of teaching and learning methods and activities are restricted.
- The spiritual and cultural (ie aesthetic) dimension of mathematics is not explicit.

250. Standards in A-level mathematics have been consistently high, with 100 per cent passes being the norm. In 2001 the proportion of A and B grades was well above the national average. In 2002 all students passed and half achieved high grades, with no significant difference between male or female students' results. Few students convert their module results to AS, as most continue with A-level studies through Year 13. The retention rate is high; very few students leave A-level mathematics courses. Each year GCSE retake courses are held for Year 12 students, but the proportion of C grades is low overall as many students do not attend lessons regularly or have adequate prior attainment.
251. In A-level lessons standards are good, students listen carefully to their teacher, most take comprehensive notes and try hard with exercises set, having understood examples given by the teacher. This is the most common format of lessons, although research occurs when preparing for coursework, as in the Year 12 double mathematics group using numerical methods to solve equations. The normal requirement for entry to A-level is GCSE A*, A or B grades, although some students with only a grade C are exceptionally admitted. For them, the jump to A-level work is extreme. Some students in a Year 13 single subject group had problems with factorising quadratic equations; they needed to apply these GCSE skills in order to solve trigonometrical problems involving double angles. The further mathematics students mostly have A* at GCSE and standards are very high, as in a lesson on using complex numbers to solve trigonometrical equations.
252. The new AS course in 'Use of Mathematics' is a very useful addition to the range of courses offered; it complements and supplements many other A-level subjects, allowing students with C grades to continue mathematics in the sixth-form. A portfolio of work accounts for half of the final assessment and the coursework of most students showed good achievement with complex statistical calculations and good understanding of the application of mathematics. Students on NVQ courses take the key skills 'Application of Number' and achieve well. GCSE retake students who attend regularly and try hard achieve well.
253. Teaching is mainly good, but inconsistently so. Its many strengths are balanced by a limited range of teaching and learning methods. Activities rarely include research and presentations, which would benefit students' personal development and independence. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons well, but the spiritual and cultural dimension of mathematics is not made explicit. Frequent practice with past examination papers and teachers providing model answers help raise students' standards. Humour is used well, as in the Year 13 group studying projectiles and the action of goalkeepers, in the mechanics module. Relationships with students are very good and students recognise their teachers as very supportive.
254. Leadership is good, with a clear vision of mathematics in the sixth form and a wide range of courses and modules are offered at A-level. The large team of well-qualified teachers are well managed, although the

quality of teaching is inconsistent and increased monitoring, evaluation and action would improve provision. Resources are good, with plentiful textbooks and ICT is well used, although access is limited. Accommodation in the new Telfer block is pleasant, but cramped with the larger groups. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good diverse knowledge of their subject.
- The students have very positive attitudes to learning.
- There is good provision for independent learning.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of higher grades at A-level and AS is too low.
- The use of ICT is limited.
- Teachers need a clearer picture of students' understanding of new work.

255. The results of the 2002 GCE A-level biology examinations indicate that the number of students who gained A and B grades was comparable to that in 2001. The proportion of students achieving at least grade E improved considerably from 2001. In 2001, results at A-level were well below the national average. In 2000, they were below the average. Students achieved less well in A-level biology than in most of their other subjects in 2000 and 2001. The standards attained by male and female students were similar. Retention into Year 13 is good and the majority of students have very good attendance.
256. More than half the students who took AS level biology in 2002 continued their studies of the subject into Year 13. From work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by these students are close to the national average. While most students are adept at understanding new ideas and coping with the depth of knowledge required at this level, a few show significant weakness in their prior knowledge and understanding of basic concepts. In a lesson on photosynthesis the failure of some students to distinguish clearly between different areas of the process significantly slowed their progress.
257. The number of students following the AS level biology in Year 12 has increased compared with last year. At this relatively early stage of their course, students are making good progress and standards achieved in lessons are close to the national average. In a good lesson where students debated the motion that humans damage any environment they inhabit, students successfully used their prior knowledge and skills of independent learning to collate and put forward ideas based on sound scientific evidence. This was a direct result of the teachers' well structured planning within the environment module.
258. Students show a very good attitude to their work. Their response is always positive. They relish challenge, concentrate well and persevere in lessons. They use the specific vocabulary of the subject with confidence. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The development of the project room with large numbers of monographs and offprints has provided considerable opportunities for the students to work independently in terms of personal research and setting up of experiments. They have used this facility well in enhancing their coursework.
259. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and delivered effectively. Teachers' diverse knowledge of their subject allows them to share good practice to promote good learning. All work is well marked and linked to A-level criteria and the comments steer the students towards improvement. There is regular homework which is often appraised in class where common errors are identified and rectified. The ongoing assessment of students' understanding in lessons and the provision of individual learning programmes, require further development. Teachers know their students well and provide helpful guidance and advice on ways to improve. As a result, students have a good awareness of how well they are doing.
260. Facilities for ICT are underdeveloped and are not used on a daily basis to analyse and display results. Access to ICT suites is limited because of the pressure on these rooms. While students have good

word processing skills, there is a need for students to develop skills in data capture, spreadsheet development and remote sensing.

261. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The subject co-ordinator has identified areas of weakness and existing strengths and aims for improvement via the subject development plan. There is an improved range of biology specific resources and there has been considerable investment in A-level textbooks. Work in the subject is effectively co-ordinated and teachers work well together as a team.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teachers' have very good subject expertise that is used effectively to develop students' knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are well planned.
- Students' independent learning skills are developed well.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are no specific areas for improvement. Teachers should build upon and further develop, the existing practice in the department.

