

INSPECTION REPORT

FROME COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Frome

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123862

Headteacher: Mr Barry Bates

Reporting inspector: Mr Tom Ferris
4344

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd November 2002

Inspection number: 249787

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 pupils:	13 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bath Road Frome Somerset
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Siblock
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4344	T Ferris	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are the standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are the pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
9121	H Danpure	Lay inspector		How high are standards – pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18967	B Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well does the school care for its pupils? (support)
17378	M Miles	Team inspector	English	
11481	L Lindsay-Clift	Team inspector	Science	
1723	M Milton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15306	S Bugg	Team inspector	Art and design Art (Sixth form)	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30743	N Cowell	Team inspector	Geography	
31329	K Barratt	Team inspector	History	
3793	J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (Sixth form)	
24026	C Holland	Team inspector	Music	
23030	C Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
12179	L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? (support)
15590	S Slocombe	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Special educational needs English as an additional language	
13101	M Kell	Team inspector		
19278	R Allan	Team inspector	Mathematics (support) Mathematics (Sixth form)	How well is the school led and managed? (support)
13048	T Boyden	Team inspector	Business education Leisure and recreation	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? (support)
22370	P Harwood	Team inspector	Physics Chemistry	
10807	P Quest	Team inspector	Sociology Health and social care	
7958	G Lewis	Team inspector	English (Sixth form) Media studies	

12825	N Carr	Team inspector	Psychology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Frome Community College is a comprehensive school for pupils aged 13 to 18. With 1530 pupils on roll, it is much larger than most secondary schools nationally: there are 746 boys and 784 girls. The sixth form, with 338 students, 157 male and 181 female, is much larger than most sixth forms. The school has had specialist college status in media and the arts since September 2002. Only a very small proportion of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds (less than two per cent) or have English as an additional language. There is a similar, very small proportion of traveller children. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Ten per cent of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs. The main needs catered for are moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) and emotional and behavioural difficulties. In addition, the college has a special resource base which caters for pupils who are hearing-impaired or who have speech and communication difficulties. Two per cent of the pupils have statements of educational need. This is in line with the national average. The attainment of the pupils when they enter the school at the start of Year 9 is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Frome Community College is a school that does most things well. It makes a major contribution to the personal development of its pupils and students. Standards in the national tests taken at the age of 14 are above average. Standards at GCSE, although not unsatisfactory overall, are average and not as high as they could be. Results in the sixth form are above to well above average. The teaching is good in Year 9 and in the sixth form. It is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of leadership and management shown by the principal, senior managers and subject leaders is good in many respects, although more rigorous monitoring of teaching and sharper target setting are needed. The college's action to ensure that all pupils, including those most at risk, benefit from their time at school is very good. Income and expenditure are above average for schools of this type. It provides sound value for money. The quality of provision in the sixth form is both good and cost-effective.

What the school does well

- The standards reached and the progress made in music and in design and technology.
- The above to well above average standards in the sixth form.
- Relationships and the provision for the pupils' personal development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those most at risk of not benefiting from their time in the college.
- The links with both parents and the community and how they benefit learning.
- The wide choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 and for advanced study in the sixth form.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activity and the progress made by talented pupils in music and sport.

What could be improved

- The results at GCSE, particularly in science.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Greater coherence in target setting for pupils and subjects.
- Time for information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 9 and the co-ordination of ICT across subjects.
- The publication of examination results in the correct format.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in September 1996. It has made satisfactory progress since then. Results at Key Stage 3 have improved in line with the national improvement. Above to well above average results have been maintained in the sixth form. The teaching has improved. Satisfactory progress has been made in respect of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now fully met in religious education and in modern foreign languages. There has been improvement in the provision for design and technology and for ICT, although requirements are still not fully met. There has also been improvement in the way in which pupils are grouped in Year 9. There is more monitoring of teaching than previously but this is not yet systematic enough.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

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

* The basis for comparison of advanced level results changed in 2001, therefore no grade is included for 2000. National comparative data for 2002 are not yet available.

At the age of 14, the pupils' results in the national tests were above average overall. This has been the pattern in most recent years. It is the case when the results are compared to results in all schools nationally and to those in schools with a similar intake of pupils. In English, results were above average; in both mathematics and science they were in line with the average. At the higher levels, i.e. level 6 or above, the results were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Evidence from the inspection indicates above average performance in English and science and average but nonetheless improving performance in mathematics. Girls perform better than boys but the difference is not significantly different from the national average. In the work seen in Year 9, standards are average in most subjects. In history and music they are above average. In geography and ICT they are below; the pupils are nevertheless making sound progress, given their previous attainment in these two subjects.

In GCSE in 2002 the results were in line with the national average. Again this has been the pattern in recent years and is also the case when compared to results in all and in similar schools. When compared to the results in schools which had similar results at age 14 two years previously, the results are well below average. A significant factor in this is the underachievement in science, especially by boys of average ability. Results in science have declined over the last three years. Well above average results were achieved in music, in design and technology and in business studies. Results were above average in French and in the full GCSE courses in ICT, religious education and physical education. Overall, girls perform better than boys. In recent years the gap has been less than the national gap. However, it appears to have widened again in 2002. Evidence from the inspection broadly reflects the results. Most pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily. The college did not meet its targets for 2002 in GCSE; the higher targets set for 2003 and 2004 are appropriate. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.

In the sixth form the advanced level results in 2001 were well above average, with strong performance in almost all subjects. The 2002 results, for which there as yet no national comparisons, are not as high as in 2001, although most students have achieved well given their GCSE results two years previously.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Very good in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in lessons and around the college. Occasionally, some pupils, mainly boys, disrupt the learning for others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils respond well to the encouragement of their teachers and of other pupils. There is a high rate of participation in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities offered.
Attendance	Good.

Many pupils respond well to the many opportunities to help, both in the college itself and in the community. They participate well in the school council and in raising money for charity. Some are very positive about the help and support they receive from other pupils who act as trained counsellors.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Most of the teaching has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. In the vast majority of lessons, the teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan and manage the pupils well, establishing good working relationships with them. As a result, most pupils work at a good pace, concentrate well and show interest in their studies. The best lessons are characterised by very good questioning, very good variety and by very good explanations and demonstrations. In these lessons the teachers successfully involve all the pupils and value everyone's contribution. In the very small number of lessons where the teaching was less than satisfactory, the key features are work that is too easy, slow pace and, at times, difficulty in managing the pupils' behaviour.

The teaching of English is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In mathematics it is good in all years. In science, the teaching is good in Year 9. Science lessons seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 were mostly satisfactory. However, weaknesses in the teaching over time have contributed to the underachievement in GCSE. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching is very good in music and in design and technology. In the sixth form it is very good in design and technology and in leisure and recreation.

Literacy skills are generally well taught. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics but not so effectively across the curriculum. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, both in the learning support centre and in the school as a whole, is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally good in Year 9, although insufficient time for ICT means that National Curriculum requirements are not met in full. There is a wide choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 and for advanced study in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Most make good progress. Staff in the learning support department provide very good support to both individual pupils and groups of pupils. The needs of the hearing impaired and those with speech and communication difficulties are well met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Only a very small number of pupils have English as an additional language and they all are proficient users of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good provision for moral, social and cultural development. Good provision for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Good procedures for promoting good behaviour and attendance. The pastoral staff provide good support and guidance. The level of support in the sixth form is very good.

In most respects the college works very well with parents, the vast majority of whom have a positive view of the college.

A major strength of the college is the very wide range of extra-curricular activities offered, for example in sport, in music, for residential experience abroad and for participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The college's links with the local community, including its partner schools, is another major strength. The new work-related programme for pupils experiencing difficulties with the traditional curriculum is working well. In science in Years 10 and 11 the practice of teaching the three sciences as separate GCSE courses to most pupils is not effective. Too many are not coping with the demands and are consequently underachieving. Although the provision of advanced courses in the sixth form is very good, that for students less academically inclined but wishing to pursue their studies is more limited. Guidance for sixth form students on applying for places in higher education is a strength. The college's 'time out' room and the 'flexible learning centre' provide effectively for pupils whose behaviour is at times challenging. Provision for child protection is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good in most respects. The principal and other senior managers work well together and provide clear direction in respect of relationships, care, personal development, relationships with the community and with parents. Action to improve GCSE results needs to be more robust.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good awareness of the college's strengths and relative weaknesses. Good support for senior managers and for subjects. Although governors ensure that most statutory requirements are met, there are some important gaps, in relation to the curriculum and to reporting examination results in the correct form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Generally satisfactory. Evaluation of the GCSE results does not, however, take sufficiently into account the above average results in Year 9.

The strategic use of resources	Good. The budget is well planned and monitored.
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The school is well staffed, particularly but not only in the sixth form. The teachers are well qualified and have extensive experience. The non-teaching staff make a significant contribution. The induction of new staff is very good. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. However, it is barely adequate to meet the needs of the current number of pupils. Accommodation for drama and for the library is not adequate. The quantity and quality of resources are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Application of the principles of best value is good.

Leadership and management are very good in music and in design and technology. The leadership in science is not currently effective in reversing the decline in the results at GCSE.