262. Standards achieved by students in chemistry at the end of the sixth form in 2001 were close to the national average; they had declined from 2000 when they were above average. In the GCE A-level examinations in 2001, the percentage of students gaining A-E grades was around the national average, while the percentage achieving the highest grades (A and B) was higher than average. Students performed better in chemistry than in most of their other A-level subjects. In 2001, the attainment of male students was higher than that of females. The A-level results for 2002 indicate that more students obtained at least grade E than in 2001; the percentage gaining A/B grades was lower.
263. The college considers that one of the main reasons for the slight decline in standards since 2000 was that students did not cope well with a new module that had been introduced into the A-level syllabus. More resources have been deployed to cover this area of work and the teaching schemes have been suitably amended.
264. This year, just over half the students who began the AS-level course decided to continue studying chemistry in Year 13. Many of these students started the course with lower GCSE grades in science than is usually the case in most schools. However, from work seen during the inspection, the overall standards achieved by these students in Year 13 are now close to the national average; they are making good progress. Most have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts and are adept at grasping new ideas. Male and female students are making similar progress. However, some students find it difficult to apply basic chemical principles to new situations and as a result fail to make the necessary connections between different aspects of the subject; for example in a lesson on trends across the periodic table students found it difficult to associate the chemical nature of oxides and chlorides with changes in the atomic properties of the elements concerned. Teachers are aware of this weakness and make good use of the opportunities provided in lessons to help students develop a better overview of the subject. However, in order to improve further, teachers need to address this aspect more in their lesson planning.
265. The number of students electing to take AS-level chemistry in the present Year 12 is similar to previous years. In common with Year 13, many of these students had lower attainment levels in science than in other schools. At this stage of their course, standards reached in lessons are close to the national average and students are making good progress. For instance, in a very good lesson on the physical properties of hydrocarbons, students learned successfully to relate boiling points to the structures of the molecules concerned. This was helped considerably by the teacher's clear explanation of the concepts involved and the opportunities that students were given to think things through for themselves using

molecular models. However, although most of the students had satisfactory recall of earlier work on chemical bonding, some were rather confused about the different ideas relating to molecular interactions.

266. Students display a very good attitude to their studies. They concentrate and persevere well in lessons. Relationships are very good. While teachers use questions effectively to challenge students' understanding, some students in Year 13 are rather reluctant to query teachers' explanations or to venture answers to problems posed in lessons. In part this reflects a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed. This was a feature of some experimental work students carried out on acids and bases, in which they worked slowly and were over-concerned about making errors. While Year 12 students displayed more confidence during a practical determination of energy changes, they also worked rather slowly. More opportunities for practising essential skills would help to rectify this weakness. Students in both Years 12 and 13 are beginning to work effectively on their own. Teachers provide good opportunities for independent learning, particularly through the use of appropriate homework assignments. Good self-study facilities exist in the department, including computer-assisted learning and a good collection of resource books.
267. In all the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was at least good. Lessons are well planned and the work is organised effectively. Teachers are well qualified and their very good subject knowledge results in chemical concepts being explained clearly. Lessons are delivered in an enthusiastic manner that engages students well. Teachers' very high expectations promote a good level of challenge while still maintaining a supportive environment. This was the case in the very good Year 12 lesson on hydrocarbons; while students were allowed to think through the issues for themselves, the teacher interjected probing questions at appropriate points that helped them refine their ideas. The teaching approaches used are linked well to the needs of individual students and promote good learning opportunities. Although resources are used effectively to support learning, at present insufficient use is made in lessons of ICT for scientific purposes such as remote sensing and data logging.
268. The overall monitoring of students' achievement is effective, with good attention being paid to the setting and marking of homework. Teachers know their students well and provide helpful guidance and advice on ways to improve. They have a very good knowledge of course requirements and use past paper questions well in lessons, both to illustrate teaching points and to assess progress. Students have confidence in their teachers and feel that they can turn to them for help; as a result students have a good awareness of how well they are doing.
269. Work in chemistry is well led and managed. Progress is evaluated effectively and suitably ambitious improvement targets have been set. The teacher in charge has a good knowledge of how well the subject is doing and has a clear vision of what is needed to improve further. Curriculum changes have been introduced successfully and work schemes and resources are organised well. This has resulted in good opportunities for students to learn effectively. The three A-level chemistry teachers meet regularly to plan developments; together, they organise work in lessons well as a team. A very useful resource book for teachers has been developed that helps to standardise work across the subject. Accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection and are now good overall. The facilities for ICT have also been improved. As a result of the good provision that is made for the subject, students now achieve well; there has been a good improvement since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection included sampling of teaching in design and technology and in graphics.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies, but teaching in economics was also sampled.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Experienced staff, through their teaching style, support a wide range of students in achieving satisfactory results.

Areas for improvement

- Relatively few students achieve high examination grades.
- The range and variety of teaching approaches are limited.
- The deadlines that students are set for the completion of their work are not enforced rigorously.
- Students' files are not checked regularly for accuracy and completion of work and so their usefulness as an aid for revision is limited.
- Written feedback to students does not routinely include specific targets for improvement.

270. Post-16 provision in the subject consists of intermediate and advanced vocational programmes, with the current AVCE offered as a single and double award. Attainment in 2001 in Advanced GNVQ was a little below the national average, both in terms of the points scores and grades achieved. Numbers at intermediate level have remained small and a below average proportion have completed the award.
271. The results for 2002 show 25 per cent of the 12 candidates for the double award receiving A/B grades and an overall pass rate (A/E grades) of 83 per cent. These percentages and the average points scores of candidates, are below those of the school overall and below average nationally when compared with verified figures from the previous year. Only three students took the single award, of whom two passed, none with the higher grades. A similar number of candidates took the GNVQ(A) award in 2001 and results (recorded at that time as distinction, merit and pass) and average points scores were again below average. All but one achieved an award at pass level. In 2000 14 candidates are recorded as entering for the award with 21 per cent achieving Merit and a further 40 per cent a pass. Much smaller numbers in the previous two years achieved at a similar level – overall therefore continuing to be below the national average.
272. Written work is satisfactory. It is moderately well presented but there are examples of poor sentence construction, spelling and punctuation. Some student folders lack names, section divisions, dates on work and chronological sequencing of work as well as occasional incomplete work. This could affect subsequent performance; there is no evidence of regular file checks by staff. Feedback on work is not always sufficient to show students clearly what they should do to improve. However, there is good coverage of the necessary topics as shown in notes and handouts and evidence of satisfactory retention of learning is shown in the regular tests.
273. The teaching was at least satisfactory and most of it was good. Lessons are well constructed with clear initial objectives. New topics are presented thoroughly and supplemented by pertinent and challenging questions. For example, it was necessary to ensure students had an outline of the Trades Description and other acts that are a constraint on marketing activities before taking on investigation of relevant issues like Levi's dispute with Tesco about the selling of jeans at a discounted price. In the initial discussion, students were able to recall and discuss events that illustrated the use of the acts before making good use of time on computers to research information to report back to the group at a subsequent lesson. The earlier part of the lesson was conducted at a relaxed pace. This applied also to another lesson where students were working individually on assignments and progress was in some cases slow and a minority were clearly not engaged in the task. However, another lesson based around individual work benefited from firm attention to interim and final deadlines for work. A feature of all lessons and a strength of the teaching, is an awareness of individual needs for coaching, particularly among students whose previous academic record is not very strong and who have been predominant in groups up to this year.

274. Students work well together, have a good relationship with staff and generally work conscientiously. The better students make well argued contributions to debate and can develop their grasp of the subject beyond the information provided. They have the skills to make good use of computers both for word processing and to find information although a minority (mainly at the intermediate level) are unsystematic in their approach to the latter and, for example, found difficulties in using this source to provide precise answers to a checklist of questions about an organisation.
275. Current leadership and management are satisfactory. This is a small, cohesive, department which has come to terms with successive changes to the courses they run. They provide teaching in ICT as well as business. An innovation is the bridging course which includes Spanish, citizenship, key skills and the opportunity for GCSE repeats as well as the business course. However, NVQ provision (which includes business administration) is separately organised. There is also a social science department which includes subjects, law and economics for example, which have some affinity to business.
276. Teachers' experience of earlier versions of the GNVQ programme enables them to work supportively with individual students. The head of department is putting together a revised handbook which draws on school policies and applies them in the departmental context. They are drawing together exemplar material from the current version of AVCE and GNVQ to support a developing structure for assessment and standardisation. In common with some other subjects, there is not sufficiently explicit feedback to guide student improvement. There is a development plan for the subject which addresses physical facilities and resources as well as teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The inspection included sampling of teaching in computer studies.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education and on leisure and tourism.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- The good subject knowledge of the teachers provides the potential for good learning.
- Student recruitment and retention rates are improving.
- Students are generally well motivated and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching is not consistently good.
- The quality of the environment for learning needs further improvement.
- The written marking of students' work needs to be improved.

277. Only five students took A-level sports PE studies in 2001. All students achieved a pass although no student gained the higher A and B grades, which had been a feature of the previous three years results. Small numbers prevent a statistical analysis. Examination results in 2001 highlighted the continuing improvement at AS level. Eighty-nine per cent of students achieved a pass and 25 per cent achieved an A or B grade. More girls than boys achieved the higher grades reflecting higher standards on the theory papers. Overall the AS results were broadly in line with the national average.
278. National comparisons for 2002 examination results are not yet available. Compared with earlier years, physical education had relatively weak results at A and at AS level. At A-level 73 per cent of students achieved a pass. No students achieved an A or B grade. At AS level in 2002 all 20 students achieved a pass and 25 per cent achieved an A or B grade. Predicted grades for A-level students based on ongoing assessment suggest all of the 13 students will gain a pass with three students possibly gaining a B grade.
279. A and AS results over the past two years have tended to reflect the prior attainment of the students.

280. Students fail to appreciate that 70 per cent of the course is theory. It is not a practical course. In the two theory lessons observed the teaching overall was satisfactory with some good features. Students' responses in the lessons and evidence based on work scrutiny, supported teacher assessment of their levels of attainment. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Lessons have clear learning objectives and tasks are designed to challenge students at an appropriate level. Lessons proceed at a good pace. Students enjoy their courses and respond well to the level of challenge in the course and work set. Relationships between the students and with teachers are good. Teachers know individual students' strengths and weaknesses well, but the quality with which they mark students' written work is inconsistent.
281. The curriculum for A and AS sports/PE studies is appropriate. The sixth form work is satisfactorily managed. Staff are committed to students' success, although there was some student disquiet over the final assessment of their practical performance. The department would benefit from the monitoring of each other's teaching to bring consistency to the students' learning and raise standards further.

Leisure and tourism

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

Strengths

- The teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects.
- The attitude of the students is sound and they want to learn.
- The procedures for assessment are sound.

Areas for improvement

- Students' attendance in classes is too intermittent.
- Students do not submit assignments punctually.
- The monitoring of students' key skills, particularly the use of investigative skills, needs further work.
- Literacy skills are not integrated into the scheme of work.