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 expectation that the pupils will work hard. • The teaching. • Their children's personal development. • The leadership and management. • The approachability of senior and other staff. 	<p>Some parents would like to see improvement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework; • information on their children's progress; • activities outside lessons.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. In respect of homework, this generally makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. At times, however, the homework timetable is not always followed, which can make it difficult for pupils to manage the load. The inspectors partly agree on information on progress. The college provides good opportunities for parents to meet tutors and subject teachers. Written reports on progress, although satisfactory, are sometimes not clear enough on strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. The inspectors do not agree on activities outside lessons; this is a strength of the college.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is much larger than the national average. With slightly more female than male students, the proportion is similar to that found nationally. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language. The sixth form offers 31 courses at Advanced Subsidiary (AS) or Advanced (A) level. It also offers four Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses and two Intermediate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). There are a small number of GCSE courses, for example in English and mathematics. There are no shared courses with other institutions. About half of Year 11 stay on into the sixth form, with a small but increasing proportion of students coming from other schools. Almost all students on A-level courses have five or more A*-C grades at GCSE; almost all of those on AVCE courses have at least four. Those taking intermediate GNVQ are expected to have at least two A*-D grades but those with fewer than this are considered on their individual merits.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Frome Community College has a good, cost-effective sixth form. It has a number of very good features and meets the needs of most students well. A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average, broadly in line with the students' GCSE results. Whilst results in 2002 were not as high, students achieved well in relation to their GCSE grades. Teaching is good overall and consequently students generally achieve well. The sixth form is well led and managed. Students hold the college sixth form in high esteem.

Strengths

- The broad range of A-level courses offered.
- Very good achievement in design and technology at A-level and in the AVCE leisure and recreation course.
- Very good personal and academic guidance and support.
- Good teaching.
- The very high regard in which students hold the college.

What could be improved

- The range of provision: for those students who do not reach the standards necessary for A-level programmes; for general religious education; and for physical education beyond examination courses.
- The consistent use of data to evaluate effectiveness and identify priorities for improvement.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average. Most students achieved the grades expected from their GCSE results. Currently, standards are above average. Teaching is good and students are learning well.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are broadly average and students achieve well in relation to their GCSE grades. Teaching is purposeful and well planned; students are attentive and productive.
Physics	Good. Results in 2001 were well above the national average and students make good progress. Teaching is good and the subject is well managed, with good technical support and resources.
Design and Technology	Very good. Students make very good progress from GCSE and reach high standards as a result of very good teaching.
Business	Good. Results were well above average in 2001 and generally represent good progress from GCSE. Good teaching and assessment ensure students achieve well.
Physical Education	Satisfactory. A-level Sports Studies standards are average with good teaching and achievement, but provision for general PE is limited.
Leisure & Recreation	Very good. Current standards are good and progress from GCSE is very good. This is the result of very good teaching in a well-led department.
Health & Social Care	Good. Standards are average. Good teaching within a supportive environment ensures that all students make good progress.
Art & Design	Satisfactory. Standards are below average and some students do not achieve as well as they should. Year 12 students are making better progress. The teaching is satisfactory.
Media Studies	Good. Standards are average. Well-planned teaching ensures students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their targets.
Geography	Satisfactory. Results in 2001 were well below the national average but are much improved in 2002. Teaching is mainly good; standards are rising but are not yet high enough at AS-level.
Sociology	Good. Results are consistently well above the national average. Students achieve well as a result of very knowledgeable teaching and their own enthusiasm for the subject.
Psychology	Very good. Results in 2001 were above the national average. Teaching is good and students are very positive about their work and so achieve well. Many achieve much better than expected.
English	Good. Results are consistently good, with students making good progress from GCSE. Teaching is well planned and efficient.
French	Good. Results are well above average and represent good progress by students who are taught imaginatively and work well independently.

Work was also sampled in biology, design and technology textiles, ICT, photography, music, history, law, politics and government, religion and philosophy, German and general studies. There was excellent teaching seen in history and music. There was very good teaching in politics and government, religion and philosophy and general studies. In addition, good teaching was seen in biology and law. There are limited sixth form physical education and leisure activities open to all.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students are supported very well by their teachers and mentors. Guidance on future courses and university applications is very thorough and students appreciate very much the high level of personal support they receive.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of sixth form and the year heads are highly committed and provide extensive support and guidance for individual students. However, overall performance is not monitored with sufficient rigour. Equal opportunities are well promoted within the sixth form, although there are limited opportunities for Year 11 pupils who do not meet the requirements for A-levels but who may wish to stay on at the college.

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"> • Very good relations with staff. They appreciate being treated as adults. • Exercising personal responsibility. They are stimulated by the high expectations teachers have of them. • Greater independence. They enjoy the challenge of planning their own private study. • The quality of personal support. They appreciate the attention given by their mentors and teachers. • Access to teachers. They have a very high level of academic support from teachers outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about progress and careers could be provided earlier in Year 12. • Guidance for some on independent study in Year 12.

The inspectors found good evidence to support the positive comments made by sixth form students. Advice and support are very good. Teaching is good, with extensive support for students beyond formal teaching. Considerable responsibility is placed on students, to which most respond very well, though some struggle initially to use their study time efficiently. Progress information is very good, although some Year 12 students need information earlier in their first term to help focus their studies and understand changes from Year 11.

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 school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils' attainment when they arrive in the college at the start of Year 9 is broadly average. The pattern has been for average attainment in English and science and slightly below average attainment in mathematics.
2. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the college's results in recent years have been above average. In English, they have been above average, showing an upward trend after a dip in 2000. In mathematics, results have been average, the trend upwards in line with the national improvement. In science, above average results have been maintained. In the most recent tests, in 2002, the pupils' overall results and those in English were above average. In both mathematics and science, the results were in line with the average. At the higher levels, ie level 6 and above, the performance of the pupils was well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Overall, the 2002 results indicate good achievement in English and sound to good achievement in mathematics and science. Girls have performed better than boys in English, although the gap is not significantly different from the national gap. In most recent years, boys and girls have performed equally well in mathematics and science, with the exception of 2002 when the girls performed perceptibly better in science.
3. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the results were in line with the national average in most of the key indicators, ie the pupils' overall points score (the best indicator of overall performance), in the percentage gaining five or more grades at A*-C (49 per cent) and in the proportion of those gaining five or more grades at A*-G. The percentage of pupils gaining at least one grade is, however, slightly lower than the average. All the above is so, when the college's results are compared both with all schools and with those having a similar intake of pupils. When the results are compared with those in schools having broadly similar scores two years previously at the end of Year 9, they are well below average. It is the view of the inspection team that the 2002 results represent sound achievement on the part of most pupils, except in science (see below). The overall results are satisfactory but could be better. The college did not meet its targets. The higher targets set for 2003 and 2004 are appropriate.
4. Results well above the national average were achieved in music, in business studies and in design and technology. The pupils also performed very well in sociology and photography. Above average results were achieved in French and in the full GCSE courses in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and physical education. The results in most other subjects, including English and mathematics, were average. The weakest performance was in science in which the overall results, including both those pupils who were entered for double award science or for the three separate sciences, were below average. Pupils of average ability, particularly boys, did not achieve as well as they should have. This is unsatisfactory given the well above average performance of these same pupils two years previously in their Key Stage 3 test results. There has been a significant decline in the results in science over the last three years. Overall, girls perform better than boys. In recent years the difference has been less than that found nationally. In 2002, however, it appears to have increased again, largely because of the underachievement of boys in science.
5. In English, the pupils currently in Year 9 are performing at above average level and are achieving well. Their skills in speaking, listening and writing are good. By Year 11, many can write at length, although some pupils of average ability and more of below average ability still experience difficulties in spelling and punctuation. In Year 11, their overall standard is broadly average and their achievement sound. In mathematics in Year 9, the current pupils' attainment is average, but they have, nevertheless, made good progress over the key stage. The pupils in Year 11 have continued to perform well in mathematics. A particular strength is their ability to explain their methods. In science, the pupils in Year 9 are achieving well, reaching above average standards. In

- Year 11, however, underachievement by pupils of average ability, particularly boys, remains. They find it very difficult to cope with the demands of the combined content when studying the three sciences separately.
6. In the other subjects of the curriculum, pupils in Year 9 are reaching above average standards and achieving well in history and music. Standards in physical education are average overall, but achievement is good, given the pupils' prior attainment. In religious education, design and technology and modern foreign languages, attainment is average and achievement sound. In geography and ICT, standards are below average. In geography, however, the pupils make sound progress, given their previous standards. In ICT, insufficient time for the subject means that achievement is not as good as it should be.
 7. The pupils currently in Year 11 are reaching well above average standards and making very good progress in music and in design and technology. In both subjects, very good teaching and leadership are the key factors. In physical education and in religious education, standards are above average and achievement good. In ICT and modern foreign languages, most pupils make good progress. In geography, history and art, standards are average and achievement sound.
 8. Overall standards in literacy across the curriculum are good. As a result of a co-ordinated approach, most pupils have a good understanding of key technical vocabulary and can write at length to a good standard, although some still experience difficulty with spelling and punctuation. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. Most pupils cope well in their mathematics lessons. They also apply their number skills well in design and technology but experience more difficulty in both geography and science.
 9. Pupils and students with special educational needs make good progress during their time in the college. Their confidence, self-esteem and level of achievement are raised by the very effective support they receive from the staff in the learning support department, who have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils and students. Aided by computer generated learning programmes, which pupils enjoy and use well, they make significant improvement in literacy and numeracy skills and in managing the range of subjects that they are studying. This improvement and progress are reflected in their GCSE examination results.
 10. Pupils for whom English is an additional language present no particular needs and have required no special action as they speak English fluently. They make good progress. Most travellers' children make reasonable progress. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress. Some of the latter make excellent progress in music and sport.