282. The courses inspected were leisure and recreation (VCE), leisure and tourism (VCE) and travel and tourism (VCE).
283. Results in the 2001 vocational education examinations are average over the whole grade range. The overall pass rate exceeded the target for the year. Females outperform males but not significantly so. The 2002 results were similar to previous years. For many students the grades in these courses are the highest gained in their examinations.
284. The standards of work in these courses are close to the national average. These standards are achieved because teaching is good. Students' achievements are good by the end of Year 13 in relation to standards on entry to the sixth form. Students' attitudes also cause the quality of their learning to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Retention rates are good.
285. The standards of students' work in the current Years 12 and 13 generally reflect the recent examination results. Students have secure knowledge and understanding. The high attainers produce coursework of a high standard, combining thorough research into, for example, the most popular resorts for holidays, the number of air tickets left unsold, the benefits of anaerobic exercises and the importance of diet for recreation. All students have access to learning facilities on the Internet such as that provided by The Sports Academy. A large number of textbooks is used as the nature of the courses encourages an experimental approach to learning. This access is causing the quality of student work to rise. There is steady improvement in students' ability to deal with oral questions, respond to questions explaining travel or recreational facilities and check that listeners have understood what has been said.
286. Standards in Year 12 are average. Students use numbers in the market analysis of recreation to break down the demand for public amenities or services. Females write more succinctly than males. All students show good knowledge and they demonstrate an ability to work hard at a good pace. Students make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. In most classes there is teamwork which encourages participation and the sharing of ideas and knowledge to help solve problems. This shared responsibility is encouraging social competence. The level of students' interaction in problem solving is very good. The higher attainers plan their work and take care with grammar and spelling. The

average attainers, with careful guidance, produce some imaginative reports and engage in meaningful debate in class. However, spelling and grammar cause problems. The high attainers prioritise their tasks and prepare reports in advance of deadlines. These students show an effective management of resources.

287. Standards in Year 13 are average. The use of research is more developed. Students acquire new knowledge. Male and female students relate theory to practical application in their use of statistics. The majority of students show thinking skills rather than simple regurgitation of textbook theory. The high attainers present their ideas and facts to their peers independently of their teacher using the well resourced materials provided. Most students speak fluently and in detail in response to questions posed by the teacher. The quality of much writing is not as high. Errors of grammar and spelling divert a reader's attention, as for example, when reading about the myriad businesses in tourism, leisure and recreation.
288. The quality of teaching is good resulting in good learning. The strengths are teachers' knowledge and their professional understanding of the way the subject should be taught. Teachers have a technical competency in teaching number, writing and the use of electronic sources. Lessons are well planned and each lesson has a clear learning aim for all levels of attainment. Able students are given more demanding tasks to match their ability. Students are acquiring new knowledge and skills. Students make confident, thoughtful use of primary and secondary sources. Males and females communicate in appropriate depth and in a variety of methods. Teachers enhance students' skills and knowledge to answer questions purposefully and develop independent, reasoned argument through discussion, extended writing and use of electronic data sources to examine the main sectors of tourism related industries. When learning problems arise teachers know when and how to intervene to extend students' work.
289. Leadership and management are good. Students receive expert and timely advice about careers in leisure and higher education. The teachers have good contacts with leisure, sports and tourism professionals. The subject has stated aims which are appropriate. There are developed schemes of work which effectively meet the new specifications of vocational education. Key skills are carefully planned to aid inclusiveness.
290. There has been improvement made each year to the subject's provision. Students' attendance and the timeliness with which they submit their work remain as weaknesses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

During the inspection, teaching in child development and in health and social care, was sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on media studies, music and theatre studies, but teaching in art and design was also sampled.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- The students' attainment is high.
- The teaching and learning are of high quality.
- The number of students taking the subject has increased.
- Students have positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment procedures need further refinement.
- A more substantial bank of research material is needed.

291. The media studies department caters for an increasing number of post-16 students representing a wide range of approaches and capabilities. Forty-five students are following the GCE AS-level course; 42 are

taking the subject at A-level. Twenty-one students in Years 12 and 13 are taking the subject at VCE level (single and double syllabuses).

292. Standards in GCE AS and A-level and at VCE level are very good. Attainment, already above the national average during the period 1998-2001, was maintained in 2002; all 30 A-level candidates gained pass grades, and 53 per cent attained grades A-B. Attainment at AS-level in 2002 was correspondingly good; all 51 candidates attained pass grades with 59 per cent at grades A-B. Moreover, all students passed the vocational VCE course, some at the highest level. These results represent good achievement with students building well on their GCSE results. Moreover, the number of students taking the subject has more than trebled since 1998. There is no significant disparity between male and female attainment and almost all students complete their courses.
293. Standards in Year 12 are very good. For example, in coursework students make perceptive analysis of a wide variety of media. They use ICT skills of a high order; for example in creation of media images, effective layout and startling design with convincing content. In lessons students make critical analysis of the art of film making; they discuss the effects of a 'montage of shots' and of 'binary opposites'; and of shots conveying perspective to manipulate an audience's reaction. Students understand the purpose of tracking shots, of cross cuts and film angles. They understand the impact of recent media developments; of 'interactivity', 'bundle technology', of the progression from analogue to digital and of the widening of audience choice. They discuss the moral choices which accompany greater access to a digital media, reflecting, as one student pointed out, the world of Orwell's *Big Brother*; they understand the negatives as well as the positives offered by interactive technology.
294. Attainment in Year 13 is very good. Coursework folios contain articles for magazines, perceptive analysis of various media and videos of very good quality; VCE students publish the *Reporter* with a wide circulation within the town. Students understand the complicated legal issues involving control of the press, the 'lobby system', the Press Complaints Commission and how press agendas are managed by government press secretaries. They appreciate the subtle difference between the terms, 'in the public interest' and 'of interest to the public'. A lively interest in contemporary affairs provides appropriate starting points from which further research is developed. Students apply their knowledge of the 'media code' to focus on the technical, presentational and aesthetic aspects of media products. Students give effective presentations putting theory into practice. They require, however, to revise some essential media terminology covered earlier in the course.
295. Teaching is very good. Aims of lessons are met; expectations are high; relationships are harmonious. Students are trusted to proceed with their studies; they, in response, are busy, motivated, and learning flourishes. Teachers listen to and respect, students' ideas. Although assessment procedures need to be refined to deal with the sheer quantity of work produced by students, teachers are secure in their knowledge and systematic and thorough in sharing their expertise. Students use initiative in research; all students, whether gifted or borderline, achieve their potential. Best use is made of very good ICT resources. Excellent media display material is testimony to the high standards expected by teachers and achieved by students.
296. Leadership by the teacher in charge is very good; he promotes clear principles of best practice. Under his guidance the department has achieved significant growth since the previous inspection. Collation of banks of research material in the changing media world is a continuing process. The number of candidates attracted to the subject has more than trebled. VCE courses (single and double) as well as A and AS-level courses cater for those with differing approaches to study. In the next academic year media studies will become separate from English; the present subject co-ordinator will become head of the department with a new appointment as deputy. Induction procedures support teachers new to the subject. Students produce a wide variety of media coursework; further teacher training in assessment procedures is required. Teaching is monitored but, at present, teachers of media work within the English department and have their work appraised in that subject. Full appraisals in media teaching can, however, proceed next academic year. The department has formed valuable links with the community; with the Exmouth Journal, with media industries and scriptwriters. Invited speakers include the local MP and the media liaison officer for allied forces in Afghanistan. Students are well prepared for life in a world made more complicated by an increasingly intrusive and powerful media. A significant number of students continue to study this subject in higher education and choose a career in media related professions.

Music

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

Strengths

- Growing numbers of students are continuing to study music in the sixth form.
- In some lessons students engage in practical work alongside detailed academic study.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the teaching allows students to remain passive.

297. In the sixth form only three students took A-level music in 2002. No data are yet available for national comparison, but all three achieved pass grades. These three students had also been successful in achieving AS level in 2001. In 2002 the teaching of the A2 students was shared with a neighbouring school. In recent years there have been small cohorts of students taking AS and A-level. No candidates were entered for A-level in 2000 or 2001.
298. The two students in Year 13 are producing work in line with the national average. Files are of a satisfactory standard, show a clear understanding of harmony and are supplemented by some useful historical notes and analysis provided by the teacher and downloaded from the Internet. In lessons students speak clearly and confidently about the music they have heard and make comparisons with the music of other composers working in particular genres. However, the standards achieved by several students in Year 12 are below what might be expected at this stage. The very wide range of attainment is reflected in their oral contributions in lessons seen, their coursework and in the quality of written work, which range from the exemplary to the weak. In one very good example, a student had written an essay about the music of Miles Davies as part of their set area for detailed analysis. The work was very well presented with key ideas and works underlined for clarity. He had clearly understood the main musical devices used by this musician, had listened to a variety of works and had developed his own critical ideas through the essay. This was not the case for many of the other students and many files were poorly presented with essays short in length and with evidence of poor note taking in lessons.
299. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. However, there was both good and unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching was good when the teacher engaged the students in practical work alongside detailed academic study. In a Year 12 lesson the students were engaged in a detailed analysis of the film score by John Williams from the film ET. After some initial focusing on harmonic and structural detail the students had the opportunity to play particular melodic or harmonic lines using their own instruments. As the group was large enough and consisted of some very accomplished musicians, the lesson culminated in a full performance of the selected extract. In this lesson the learning taking place was much more effective and of more depth than in those lessons where the students were more passive. When teachers were able to bring a variety of teaching approaches to lessons including performance, aural and creative work, as well a detailed critique of musical styles and historical contexts, the students achieved higher standards.
300. The A-level and AS teaching is shared between two teachers whose strengths are complementary. Subject knowledge is good but lesson planning sometimes does not reflect the individual needs of students. Although some essays are marked in detail, more work needs to be done in ensuring that every student is aware of their own progress and of their individual targets for improvement.
301. Many students in the sixth form take part in school extra-curricular activities and this is evident through the commitment to the Swing Band and to the annual school production. Several students participate in Devon County groups such as the Youth Orchestra.

Theatre studies

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

Strengths

- The teaching is of high quality.
- The students are committed and work hard.
- Students' attainment in performance is high.
- More students are choosing the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The department's computer is out of date.
- Additional sound and lighting are needed to enhance performance.
- Students' standard of written work sometimes falls below that of their practical performance.

302. Results in 2002 at GCE A-level were good; although the number of entrants was small (five), all students attained passes while four attained grade A or grade B. These results were higher than those of 2001, which matched the national average; although all students passed the examination in 2001, there were no A grades. Results at AS level in 2002, with larger numbers of candidates (13), were also good; all candidates passed the examination and 54 per cent attained grades A-B. These results, with twice the number of students, maintained the good standards reached in 2001 when the average points score rose above the national average. There was no difference in the performance of males and females. Almost all students completed their courses.
303. Observation of work in Year 12 indicates that standards in practical theatre are very good with students building well upon their previous work at GCSE. They understand how to use sound, lighting and stage and costume design to good effect. Students' coursework shows a familiarity with the specialist vocabulary of drama. Students, in directing performance, make thoughtful interpretations of texts to catch the spirit of plays. Students use their imagination to full effect. In one very good lesson students presented the same prologue scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in two widely differing styles chosen by their stage directors; their performances showed verbal dexterity, comic characters developed individuality and breathless pace was maintained. In plenary sessions students evaluated one another's performance, actors showed insight into how to achieve improvement. However, the written work of some students, though good, is not always as convincing as their performance.
304. Attainment in Year 13 is very good in practical theatre. Students perform confidently. For example in their improvisation in a lesson on Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, their characters revealed often startling nuances of feeling both through their words, their positioning on stage in relation to one another and by gestures. They attracted their audience's attention to the essential theme of two characters, in life married but existing in separate worlds with an unbridgeable gulf between them. The students understood how a series of small ideas build up in drama to a final important theme. Standards in coursework are good but students are not always as confident with this aspect of work as with practical performance.
305. Teaching is very good. Teachers are sure of their subject, enthusiastic and eager to share their expertise. They listen carefully to students' ideas. They time their advice and suggest appropriate ideas when students are receptive and ready to move confidently onwards. Assessment of coursework is thorough and helpful. Relationships between students and teachers are very good; students use their initiative, co-operating well with one another in scriptwriting and performance. Teachers devise successful methods of developing students' insight into the playwright's purpose and meaning. Satisfactory use is made of ICT; however, the department's own computer needs replacing. Each student is given and eagerly takes up, the opportunity to develop their particular talents. An attitude of optimism and enthusiasm for hard work prevails - very good learning ensues.
306. Leadership is very good. The departmental handbook gives clear guidance on best principles of teaching. The induction of newly qualified staff is excellent. Appraisal of staff is ongoing. Organisation is very good; students benefit from the variety of approaches offered by a well organised team which includes experienced as well as newly qualified teachers. The department has established a tradition of public performances. Theatre visits are arranged, workshops on use of sound and lighting are held and there are productive links with the Northcote Theatre in Exeter. Year 12 students visited three partner primary schools giving a performance in each; thus raising the profile of drama with younger children soon to join the college. The department contributes very well to students' moral, social and cultural development. It creates an ethos in which students are able to be creative, use their initiative in research and enjoy the success they achieve.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, law, psychology and government and politics, but teaching in citizenship, history, religious studies and sociology was also sampled.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The students reach good standards at the end of Year 13.
- The teaching is good and provides students with support in developing their independent learning.
- Fieldwork and ICT are incorporated effectively into the curriculum.
- The department is committed to raising standards and the teachers work together collaboratively.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient attention to the teaching of key skills.
- Contributions to students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development are not identified in curriculum planning.