Sixth form

11. Overall A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average, as they had been the previous year. Results in information and communication technology (ICT), English literature, design and technology (DT), general studies, mathematics, physics, sociology, physical education and French were well above the national averages. Results in biology, drama, D and T textiles, psychology, German, music and advanced vocational health and social care and business were above average. The results of the small number of students studying religion and philosophy were outstanding. Results in communication studies and geography were well below average. Considering their GCSE grades and attainment at the beginning of their Sixth form courses, students generally achieved the grades expected of them. Students achieved well in DT, general studies, drama, religion and philosophy and sociology. In biology and chemistry, students' achievement was below that expected.
12. The 2002 results, although not as high as those in 2001, represent better progress by students overall from the grades they attained in GCSE examinations. The very small number of students who did not follow their AS level courses through to A-level in 2002 generally achieved the grades expected from their GCSE results.
13. Current students' work seen and that observed in lessons indicate well above average standards in design and technology and sociology. Design and technology students show flair and imagination

and have good graphical presentation skills. Students of sociology understand and use technical concepts to write very well argued essays. Above average standards and good achievement are evident in English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, sociology, geography and aspects of PE. Work seen in French and chemistry represents good achievement. In art, achievement is satisfactory although overall standards are below average. Marking in chemistry and physics is not sufficiently linked to the requirements of the examinations for students to know how to focus their efforts to improve their work. Inefficient storage arrangements in PE hamper provision and adversely affect standards.

14. Small numbers of students have studied key skills since 2000 but they have not been widely assessed or accredited. In 2001 they were assessed mainly within GNVQ courses. A very small number were accredited at a basic level in both communication and ICT skills; a similar number in communication skills only. No students were accredited with skills in the application of number. In 2002, a small number were accredited in ICT or application of number at an intermediate level; a similar number in communication skills at a lower level. Despite the low levels of accreditation in key skills, generally students have good communication skills that they use to good effect in a range of subjects. Furthermore, skills in ICT and numeracy are sufficient for them to make good progress in their wider studies.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. As at the time of the last inspection, most pupils continue to show good attitudes to school and to their learning. Their behaviour around the large site is good and there is an atmosphere of calm and order. In most lessons, behaviour is good or better. However, in a few lessons some pupils, mainly boys, disrupt the learning for the rest of the class. This tends to occur where the teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils and parents report that most incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. The number of fixed term exclusions is low considering the size of the college and has decreased significantly since the last inspection.
16. Relationships within the college, particularly between pupils and staff but also between pupils, are very good. The reception staff provide a friendly welcome that sets a good tone for the day. The principal knows most students and greets them as he walks around the site. Pupils respond very well to the encouragement of their teachers and their fellow pupils. They work very well in group activities, sharing their ideas and helping others. The high quality of relationships within the college ensures that pupils know they are valued and is helping them to succeed in their studies and become responsible caring individuals.
17. Pupils continue to enjoy and respond well to the many opportunities provided for them to help the college and local community. For example, Year 9 pupils act as runners to help staff and visitors. The school council is an effective voice for the pupils and organises support for charities. Pupils are very positive about the help and support they receive from their trained peer counsellors. There is a high rate of participation in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities provided and some pupils and students are involved in the Frome junior town council.
18. The level of attendance is good and continues to be above the national average, even though the college does not benefit from having any Year 7 and 8 pupils who traditionally have a good rate of attendance. Attendance by all year groups this term is above 90 per cent, despite the high number of students who were taken out of school for holidays soon after the start of the term. This disruption to their education does not help their progress. The level of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Punctuality continues to be good, although a few pupils arrive during registration time. Despite large numbers of pupils moving around the site at the same time and the large number of buildings, most pupils arrive at lessons on time.

Sixth form

19. Students show very good attitudes to their work. They are keen and enthusiastic and enjoy their studies. Students work together very well and show a high regard for staff. They feel comfortable approaching members of staff for help and advice. This promotes effective learning and high

standards. A good example of positive attitudes was shown in a Year 13 theatre studies lesson where students, rehearsing the meeting of British and German soldiers in the play about World War One, 'Journey's End', displayed great sensitivity and understanding.

20. The sixth form students show maturity and a strong sense of responsibility through the many roles they undertake in order to help other members of the college and local community. For example, they help younger pupils with reading and mathematics, raise money for charities and run the Students Association. Most students are developing very good personal and learning skills through their key skills studies and personal and social education programme, but a few students in Year 12 are finding it a struggle to work independently.
21. Students have very positive views about the college. Most have stayed on from the main school because they like the extensive opportunities for study, extra-curricular activities and independence that the college offers them. The results of the questionnaire for Year 12 students are disappointing. However, further investigation shows this was because it was completed early in the term before they had received their exam targets and had had meetings with their mentors. The response to the questionnaire by Year 13 students is more positive.
22. It is not possible to include an evaluation of the students' attendance, as the college does not have records of this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The teaching is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Of the lessons seen in the inspection, including those in the sixth form, 98 per cent were judged to be satisfactory or better; 68 to be good or better; and 19 per cent to be very good or excellent. The teaching has improved since the last inspection.
24. In Year 9, all of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory; 72 per cent was good or better; and 20 per cent was very good or excellent. Subjects in which the overall quality of the teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are good include English, mathematics, science, religious education, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.
25. In Years 10 and 11, 96 per cent of all lessons seen were at least satisfactory; 64 per cent were good or better; and 19 per cent very good or excellent. The teaching is judged to be satisfactory rather than good as the impact on the college's GCSE results is not yet evident. Within subjects, the quality of the teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning are very good in music and in design and technology. High expectations and skilful teaching in both subjects lead to well above average standards and very good achievement. Good teaching in ICT, religious education, modern foreign languages and physical education all has a positive impact on results and progress. In science, the teaching seen was broadly satisfactory. However, over time the teaching in science is not engaging the pupils, particularly boys, sufficiently. The heavy content associated with the teaching of the three sciences as separate subjects is leading to too much note-taking and insufficient active learning. This is a factor in the underachievement in science at GCSE.
26. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons seen in the main school (all in Years 10 and 11) the key factors were:
 - work that was too easy;
 - the slow pace at which the lesson progressed; and
 - the teachers' difficulty in managing the behaviour of the pupils.

For example, in a Year 11 biology lesson on the nervous system, the tasks were too easy and the lesson progressed at a pace that was too slow to engage the pupils. The teacher's inability to deal with poor behaviour on the part of some of the boys and the general lack of concentration ensured that little was learnt.

27. In the best teaching, in the one in five lessons judged to be very good or excellent, the key characteristics were:
- very good subject knowledge and an infectious enthusiasm for the subject;
 - very good questioning to extend the pupils' thinking and to assess the extent of their understanding;
 - an ability to involve all the pupils and to value everyone's contributions;
 - very good variety of activities and lessons conducted at a brisk pace;
 - very good explanations and demonstrations; and
 - varied and motivating resources.
28. For example, in a Year 9 music lesson taught to a lower ability group, the teacher exhibited all the above qualities and in addition made very good use of the teaching assistant. The teacher's enthusiasm and skill ensured a high level of engagement and enjoyment and led to considerable progress in experiencing and performing the 'blues'. In a history lesson in Year 10, the teacher's enthusiasm, excellent planning and relationships with the pupils led to a high level of enthusiastic involvement. The pupils actively engaged in very well structured role-play activities based on the themes of progress and regression in the history of medicine, contrasting practice in the Roman Empire and in the Dark Ages. By the end of the lesson the pupils had considerably extended and deepened their understanding of the key concepts. In a Year 11 physical education lesson on drugs in sport, the teacher's very motivating variety of tasks and resources, brisk pace and very good questioning to draw out and assess the pupils' understanding all led to a high level of engagement. As a result, the pupils made rapid progress in understanding the complexities and implications of various performance-enhancing drugs in different sports.
29. The teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum is generally good. The teaching of numeracy skills is good in mathematics. Teachers in design and technology make a good contribution to enabling the pupils to apply their numeracy skills. This is, however, not as effective in geography or science.
30. Staff from the learning support department work constructively with teachers and provide very good support to both individual and groups of pupils with special educational needs, thus enabling them to engage fully in lessons. They liaise effectively with subject teachers, providing them with detailed information on the special needs of individual pupils so that work is generally well matched to learning requirements. However, in a few lessons where this is not so, pupils have difficulty in understanding and completing tasks. Teachers and support staff have purposeful, constructive relationships with pupils, promoting their confidence and interest in learning. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons to the Learning Support Centre, they receive very focused and targeted teaching, enabling them to make good progress. However, most support for pupils with special educational needs takes place appropriately in subject lessons. The quality of teaching, in both the learning support centre and the school as a whole, is good.