307. The focus of the inspection was on one group of students following an AS course in Year 12 and one group following an A-level course in Year 13.
308. The A-level results in 2002 were above the national average for all maintained secondary schools, in the percentage of grades A-B and A-E attained. They were also significantly above the national average for the previous two years. The quality of coursework was a significant factor in the highest grades. Students attain well in relation to their other subjects and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. There is a high retention rate between Years 12 and 13. Results at AS level are just above the national average with boys' attainment higher than that of girls.
309. Students make good progress in the sixth form. They have a good knowledge of advanced technical vocabulary, for example in relation to heath land ecosystems and limestone landforms and can interpret these landscapes through maps. They have a good understanding of the major conceptual models in both economic and physical geography and can apply these through a range of up-to-date and world wide case studies. Their coursework shows an ability to test hypotheses through a range of survey techniques and the advanced statistical analysis of data. They are well challenged through use of subject-specific software and Internet research. The teaching of key skills is not made explicit in curriculum planning and students lack training in oral presentation to a class. Opportunities for contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not well identified.
310. Teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and plan well. Students show a positive attitude and co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. They respond particularly well when they are given opportunities for individual and group research work and analysis, as in their project on retail gravitation in the east Devon area. Extended homework is rigorously assessed and students are thoroughly prepared in examination techniques. Examination results are very carefully analysed so that students have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in the subject. They themselves are positive about the amount of individual help and guidance they receive and teachers give generously of their time.
311. Leadership and management of the department are very good and the specialist team is committed to the maintenance and improvement of standards.

Law

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

Strengths

- Good progress is made in lessons.
- The highest attaining students achieve good standards in their writing and analysis of legal thinking.
- The students learn about legal knowledge and its interpretation.
- The students have frequent opportunities to work informally, to practise legal terms and to engage in debate.

Areas for improvement

- Activities are not planned so that all students are fully involved and their opinions heard.
- Students' spelling and grammar receive insufficient attention.
- Students have insufficient opportunities for independent learning and research.
- The use of ICT needs to be developed in order to help students develop critical skills when examining new cases and new legislation.

312. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above the national average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. They are the result of good teaching. Students are hard working and have positive attitudes. This causes the quality of their learning to be good. Retention rates are good.
313. A-level and AS examination results in law in 2001 were above average for all grades. The most recent results show an improvement in the higher grades awarded. Male and female students achieve similar grades. Students' achievements, in relation to their average starting points in the sixth form, are good overall. In comparison with many other subjects, students' performance is high.
314. Standards have been maintained while the number of students wishing to study law has increased. The increasing popularity of the subject means more resources will be required to promote the consistent involvement of students in their work which is needed for the study of legal reasoning. For example, discussion, debate and presentations require access to up-to-date legal cases. The evidence from students' files indicates some inconsistency in their accessing, via the electronic media, the variety of information now available. The amount of independent work they can undertake is limited by the restricted opportunities to use ICT while in college. Higher attainers use their detailed knowledge and understanding well in their writing at length and with good style. However, the spelling and grammar of many students are weak. Their work shows some evidence of wide reading and they quote case law accurately. In a lesson introducing the principles guiding statutory interpretation, students were able to identify the different explanations of the literal golden and mischief rule. Notes are taken assiduously and some students spontaneously provide their own amendments in response to their teacher's comments about their work.
315. Standards in Year 12 are average with students making sound progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding and their use of legal skills. Most are maintaining progress towards the challenging target grades which are set for them. A few are already working beyond them. Many write clear legal arguments at length and develop a good legal style of argument. Too many, however, tend to summarise the information given them by their teacher without any form of analysis. They are instructed in the importance of precise interpretation and analysis. A few files are disorganised which suggests a lack of determination to enhance their legal skills of having the facts at their fingertips. This reduces a student's ability to assess the weight of opposing legal arguments and the value of conflicting precedents.
316. Standards in Year 13 are above average. The higher attainers recognise that law is a dynamic subject and they are able to separate fact and opinion with ease. They maintain good files and show good study skills in selecting and synthesising information. Students with middle and lower attainment are less certain about the legal knowledge they handle. All levels contribute well in class and they are not afraid to voice an opinion. The enrichment of the subject in Year 13 is good with speakers and visits to courts. This helps students to develop case analysis and the identification of relevant facts and law in order to reach conclusions.
317. Teaching is good in both years. This contributes to the popularity of the subject. In the best lessons the teaching is imaginative and well paced. The teachers have a good knowledge of law and a clear understanding of the importance of legal argument. This has a strong influence on students' ability to evaluate the relative significance of examples of case law. Activities are varied and expectations high. The teachers provide good opportunities for students to speak and argue. There are good relationships

between students and their teachers, this results in effective work being produced most of the time. However, suggestions for reading beyond the material covered in class are not always followed.

318. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear educational direction for law. The teachers are specialists and possess good knowledge. The progress of students is well monitored with appropriate targets set for improvement. Ethical issues are recognised and evaluated, while Green, European and social issues are covered.
319. There has been progress in the provision over time. Consistently good pass rates at AS/A-level are above the national average. There is smooth transition from AS to A-level, and well-established systems of academic monitoring and pastoral care have enhanced progress. Citizenship studies are integrated as a part of the legal dimension. High levels of commitment and expertise among staff are a part of rising standards.

Government and politics

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is **good**.

Strengths

- The teacher is knowledgeable, experienced and energetic.
- Students' A-level results in 2002 were higher than those for other subjects.
- The teaching emphasises practical and current political issues.

Areas for improvement

- The subject recruits irregularly from year to year.
- Written feedback on students' work often does not include specific targets for improvement.
- Links with the citizenship curriculum are underdeveloped.

320. There is currently one Year 12 group of nine students. National numbers in this subject are relatively small and it is not therefore possible to compare results with those of other schools. Results, by comparison with the 'all other subjects' category nationally or against other subjects within the college, are good. In 2002 the four candidates all passed and three of them achieved a grade of A or B. There is no current Year 13; the pattern of recruitment has been for viable groups to operate in alternate years and the current Year 12 AS group is the largest there has been. The only AS group was in 2001: of six candidates, two achieved a grade of A or B and three passed, which was in line with national figures.
321. Students' written work is well ordered; notes are structured and show full curriculum coverage. The overall standard is at the level of good to average grades at AS level. Files include students' own notes from texts as well as teacher-generated material. Students are briefed as to grade requirements. Work is generally coherent and accurate, developing in length and depth as students realise the demands of the subject. The main skills needing development in weaker students are to write concisely, to the point and in an appropriate style. At this stage of the course students are still learning to apply their knowledge to the analysis of political questions rather than merely writing descriptively.
322. Teaching is good overall. The teacher takes a lively and knowledgeable approach to the subject, creating a similar interest in the students. A focus on current issues leads to an informed debate at the beginning of each lesson. A well chosen range of journal, book and Internet sources are provided to enable the examination of each topic. For example, the group were divided into four to research the arguments for devolution in each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which would then be used in debate with the teacher in a future lesson. Sharp and pertinent questions are asked to focus the students' thinking. Progress and understanding are regularly checked.
323. The rapport with the students is excellent; the latter are quick to put their own questions and views. Their attention to their tasks is generally good. They show a good grasp of the historical context of the issues addressed. Although some of the group occasionally lose concentration if they feel unable, through lack of practice, to extract the information they need, in the second lesson observed they made good progress towards preparing their case for debate. They appreciate the informality of the small learning group which allows an easy learning relationship with the teacher.

324. There is one teacher of government and politics who also heads the department containing other social sciences, which also in the main are single teacher subjects. Each has autonomy in deciding how to assess and monitor performance within the subject. This teacher will be able to contribute to forthcoming college policy on assessment linked to individual target setting as a result of previous work in this area. In his own subject there is a need, in common with some other subjects, to provide more specific targets for improvement after each piece of assessed work. He has also been responsible for developments in citizenship and the college benefits generally from his experience in examining, textbook writing and practical politics.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- The teacher is knowledgeable and the teaching is good.
- There is an effective system for assessment, marking and feedback.
- The response of the Year 13 group is good and the standard of their work is high.

Areas for improvement

- Note taking is used too frequently as the means for receiving information, particularly in Year 12 classes.
- The balance between teacher and student led activities needs to be adjusted in favour of the latter.
- The accommodation for teaching the large groups now attracted to the subject is cramped.

325. A-level results in 2001 were slightly below the national average for social sciences. Attainment rose in 2002; a larger group of 29 candidates achieved slightly above the national average for 2001. Candidates appear to have done particularly well in their assessed coursework. The college is concerned that the even larger AS group in 2002 appears to have performed less well with only a small proportion achieving an A or B grade and an overall pass rate that is likely to be below the national average.

326. Current work is at least at the standard predicted by students' earlier results. Students are made well aware of the standards required of them, for example through the use of exemplar material from the examination board and the study skills necessary to achieve them. Guidance on specific targets for improvement following assessed work is less clear. Organised files form a good basis for revision. There are full notes covering both content and methodology. Students are given early practice in experimental work and its recording and evaluation. There is no evidence of regular checking of files for completeness and accuracy. Work shows a good grasp of the fundamental theories and models. Some students are less confident in explaining this information in writing or linking their analysis to research examples. There is clear evidence of improvement in these skills by Year 13 where some well designed and presented investigations were seen.

327. Teaching groups, particularly in Year 12, are large and teaching is hampered by the size and shape of the base room. Teaching is nevertheless good. Lessons are excellently prepared, show up-to-date knowledge presented in a clear and lively manner by the teacher and are at a brisk pace. For example, clips from a television comedy series were used to graphically illustrate different models for explaining abnormal human behaviour. Objectives for the lesson and a summary of previous work introduce each session. There is a flexible response to students' questions and students are encouraged to participate in the lessons. The lessons have an appropriate mix of reinforcement of previous work and new topics. On occasions the dominance of the teacher's input and a strong emphasis on note-taking, combined with the size of the group, inhibits students' contributions. There is useful cross-referencing to book and journal sources.

328. Overall, a sound basis is laid for future work in an adult working environment. Students show good knowledge of their previous work and ask perceptive questions. They follow the work closely and appreciate the systematic way in which it is presented. By Year 13 they demonstrate the capacity for good quality written and oral work in the subject.

329. The subject is within the social science department and has one teacher with a valuable background in teaching at a variety of levels, of examining, research and publications. A very systematic picture of students' background and progress is kept and an opportunity for discussion on progress, involving parents, linked to examination entry decisions, has been introduced in addition to the normal parents'

evenings. The scheme of work is well written and includes detail of methodology and activities for delivering the course. Good resources are being developed. The teacher has analysed his own performance in order to adjust the delivery of the AS year to counteract the disappointing performance last year.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and Spanish.

English

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving and are now well above average at A-level.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations enable them to challenge and support even the highest attaining students.
- Students' very positive attitudes and very good relationships with teachers help them to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The pace of teaching is not fast enough in some lessons.

330. A-level results in English literature fell below the national average in 2001. All students passed, but only one gained a high grade and students did not achieve as well as expected. Results improved considerably in 2002. Students achieved well and a good proportion gained the highest grades, A and B. Results in AS examinations in 2001 were good, but even better in 2002 when all 40 students passed and well over half gained the highest grades. More females than males study the course but there is little difference in their attainment. Once committed to courses, nearly all students complete them. Each year a small number of students resit GCSE examinations in English in Year 12. Most improve their GCSE grade and several achieve a grade C or above.
331. Current Year 13 students are building well on their success at AS level and are achieving above average standards. Most are confident, articulate and able to express their ideas at length during class discussions. The writing of several high attaining students is exceptionally mature and analytical. They deal impressively with challenging texts and questions of their own choice in well-structured coursework essays. For example, one student identified the related themes of suppression, oppression and repression in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *The Remains of the Day* and justified her personal viewpoint with excellent reference to the text. Most students are well aware of the social and historical contexts of texts. They used this knowledge effectively when preparing class presentations on the importance of remembrance in a variety of writings about the Great War. However, lower attaining students find it difficult to analyse how writers use language and form to create effect and meaning.
332. Year 12 students are also making good progress from their earlier GCSE standards of work. They read Chaucer's original text of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* with understanding, although their translations are rather stilted at times. They analyse plot, character and themes in Shakespeare plays with good insight. The most competent students are developing a personal response to texts while taking into account the views of other literary critics. Most students make close reference to the text to back up their views in essays, although some do not integrate quotations into their discussion as well as they might and several still make spelling and syntactical errors.
333. A small class of students is continuing to study GCSE English language in order to improve their Year 11 results. Good teaching, based on careful planning of work to meet their individual needs, is enabling students to make good progress. Sensitive support from their teacher has led to a significant improvement in confidence and self-esteem for these students.
334. The quality of teaching is good and enables students to learn well. A particular strength is teachers' excellent, in-depth knowledge of texts and writers. This helps them to extend the ideas and understanding of even the highest attaining students. However, they also value students' own views and encourage them to develop and justify their own interpretations of set texts. Teachers mark students' work regularly and supportively. They show their high expectations by asking students challenging

questions that help them to improve essays that are already of a high standard. They make direct reference to the assessment objectives and often discuss these with students in individual tutorials. As a result, students know how well they are doing but also understand how they can gain even better grades. They respond very well to teachers' advice and many spend a lot of time and effort redrafting and improving their work. A few lower attaining students do not get enough advice about how to analyse writers' use of language when teachers mark their work. Teachers and students clearly enjoy discussing literature. However, teachers sometimes allow the discussion to lose focus. This slows the pace of teaching and students do not achieve as much as they might. In two lessons, there was insufficient time for students to share their ideas with the whole class because the group discussion continued for too long. Teachers do not use whiteboards very effectively. They sometimes miss opportunities to summarise points made in discussion and do not ensure that all students can see the whiteboard.

335. Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies and this makes a significant contribution to their learning. They are mature and confident and have very good relationships with teachers, who they trust. They appreciate the fact that teachers are challenging but supportive and use a good variety of teaching methods. A Year 13 student rightly claimed, "This is a good course that is well taught".
336. The department is well led and managed. The standards in the sixth form that were reported during the last inspection have been maintained. Teachers work well as a team and share the planning of the course effectively so that classes benefit from having two teachers each. The monitoring of students' achievement is becoming more systematic and efficient as teachers make better use of the available data. The department has not yet responded to requests from several students to run an English language course in addition to literature. The department's resources are adequate overall but there are insufficient reference books in the library to enable students to carry out research and take further responsibility for their own learning. As a result, they rely heavily on photocopied resources provided by their teachers.

Spanish

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- The subject is organised effectively.
- The range of languages offered is enhanced by the addition of Spanish.

Areas for improvement

- There are no specific areas for improvement given the early stage of development of the post-16 Spanish course.

337. The post-16 curriculum has been enriched by the opportunity for students who have previously studied French or German to take GCSE Spanish (short course) for two periods per week and by offering Spanish at entry level for one period per week as part of the vocational course provision for students who may not previously have studied modern foreign languages with success. The GCSE results in 2001 were good; there were no candidates in 2002.
338. Students respond well in the GCSE course and are well motivated. They are making good progress; much ground has been covered in barely two terms of study, although some of them have difficulties with retention of grammar and structure. They understand the written and spoken language, but need more extended exposure to the latter. They cope well with speaking and writing in structured situations, although their experience of improvisation is more limited.
339. The vocational group are coping with the demands of the entry level syllabus in the time available and can perform the simple speaking and writing tasks it requires. Although some students struggle to do this, there are others who could go well beyond the demands of the syllabus. Some students need rather more support in organising their learning, for example in identifying key verbs as well as nouns, although in the case of some students, particularly males, limited concentration is an obstacle.
340. The teaching of Spanish post-16 is effective although the limited time available means the diet is very closely influenced by the textbook. The teacher shows good judgement in the focus on grammar with the

GCSE students and the selection of materials from authentic business websites for the vocational students.