Sixth form

31. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Of the lessons seen, 98 per cent were judged to be satisfactory or better; 68 per cent as good or better; and 19 per cent as very good or excellent. The teaching promotes efficient learning and good achievement. It is very good in DT and Leisure and Recreation. As a result, students make significant progress in these subjects. Apart from art where it is satisfactory, teaching is good in each of the other subjects inspected. Very good and excellent teaching was seen in one in five of all the lessons seen during the inspection. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in music and history; some very good teaching was seen in English, mathematics, general studies, physical education, religion and philosophy, government and politics, business studies and French. As a consequence, students are highly stimulated, invest significant effort in their work and make good progress overall.
32. Teachers have very extensive specialist knowledge that they draw on to illuminate difficult aspects of their subjects. Being carefully led by the teacher through explanations of Baroque counterpoint, by the end of a music lesson students were successfully applying their knowledge to composition in response to a past examination question. Detailed knowledge of training methods was evident

in the teacher's probing questions that required students to think beyond the obvious and link their knowledge to practical experience in physical education.

33. Teachers plan challenging activities in detail to ensure widespread participation by students and a high level of achievement. By concentrating on timed sentence-building activities and moving between groups at a demanding pace, the teacher extended students' use of the conditional tense in French conversation and writing. Students responded very well, with some initiating dialogue, in French, with their teacher.
34. Based on accurate assessments, teachers have a good knowledge of their students. In this way, they are able to set sufficiently taxing work for the most capable as well as providing timely support for those who have special educational needs. Planned assistance enabled a student to work at a brisk pace and make good progress, unhampered by difficulties with reading comprehension during a leisure and recreation lesson. At the same time, the teacher encouraged students to plan their own learning and evaluate their work against the standards necessary for the highest grades.
35. Good communication skills are developed in many lessons, for example, through debate in government and politics and by research and analysis of texts in religion and philosophy. Good applications of number were observed in physical education and of the use of ICT skills in leisure and recreation.

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

36. In most respects the college provides a good curriculum in Year 9. This consists of the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, drama and personal, social and health education. Almost all pupils learn both French and German. Good liaison with the partner middle schools ensures that the curriculum builds on the work covered in Years 7 and 8. Overall, good improvement has been made in the curriculum since the last inspection. The main weakness in the curriculum in Year 9 is that insufficient time for ICT makes it impossible for the statutory requirements for the subject to be fully met. Below average time for history and geography has a negative impact on the breadth of work covered in these subjects.
37. In Years 10 and 11, the college provides a curriculum of considerable breadth. In addition to the subjects offered in Year 9, the pupils can choose from a wide range of new subjects. These include business studies, sociology, media studies, photography, child development, pottery and rural studies. All study religious education as a short course to GCSE. In Year 10, all study a short GCSE course in ICT and this will carry on into Year 11. There are two weaknesses in the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Firstly, a small number of pupils do not study National Curriculum design and technology (DT) and are not formally disapplied from doing so. They follow related courses which are valuable in themselves but do not meet the statutory requirement for DT. In science, the practice of teaching the three sciences as separate subjects to most pupils is not effective. Too many pupils, mainly of average ability, are not coping with the additional content that this involves.
38. At the last inspection, the college was criticised for aspects of the organisation of the curriculum, in particular, the placing of pupils in Year 9 in the same group for most of their subjects. The college has retained a similar organisation for English, history, geography, religious education and modern foreign languages in Year 9, with a wide range of ability and prior attainment in most of the groups. In English and modern foreign languages, this is making it difficult in some lessons for the teacher to cope effectively with the full range of ability. Broad grouping in English and mathematics in Year 10 is also occasionally having the same effect.
39. Arrangements for the teaching of literacy skills are generally good; arrangements in respect of numeracy skills are satisfactory (see paragraph 28 above). The use of ICT by other subjects is unsatisfactory. An audit of the use of ICT by other subjects has started but is incomplete. Good

use is made of ICT in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, where its use is planned in the subjects' scheme of work. During the inspection, good use was made of ICT in lessons in several subjects including mathematics, science, geography and music. However, other subjects do not make enough use of ICT to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is not a clear plan for ensuring that all subjects meet statutory requirements for their use of ICT.

40. The college's provision of extracurricular activities is a major strength. There are competitive fixtures in a wide range of sports, including soccer, rugby, hockey, basketball, athletics, cricket and swimming. Pupils have been selected for national teams in trampolining, cross-country and basketball. The girls' under 16 soccer team are the current national champions. Drama and music are also a major strength: there are three drama productions a year and six concerts a year in which a wide range of ensembles participates, eg choir, chamber choir, orchestra, band, folk group and string group. One hundred and twenty pupils receive instrumental tuition in a variety of instruments. There are regular residential visits abroad, to Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands. Over 70 pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
41. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. The programme has recently been restructured to comprise three elements: lessons as part of the short course in religious studies; 'suspended timetable' days to focus on particular topics; and work in tutor periods. Since the last inspection a more structured programme of PSHE has been put in place. Pupils of a wide range of abilities are able to grasp a comparatively complex range of ideas on topics such as human responsibility for the environment and the role of marriage in society. 'Suspended' timetable days usually occur twice per year. They enable whole year groups to explore issues in depth, either new topics or aspects of topics already studied. The pupils gain from the expertise of a range of visitors from the community. For instance, a recent Year 9 programme on Citizenship and Health Education involved representatives from the police, local magistrates, health education organisations, the YMCA and the army. Work within extended tutorial periods is more variable in quality. Although generally satisfactory, the time allocated is not always used productively.
42. The provision of careers education and guidance and of work-related learning is good. Careers provision forms part of the PSHE programme. It is well structured and its content closely follows national guidelines. Careers education incorporates work experience very effectively as an element of provision in Key Stage 4. The vast majority of the pupils value work experience highly and comment favourably on their placements. Many employers refer to the high standards of pupil preparation for work experience. There are strong curriculum links between work experience and subjects like English, catering, child development and business studies. However, the time allocated to the careers education element in Year 9 is insufficient in terms of the topics to be covered and the impact of the programme across the full year groups is not monitored. Over the past year a successful partnership has developed with the local Connexions Service with emphasis on greater integration between the college social inclusion team and the service. Every pupil is entitled to a guidance interview from a Connexions Personal Advisor and the Connexions team is flexible and generous in the range of support it gives.
43. Other elements in the college's work-related provision include current 'vocational' provision in GCSEs such as business studies, rural studies and child development, all of which have placement opportunities and the Youth Award Scheme and provision of access to such events as Careers Fairs.
44. A new work related learning programme was introduced in 2002, initially concentrating on the needs of current Year 11 pupils but already expanding to involve those in Year 10 too. The programme is at the developmental stage but has already exceeded its initial targets for provision of work experience, training provider and college placements. Well over 20 pupils are involved. This provision is very good. The programme is targeted at pupils who for various reasons are experiencing significant problems with much of the traditional school curriculum. Its specific aim is to enable them to embark on employment with training or further education at 16. In a very short time it has had a positive impact on their general behaviour and attendance and some businesses have already offered positions to pupils should their current approach to work continue.

45. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for in a caring, supportive and challenging environment (see paragraph 29 above). The Learning Support Centre provides a 'safe haven' for pupils who need assistance with their work or in coping socially. Provision for pupils who find it difficult to settle in school, or who are poor attenders, is very good. A number of planned opportunities provide pupils with a range of interesting and stimulating options. Some take part in the work related learning course as a means of improving and broadening their vocational skills. This has proved to be successful in motivating pupils and improving their attendance.
46. The procedures for the identification of very able pupils are good, as is the planning to extend their learning opportunities, but the latter has yet to be implemented fully in all subjects.

Community links

47. The college's links with the community make a very good contribution to the learning of most of its pupils. The aims of the college emphasise the integrated nature of education in Frome, the college being the only secondary school in the town, as well as the main provider of post 16 and adult education. There is a long tradition of community education, and the wider remit includes further and adult education, within a strong ethos of life-long learning. The links are very extensive. The Frome Learning Partnership consists of the Frome Area Federation of Schools (all first and middle schools as well as the college), the Frome Education and Training Enterprise (FETE- all 16+ providers) and the Social Inclusion Partnership. Adult education is based in the Community Education Centre, a new building within the college site, but adults also use art, pottery and ICT facilities in one of the school buildings and the Weavers Guild are housed in three mobile classrooms. Adults also join sixth-form classes. The Little Oaks Nursery, for 2-5 year old children, also emphasises the commitment to life-long learning and is used by several staff. The Leisure/Sports centre is a dual-use facility, as is the Merlin Theatre, both contributing well to the college facilities and the young people use them during the day, as well as the community in general, out of school hours. The community education manager is a member of the senior management team and both he and the Principal represent the college on the many community groups within Frome.
48. The college's links with its partner schools, particularly but not only the middle schools, are good. They are very good at senior management level and good in subjects.
49. Many individuals, voluntary groups and businesses in Frome contributed in financial or other ways to the bid which enabled the college to become a specialist Media Arts College. There are many arts groups and individuals who are committed to the college and its young people, inside and outside the college. The construction of the ECOS (European Community of Stones) amphitheatre is an example of enthusiastic commitment to a community project. Many other individuals and agency groups contribute to life in the college and many in the college contribute to community ventures, such as the Frome Festival, the YMCA Foyer for disadvantaged young people, the local playgroups, youth clubs and community associations - a two-way process of help and contribution. Summer school activities have been enabled through involvement of individuals from the community and many Family Learning and holiday activities give a long-term focus to improving education and standards in Frome.
50. Eighty people from local businesses and the community acted as mentors to pupils and students in the college last year. The Neighbourhood Engineers group work closely with the design and technology department and provide mentors for sixth form students. The ICT coursework is based on real problems faced by business and other organisations, where the pupils make the contact themselves. Geography uses the local area effectively, such as for Year 10 local studies, and for coursework projects based on local villages and industries. History uses the local castle for GCSE coursework and a Holocaust survivor is a regular visitor, with family and community members being good sources of research on trenches in World War 2. Music groups play at local events and pupils have attended workshops by community musicians. As well as the local community many curriculum areas have links with the wider community of Britain and abroad. Bands and other musical groups regularly travel to Europe, as do those studying modern foreign languages; some even do work experience in Biarritz.

Sixth form

51. The sixth form offers a wide range of advanced (A-level) and advanced subsidiary (AS-level) courses. These include advanced vocational courses, an intermediate level vocational course, and good choices of courses within subject areas. Students can study a small number of GCSE courses to improve grades attained at the end of Year 11. There is a successful course in religion and philosophy but there is no religious education provision for all students that meets statutory requirements. Whilst provision for specialist physical education students is good, there is no common provision of physical education for all sixth form students. Students who wish to follow academic courses have a good choice but there are limited opportunities for lower attaining students. Consequently, some students are unable to continue their studies in the college.
52. In recent years, the college has been successful in recruiting an increasing proportion of students from Year 11 as well as a small number from other schools. The rate of retention has been high, with almost all students who begin courses of advanced study continuing to the final examinations. Since 2001, as a consequence of more students embarking on courses to advanced subsidiary level that they do not intend to follow in Year 13, a higher proportion now withdraw at the end of Year 12.
53. Students follow a guidance programme with their mentors. This has a strong emphasis on personal responsibility, with a sharp focus on careers options and university applications. Post-16 careers provision is the overall responsibility of the head of year. It consists of a number of opportunities with particular emphasis on students accessing information tailored to their individual needs. Good links with the Connexions are also developing within this provision although form tutors have responsibility for mentoring the students on a day to day basis. The range of activities places great emphasis on preparing students for higher education. The application process through UCAS makes increasingly sophisticated use of electronic guidance through the Internet. Visits to higher education conventions are encouraged for all students interested. All students complete a personal statement irrespective of whether they are applying for higher education or not, for it also provides a basis of support for their action plans for employment, 'gap year' and other alternative ways forward.
54. Since 2000, the college has adopted different approaches to the provision of key skills. In addition to those taught within vocational subjects, from this year all students following the AS-level general studies course have the opportunity for their achievements in communication studies to be accredited. Separate courses are offered in ICT and application of number. Whilst these do not attract large numbers of students, key skills are developed sufficiently well in other courses, according to the demands of the individual subjects.
55. All sixth form students are expected to undertake activities that provide a service to the wider college community and many do so by working with low attaining pupils in Year 9 to improve their literacy skills and numerical competence. Some students train with the YMCA in order to provide a valued counselling service for their fellow students. These activities contribute well to the social and moral development of the students involved. Students participate in activities offered in the main school. Some of these, such as the musical or aesthetic activities, contribute to their cultural development. There are few activities specifically for sixth form students but staff respond well to support students' initiatives, helping them to train and arrange sporting fixtures, for example. Sixth form assemblies sometimes include themes such as the sensitive poem that inspired reflection on environmental vulnerability after the Spanish oil disaster, but the college does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

The specialist resource bases for hearing-impaired pupils and for pupils with language and communication difficulties

56. The college has two resource bases, one for hearing-impaired pupils and the other for pupils with language and communication difficulties. The number of pupils with a significant degree of hearing

impairment has reduced considerably in recent years to the extent that the hearing-impairment resource base no longer has a teacher of the deaf based there. Pupils' learning and communication needs are now well met through a combination of effective in-class support and occasional withdrawal sessions provided by a part-time learning support assistant and through weekly visits by a peripatetic teacher of the deaf.

57. The college makes good provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties. A particularly strong feature of the language resource base is its ethos of promoting all aspects of pupils' development. Therefore, as well as encouraging academic achievement and the development of key skills through effective in-class support and withdrawal sessions, resource base staff are also very effective at promoting pupils' social and communication skills. Consequently, pupils achieve well and make good progress in their academic and personal development. The overall effectiveness of the provision is evident in the success that pupils achieve in externally accredited examinations, such as GCSE and Entry Level Certificate of Educational Achievement and their increased self-esteem, improved confidence and independence and enhanced social awareness and co-operative working. Their success in a number of subjects also reflects the broad and balanced curriculum that pupils are enabled to follow in all years and the college's positive attitude to social and educational inclusion. In practice this means that Year 9 pupils study all subjects except a second modern language and in Years 10 and 11 they have the same choice of options as all other pupils but usually choose one fewer. These different lessons in all years are then used as withdrawal sessions supporting main school work and work on developing specific language and communication skills.
58. Pupils achieve well because teaching in the resource base is generally good. The activities provided are relevant to pupils' ages and interests and therefore they concentrate and work very well because they experience success. All lessons are underpinned by very strong relationships between staff and pupils and so pupils have the confidence to try all activities, secure in the knowledge that support is at hand. There are also good relationships between fellow pupils and therefore pupils do not feel embarrassed about trying things and getting them wrong. All these features of good teaching were evident when a group of 16 year-olds worked on the functional use of language in the workplace. This was one of a sequence of lessons following their recent work experience placements and focused on difficulties they had identified in following instructions and processing information, asking questions and beginning conversations. They engaged very well in a number of role-play scenarios, listening and speaking maturely and sensibly and in a way that was appropriate to the audience, because they could recognise the value of the activity and its relevance to their everyday lives.
59. The language and communication resource base is well led and managed and the teacher in charge maintains a good balance between what the base offers and main school developments. This is apparent in the good quality of planning to integrate in-class support and withdrawal provision. This resource base work is cohesive and progressive from Years 9 to 11. This means that there are common threads, such as the social use of language, running through all years but the content is adapted to suit the needs and interests of the different age groups. Therefore, for example, the theme of induction focuses on integrating pupils into a new school in Year 9 whereas in Year 11 it is concerned with preparing pupils for work experience and its follow up and considering options available to pupils at the age of 16. The resource base works well with parents, who are seen as partners in helping pupils to achieve their targets.
60. There is scope for some improvement in the procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements. Pupils' individual education plans do not always contain targets that are sufficiently specific. At times, the relationship between the targets set at the annual review of a pupil's statement of special educational needs and the individual education plan drawn up following that review could be clearer.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

61. Overall the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The general ethos of the college is one which cares for its pupils and endeavours as far as it can to be

inclusive and to help pupils, whatever their circumstances. In this respect, spiritual provision is good as the pupils feel valued and supported during their time in the college. Celebrations of achievement are a central part of college life and many events such as assemblies celebrate hard work and success. The rewards systems also make a significant input here. The Drop In Centre offers help for pupils who are troubled or who just want someone to talk to and the local churches take an active interest in the life of the pupils and are often in the college to take part in things like assemblies. Some individual subject departments provide pupils with opportunities for reflection. Religious education, for example, gives opportunity for the pupils to reflect on 'ultimate questions' such as the meaning and purpose of life and the problem of suffering. In history, the pupils reflect on issues surrounding World War 1. The music department too gives opportunities for reflection in listening to various moods portrayed by music. There are, however, missed opportunities, particular in assembly times and tutor periods as well as in other subject departments, for pupils to reflect on the things that have been presented or on wider issues going on in the world around them. Although assemblies are generally of good quality, the college does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship either in the main school or in the sixth form.

62. Provision for moral development is very good. It is the clear purpose of the College to help its pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. This comes through its general ethos where high standards of behaviour are expected and its staff set good examples. The brochure for new entrants clearly sets out the standards required, both for behaviour and attitudes in the classroom and in the college generally. Assembly themes such as decision making, bullying and drugs also reinforce many of these issues. Units of work in the personal, social and health programme and in citizenship also have a strong moral emphasis and these include work on crime and punishment and prejudice and discrimination. The short course GCSE in religious studies has moral issues as one of its central themes and this covers work on abortion, euthanasia and medical ethics. Many other subject departments also make an input to this aspect of the pupils' development. These include science in the study of responsible action and the environment, and design and technology in its study of biotechnology. Outside speakers such as the police give guidance to the pupils, as does the school's own Thought for the Week.
63. Provision for social development is very good. Positive relationships are encouraged through a range of activities in which the pupils can participate. These include residential visits, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, drama events and a range of sporting activities. There are also many trips abroad. Opportunities to take responsibility are mainly through the college councils and there are many of these, including a Youth Town Council. Older pupils give support to younger pupils and pupils have the opportunity to help on open days and give support in the library. Participation in the community takes many forms, particularly in fund raising for charity. The college is also very active in sending out pupils to give concerts both at Christmas time and on a more general basis. The pupils are developing their understanding of citizenship through the areas that have been specifically identified as giving an input to this. The topics covered include issues about relationships, marriage and divorce and roles in the family. There are other studies on abortion, euthanasia and medical ethics. A range of assembly themes and thoughts for the week also covers topics of a social nature. Group work and collaborative learning in many subjects in the college also help the pupils develop their social skills.
64. Provision for cultural development is very good. There are visits to museums and the College plays an active role in the Frome festival. Some pupils participate in the Forest School project whereby they go out into the countryside round about. The pupils take an active interest in the history of Frome and often meet elderly residents to gather information. The music department plays an important role in the cultural provision as there are many groups that they can join. These include the Jazz Group, the Choir and the Chamber Orchestra. The cultural provision includes many trips and contacts abroad. These include ski trips and contacts with the Czech Republic, France and Germany. There are also pottery exchanges with Portugal and exchanges with India. A good number of subject departments have a strong multicultural aspect to their work. These include the study of some world religions in religious education, the study of African textiles and food from other cultures in design and technology and of dance from other cultures in physical education. History looks at the cultures of the Ancient World. An acknowledgement and celebration of the multicultural nature of the UK itself, however, is not a strong aspect of the college's provision and

so there is room for further development in this aspect of the cultural provision.

Sixth form

65. In the sixth form the overall provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with some aspects of it being stronger than others. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The general ethos of the College supports the students in a significant way and this enables them to feel valued and cared for. They also receive regular praise and thanks and this too gives them a feeling of self-worth. Visitors to assemblies and some church contacts also make an input to this provision. Opportunities for reflection on the things that affect them and that are going on in the wider world around them, however, are not significant and so there is scope for development in this area. Provision for moral development is strong as the students are expected to behave well and have a clear sense of right and wrong. General studies work in Year 12 gives the students some opportunity to look at issues of morality and conflict. The college is run very much as an adult establishment and the students respond to this in a very positive way. Provision for social development is very good. There is an elected Student Union and the students run and manage their own accounts. A significant number of students help younger pupils in the college by providing support in lessons or in hearing them read. Some students also help with basic maths. Some students also act as lifesavers in the swimming pool for pupils from feeder schools as well as for the staff of the College. Provision for cultural development is very good. There are trips to Paris and there have been trips to Rome. Students are also involved in cultural exchanges with the Czech Republic and Germany. There have also been trips to the Houses of Parliament and the Law Courts. A broader preparation for the students to live their life in a multicultural society, however, is not strong and there is scope for development in this area.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

66. Overall, the college's procedures for care, including the provision of personal and educational guidance, make a good contribution to the pupils' achievement.
67. The college is successful in achieving its aim of creating a caring community for all its members. There is an effective student and family support team that co-ordinates the overall welfare of all pupils and has effective links with outside agencies, such as the Traveller Service. The house and year teams provide very good support and personal guidance for pupils and the changeover to a House system from a Year system is working well. Pastoral staff in particular know pupils well, show a high degree of care and are trusted by the pupils. The welfare officer also plays an important role in providing advice and support for pupils with medical and personal problems, in addition to providing first aid together with other non-teaching staff.
68. The personal, social and health education programme, delivered by specialist staff and tutors, provides pupils with good advice on personal and social matters. However, the Monday tutor period needs to be monitored to ensure all lessons are of a consistently high standard.
69. Provision for child protection is very good. The child protection co-ordinator has briefed all staff and students very well so that if any incidents arise they can be dealt with effectively. This includes very good links with social services and the police.
70. The monitoring of attendance using an electronic system is very effective and first day absence calls are reducing the level of unauthorised absence. The attendance officer and pastoral staff use the data well to track pupils' whereabouts and follow up absences. There are effective links with the Education Social Worker that are helping to improve the attendance of pupils with a low attendance. The college authorises all requests for holidays in term time. This is unsatisfactory.
71. Monitoring behaviour and dealing with pupils with behavioural problems are good. There is a good code of conduct that is printed in pupils' journals and is available to parents in the prospectus. The use of merits is valued in Years 9 and 10 but is not always used consistently. Merits are not valued in Year 11.

72. Systems such as the Time Out room and Flexible Learning Centre enable the college to be inclusive and continue to educate pupils who would otherwise be excluded. Within the college the Flexible Learning Centre provides effectively for pupils with challenging behaviour. The centre offers planned opportunities for selected pupils to work away from the distraction of others, support for these pupils in some subject lessons in the main school, experience of work in the community and access to counselling and guidance. The work of the centre is successful in reducing the number of potential and actual pupil exclusions from the college.
73. The assessment of the pupils' attainment is satisfactory overall; use of assessment to guide planning is, however, a weakness. The whole college assessment policy stresses that assessment should be integral to the teaching and learning process. The principles, aims and objectives are exemplary but practice does not fully reflect the philosophy of continuity and consistency within and between curriculum teams. There is insufficient coherence in the different aspects of assessment, especially between subject teachers and tutors. Curriculum team leaders decide on forms of assessment in their own areas, although all teachers contribute effort and attainment grades. The process of collating these is time-consuming and not stored on a database which can be used to analyse progress. Interim reports are sent to parents at least three times in Year 9 and 10, following the staged whole college timetable. Pupils assess their own performance in each subject, before they are aware of the teachers' assessment, leading to targets being set by the form tutor in discussion with the individual pupil. This system depends on the quality of form tutors and their understanding of all curriculum areas, which is variable and leads to inconsistency in the quality of self-assessment and the rigour and appropriateness of targets.
74. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment are very good in music, physical education and modern foreign languages; good in English, design and technology; unsatisfactory in ICT; and satisfactory in the other subjects. This inconsistency between the quality of assessment procedures is also reflected in how departments use assessment information. There is no co-ordinated whole-college use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning and little monitoring of assessment procedures or how assessment is used.
75. The co-ordinator for special educational needs manages very effectively the process for the identification and assessment of pupils' individual needs. Records are comprehensive and readily available to staff. The procedures for annual reviews fully meet statutory requirements and are attended by a high percentage of parents and carers. They regard the college as approachable and helpful and are appreciative of its encouragement, care and support for pupils with special educational needs.
76. When pupils with special educational needs transfer to the college, the arrangements are well thought out and implemented. Visits are made to the feeder schools by learning support staff and there is a helpful exchange of information. This allows the college staff to assist the pupils in settling with confidence into the college routines. They are well provided for, encouraged by staff and their progress is measured and recorded in detail throughout their time in the college. However, targets in the pupils' individual education plans are not always specific enough. The targets themselves are therefore not as useful as they could be in the measuring of the pupils' progress.
77. Overall, the college is a safe place to work. However, the monitoring of health and safety systems needs to be more rigorous to ensure it meets all the required standards. A number of health and safety issues, including an urgent one relating to the training of DT technicians, were reported to the college.

Sixth form

78. The college provides very good levels of support for its students. Mentors come to know their students very well, meet with them regularly, in groups and individually and provide good personal guidance. Subject teachers provide students with good academic guidance. They mark work regularly and thoroughly and provide clear advice that enables students to see how they might

improve the standards of their work. Teachers use good assessment procedures reliably in order to produce helpful interim assessments every half term. These afford students the opportunities to reflect on their own progress in order to complete self-assessments. Heads of year and the overall head of the sixth form monitor the impact of support and guidance. In this way they can intervene promptly when the procedures for supporting underachieving students do not appear to have sufficient effect. They actively seek out those who are most at risk of falling short of their targets.

79. Year 13 students express unequivocal appreciation for the advice and feedback that they receive, and usually follow it. Teachers provide extensive additional support out of lesson time, which students value very much. Early in Year 12, those students who have not been provided with clear information about grading on AS-level courses or the standards expected of them are unclear about how they might best direct their efforts. Later in the year, when they have been helped by their teachers to understand the expected standards, students make confident evaluations of their own work. Some students are trained student counsellors; another support for students that is valued, both by those it helps directly and those who gain in personal skill and confidence through providing it.
80. Information and careers advice comprises a number of opportunities during Year 12 and 13, with particular emphasis on students choosing information according to their individual interests. Links with outside agencies make a good contribution to the guidance provided by mentors on a regular basis. The range of activities places great emphasis on preparing students for higher education. Mentors help students make good use of electronic guidance and many students complete the university application process through the Internet. Visits to higher education conventions are encouraged and all students complete a personal statement whether they are applying for higher education or not, as it provides a good basis for their planning for employment, 'gap year' and other alternative ways forward.
81. The college does not have reliable information at present about the overall attendance of its students. However, a condition of entry into the sixth form is that students attend at least 80 per cent of their lessons and this is checked on an individual basis.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. As at the time of the last inspection, the college continues to have very good links with parents, including a good home-college agreement produced after extensive consultation with pupils and parents. The partnership between the college and parents is very effective and one that the college is very committed to. Parents are consulted on many issues and encouraged to give their views through meetings of the Parent Focus Group and Parent and Staff Association (PSA).
83. The results of the parents' questionnaire and of their meeting with inspectors show that parents have positive views about the school. They are particularly positive about the way the college is led, that the college has high expectations, that pupils work hard and that they feel comfortable about approaching the college if they have any questions or concerns.
84. A small number of parents responding in the questionnaire were unhappy about aspects of the homework provided. Some concerns are justified, for example that the homework timetable is not always followed and that there could be better co-ordination between departments to ensure that homework is spread across the week.
85. A small number of parents also expressed the view that the school does not work closely with parents and that they are not well informed about the progress of their children. The findings of the inspection team do not confirm these views. Parents have many opportunities throughout the year to meet with tutors and subject staff to discuss their child's progress. The college also arranges a series of meetings which are attended by parents, tutors and pupils together, so that parents can find out how well their child is doing and ask for further information. Parents are encouraged to use student journals as a method of communication with the college and are closely involved if a pupil is put 'on report'. The use of the school website and e-mails is being developed to improve

communications with parents even further.

86. The college provides a good range of high-quality documents for parents, such as the newsletters, booklets for new entrants, information about GCSE subjects and about joining the tertiary college (sixth form) plus meetings, such as 'How to cope with GCSEs'.
87. There are omissions (*eg the national results at GCSE and at A/AS level*) in the public examination results given in the prospectus and governors' annual report. More seriously, some of the information is not presented in a form that meets requirements and that is potentially misleading (*eg the percentage of pupils attaining five or more grades at A*-C etc is not clearly communicated*).
88. Pupils' reports and interim assessments are useful but there is too much variation in the quality of the teachers' comments on reports. There are some good examples where the comments clearly indicate what a pupil can and cannot do in a specific subject. In others, the comments focus too much on pupils' attitudes. The targets listed on most reports are helpful in indicating what pupils need to do to improve. The college needs to ensure that Year 9 reports contain a comment on pupils' progress in ICT, an issue raised in the last inspection and that the additional end of Year 9 reports meet statutory requirements.
89. Support for the college from parents continues to be good. Most governors are parents or ex-parents. There is a thriving and very active Parent and Staff Association (PSA) whose members act as a sounding board for new initiatives, help at school events, organise lockers and raise considerable amounts of money for the college. A large number of parents attend parents' evenings and many make a good contribution to helping their children continue to learn at home. This is helping to encourage pupils and students to appreciate the importance of lifelong learning that the college strongly promotes.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

90. Both leadership and management are good in most respects in what is a very large and complex institution. Strengths include leadership in respect of relationships, care, personal development and links with the community and with parents. Overall leadership and management in the sixth form and in a number of subjects are good. The key weakness and area for development is impact on raising results at GCSE, in which current measures are not sufficiently robust. Leadership in science in the main school is not currently effective in reversing the decline in the GCSE results.
91. The principal, ably supported by the vice-principals and other senior managers, has been very successful in setting the overall tone of the college. A strong commitment to fostering very good relationships, to knowing and valuing all the pupils, pervades the work of the college. This has a positive impact on the personal development of the pupils, leading to very good moral, social and cultural development and good spiritual development. The high priority given to involvement with the community makes this a clear strength of the college. The emphasis given to relationships with parents has led to a good level of parental satisfaction with the work of the college. The fact that the principal personally investigates and responds to any parental complaint is symptomatic of the high priority given here. The strong commitment to equal opportunities has led to particularly effective action to keep the number of exclusions to a minimum, ensuring that many of those most at risk do benefit from their time in the college. In all of the above, the principal gives clear direction. The senior management has also been successful in attracting additional external funding, for example in gaining specialist college status in media arts and in significantly improving the accommodation for science and the facilities for sport.
92. The college has undertaken a series of measures to monitor teaching, for example, procedures for performance management, the observation of each new teacher and the end-of-course evaluations provided by Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students. There are also annual subject reviews to discuss examination performance. All of these are valuable in themselves. Nevertheless, results at GCSE have remained static. Indeed, in science they have declined over the last three years. However, the measures to improve GCSE results are insufficiently robust and the balance of support and challenge needs to be weighted more towards the latter. A more systematic and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating teaching and providing feedback to teachers by senior managers and curriculum team leaders is needed. Action plans are not sufficiently sharp and are not vigorously pursued and monitored where a subject, such as science, is underperforming. Equally, there is not enough first-hand evidence of teaching and learning informing the annual reviews.
93. The college's forward planning is good in most respects. There is a thorough development plan projected over three years with good review of actions taken in the previous year. A relative weakness is the detail of action to achieve the three main priorities and the fact that improvement at GCSE is not a specific and explicit priority. Targets for overall performance are, however, considerably sharper in the college's bid for media arts status. At present, the different procedures and responsibilities for target setting for both pupils and subjects are not co-ordinated sufficiently. The college should aim for one well-integrated system, easily understood by all.
94. Action taken by senior managers in respect of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been good improvement in meeting statutory requirements in respect of religious education and modern foreign languages. There has also been improvement in the provision for design and technology and for ICT, although statutory requirements here are still not fully met. There has been some improvement to grouping arrangements in Year 9. The gap between boys' and girls' results in the main school is now narrower than the national gap, although the weak performance of boys in science may reverse this trend. There is more evaluation of teaching than was the case six years ago but this is still insufficient. Key Stage 3 results have improved in line with the national improvement. Above to well above average results have been maintained in the sixth form.
95. Leadership and management in subjects are strongest in music and in design and technology. In both subjects this is having a very positive impact on standards and on the quality of teaching and

learning. Both aspects and their impact are good in ICT, religious education, history and modern foreign languages. They are improving in English, mathematics and geography. The one area in which subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory is in science in the main school, particularly as it affects standards by the end of Year 11. Here, inappropriate curriculum planning, a lack of effective monitoring and insufficient urgency in reversing the decline in the GCSE results are resulting in significant underachievement.

96. The co-ordinator for special educational needs (SEN) provides very good leadership to a very well organised and managed department. She provides informative training sessions for subject teachers and support staff and her expertise is highly valued. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are identified and targeted effectively. The budget is managed well, providing for good support and an appropriate range of materials. The experienced governor with responsibility for overseeing special needs works closely with the college management and staff. She is knowledgeable about developments in the college for pupils with special educational needs, and gives good support for proposed improvements in provision.
97. Strengths in the work of governors include: their awareness of strengths and relative weaknesses in the work of the college; the provision of good support in their links with individual subjects; involvement in developmental and financial planning; their role as 'critical friend', for example in relation to security and to aspects of SEN provision. Governors are not, however, as sharp as they need to be in the regular monitoring of health and safety and in respect of meeting some statutory requirements. For example, the college's publication of examination results is not in the correct format and is potentially misleading. Curricular requirements in respect of DT and ICT are not being fully met.
98. The college is generally well staffed. This is particularly so in the sixth form. Teachers are well qualified and have extensive experience. Administrative, technical and support staff make a significant contribution to the work of students. Some provide work experiences for pupils with special educational needs; some refine students' appreciation of quality issues when preparing advanced level presentations; all are committed to providing the best for all pupils and students. When joining the college, new staff benefit from a broad induction programme. All newly qualified teachers enjoy close support and a regular programme of training which all new teachers and staff are able to attend according to individual needs. Continuing staff are well trained in new initiatives through the staff development programme. The inclusive ethos of the college is evident in the efforts made to provide equality of opportunity for all staff.
99. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory overall and good in some areas such as history and facilities for practical physical education, it is barely sufficient to meet the needs of the expanding college. Some teaching takes place in rooms that double as social areas so that teaching time is lost due to delays in starting lessons and early finishes. Some specialist teaching, for example in music, takes place in many different rooms, making access to and use of resources difficult. As the community use of the theatre expands, the opportunities for teachers to use it for drama are reduced. Limited access to facilities impedes the teaching of ICT in some subjects. The library, although well managed, is small and many specialist books are dispersed to subject areas around the college. The library staff work well in cooperation with teachers, for example, by developing files of contemporary reference material that are used for project work and assignments.
100. Resources generally are satisfactory. Those for the sixth form are good, for example in English, media studies, mathematics, business studies and leisure and recreation.
101. The college's finances are well managed. Good use is made of its overall resources to pursue its educational objectives. The college ensures that money received for specific purposes - for example for special educational needs, for implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy, or for staff training, is used as intended. Application of the principles of best value is good, particularly in ensuring competition following major spending decisions. The allocation of funding to subjects follows a clear and appropriate formula and spending is well monitored. The use of new technologies is generally good, although the manual collation and recording of data from the interim pupil reviews by the librarian is not satisfactory. Well-planned budgeting is likely to

reduce the positive carry-over from last year from six to two per cent. The college gives sound value for money.

Sixth form

102. The sixth form is well led and managed. The head of the sixth form and the heads of Year 12 and Year 13 work closely with each other, mentors and teachers to provide students with a considerable degree of personal attention. This ensures that when a student's performance falls below that expected of them, effective support is quickly provided. Because of these efforts, a high proportion of students make good use of time in the sixth form.
103. Subject leadership and management are generally good, some providing a very clear sense of direction such as in Leisure and Recreation. There is a high level of commitment to raising standards that has had a clear effect - for example, in design and technology and in French. In some subjects, resources are particularly well managed. Monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the performance management framework but not clearly focused on ensuring overall improvements in all subjects. Analysis by the sixth form management team of the results of individual students is good and value-added data is used well to monitor their progress. This is not universal in subjects, however, with weaker assessment and data management in some, such as geography. The evaluation of the overall effectiveness of courses is inconsistent. Some subject managers do not use value-added data with confidence.
104. The resources available for the sixth form broadly match those expected. Considering the generally good achievements of students, good staffing and the economic distribution of resources, the sixth form provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve further, senior managers and governors should:

- (i) improve results at GCSE, particularly in science, by:
- rationalising the science curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to relieve the burden of content for many pupils;
 - monitoring closely teaching styles in science in Years 10 and 11;
 - ensuring that the science department works more as one integrated team; and
 - implementing (ii) and (iii) below across the curriculum.

(paragraphs 3-5, 25, 95, 122 and 126)

- (ii) improve the monitoring of teaching and learning, by:
- implementing a more systematic approach to monitoring by senior managers; and
 - ensuring that curriculum team leaders carry out what is expected of them.

(paragraphs 92 and 94)

- (iii) improve target setting, by:
- putting into place one integrated system of target setting for pupils, for subjects and for the whole school;

(paragraphs 73-74 and 94)

- (iv) ensure that requirements for ICT in Year 9 and ICT across subjects are met, by:

- providing more time in Year 9;
- putting in place better co-ordination of ICT across subjects; and
- monitoring the pupils' experiences of using ICT in subjects;

(paragraphs 36, 39, 158 and 164)

- (v) improve the reporting of examination results, by:

- ensuring that results are published in the legally correct form;

(paragraphs 87 and 97)

Sixth form

- (i) Broaden the range of non-advanced provision, by:
- implementing plans to introduce further intermediate courses;
 - ensuring requirements for religious education are met; and
 - providing more opportunities for physical education beyond the examination courses.

(paragraphs 50 and 54)

- (ii) Make more consistent use of assessment information, by:

- providing further training; and
- monitoring how subject leaders use the information.

(paragraph 103)

Other issues, not included above, which should be considered by the college:

- better use of assessment information in planning (see paragraphs 72-3);
- specific health and safety training for the DT technicians (see paragraph 76);
- greater consistency in reporting pupils' strengths and weaknesses to parents (see paragraph 87);
- greater attention in both the main school and the sixth form to preparing pupils and students for life in a multicultural society (see paragraphs 63-4).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 - 11	189
	Sixth form	83
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		59

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 9-11							
Number	4	32	90	58	5	0	0
Percentage	2	17	48	31	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	15	42	23	1	0	0
Percentage	2	18	51	28	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1192	338
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	105	3

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	140	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	9.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	201	204	405

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	139	139	137
	Girls	172	141	153
	Total	311	280	290
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (67)	69 (62)	71 (70)
	National	66 (65)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (37)	49 (43)	38 (39)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	114	138	145
	Girls	161	151	160
	Total	275	289	305
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (54)	71 (68)	75 (69)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (69)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (22)	48 (42)	50 (43)
	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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	183	175	358

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	78	161	168
	Girls	97	165	173
	Total	175	326	341
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (51)	91 (97)	95 (99)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.1
	National	34.6

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	59	64	123
	Average point score per candidate	18.4	21.1	19.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	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	51	51	102	8	14	22
	Average point score per candidate	19.4	23	21.2	12	12.9	12.5

NB These data relate to the results in 2001.

Ethnic background of pupils

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 pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1483	30	1
0	0	0
20	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
17	0	0
2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	97.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y9 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	40
Total aggregate hours worked per week	991

Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	4,655,296
Total expenditure	4,573,691
Expenditure per pupil	3,154
Balance brought forward from previous year	172,984

Balance carried forward to next year	254,589
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	22.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	35.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.8
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	1530
Number of questionnaires returned	245

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	51	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	3	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	56	8	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	58	16	3	3
The teaching is good.	27	63	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about my child's progress	27	48	14	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents	29	50	15	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	2	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	49	5	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	41	9	2	11

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 **satisfactory** and improving.

Strengths

- The above average results in the national tests in Year 9.
- The good teaching in Year 9.
- The teachers' subject knowledge.
- The management of the pupils' behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- The results at GCSE, which are currently average.
- The pupils' speaking skills in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensuring that both the higher and the lower attainers are appropriately stretched.

105. GCSE examination results in English language have remained steady. They are close to the national average. This is reflected in standards of achievement in work seen which show sound progress for most pupils. Where specialist staff support low attaining pupils, they make good progress. However, both low attaining and high attaining pupils do not always make sufficient progress in sets that encompass a wide range of ability. Targets for GCSE have been met. English literature results at GCSE have shown a marked improvement of 5.9 per cent gaining A*-C. Nearly all pupils were entered for English literature.
106. National test results at the end of Key stage 3 are above the national average, showing a significant improvement over the last three years. These results already exceed the school's target for 2003. Both results show that the difference between boys' and girls' performance is narrowing. This marks an improvement since the last inspection. Based on the work seen during the inspection, pupils make good progress in their first year at the college.
107. Speaking and listening skills are good in Year 9 and listening skills remain good in Years 10 and 11, although speaking skills are weak. Reading is good in Year 9. The well-run library supports pupils and their reading for pleasure is carefully monitored. This helps them to develop good reading habits. In Years 10 and 11 technical reading skills are satisfactory but reading often lacks expression. Many pupils require carefully planned support to respond to text. In all years the pupils encounter a wide range of texts. Writing is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 with some good features. Many pupils are writing at length and for different audiences by the end of the key stage. They can respond to a Shakespeare play with the support of a structure prepared by the teacher. Spelling, punctuation and grammar remain weak for some average and most lower attaining pupils. The department is seeking to deal with this through testing on arrival and key word booklets. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is sound.
108. After whole staff training, attention to the development of literacy across the curriculum is now established. Key words are on display or in exercise books in many subjects, with teachers actively promoting subject-specific terminology in many lessons. Pupils use these terms well in mathematics, English, science, physical education and music. The teachers' marking of work in most subjects guides pupils' literacy and standards of presentation are generally good. This indicates an improvement from the previous report.
109. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9 where a brisk pace, sometimes using timed targets, is maintained throughout the lesson. Pupils respond well to this. They stay on task and their productivity increases. In one lesson on 'A Christmas Carol', challenging vocabulary was used

thus extending the pupils' power of expression. Pupils can comment on the structure of a poem and identify personification, metaphor and simile, as in a study of 'The Oubliette'. The Key Stage 3 Strategy for literacy is still at an early stage of implementation. Elements such as the lesson starter are being used to good effect but plenary sessions are often rushed with no input from pupils, or are omitted altogether. Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory, and sometimes good, in Years 10 and 11. Although a few high attaining pupils display good communication skills, many others find it difficult to organise their thoughts or respond in clear, extended sentences. This means that question and answer sessions are prolonged, the pace of the lesson slows and significant numbers of pupils become passive, as in an otherwise well-planned lesson on poems from other cultures. Often, work that has been planned for is omitted. Although appropriate for the majority of pupils, the tasks set sometimes do not match the ability of some in the class. English staff have very good subject knowledge. Extensive and in-depth knowledge of a wide range of texts, especially the plays of Shakespeare, is evident. The management of the pupils' behaviour is a strength. Pupils are aware of routines and group or pair work is well organised, with pupils collaborating well. Pupils are encouraged to succeed through merit awards that are valued highly.

110. Assessment is good. With a few exceptions, marking is diagnostic, indicating how pupils may improve their work. Grades are given indicating both effort and attainment. Reports to parents are clear, noting both strengths and weaknesses in each area of the subject.
111. A strength of the subject is the range of opportunities afforded to pupils to support learning eg literacy schools, theatre and library trips and paired reading. A high quality school magazine is published. Statutory requirements, including a robust ICT element, are being met. Opportunities for moral and cultural development are taken, as in the reading of poems from other cultures. In a study of 'A Christmas Carol' attention was drawn to the plight of the homeless today.
112. There has been little improvement in accommodation since the last report. Some rooms are generally unattractive. This is further exacerbated because rooms double as dining and examination rooms. The library is very cramped. After a number of staff changes, the department is entering a period of stability under new and committed leadership. There is an established programme of monitoring of teaching and newly qualified teachers are well supported. Meetings are held regularly and all staff support each other. The team is skilled, hard working and dedicated.
113. Results in drama at GCSE are well above the national average, with 79.2 per cent of candidates gaining A*-C grades. In lessons observed, there is evidence of a growing awareness of dramatic effect and pupils are able to use subject specific terms with confidence. Accommodation for the subject is sometimes inappropriate and access to the theatre is problematic. The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and experienced, with a strong vision for the subject. She leads a team of skilled practitioners.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- The pupils are attentive, respond well in lessons and make good progress.
- The leadership is good.
- The many extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- More systematic monitoring to develop greater consistency.
- More use of ICT to support the pupils' learning.
- Promotion and monitoring of numeracy across the curriculum.

114. Standards are in line with national averages. At the end of Year 9 in 2002 the proportion of pupils

- with Level 5 or more was average, higher than previous years but lower than in English and science. The proportion with Level 6 or higher was above the national average and better than in English and science. In 2001 the results were close to the national average, but showed good achievement from below average end of Year 6 results in 1998. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls.
115. The 2002 GCSE A*-C grades are equal to the national average, although not quite as high as the 2001 results. Achievement was satisfactory for both 2001 and 2002, from Key Stage 3 National Curriculum results in 1999 and 2000. All pupils are entered for GCSE mathematics and the percentage of passes was good in each year. Boys and girls achieved equally well. In 2001 boys did slightly better than girls when compared to the national boys' and girls' figures. In 2002 18 pupils were also entered for GCSE statistics and results were very good, with over 80 per cent A*-C grades.
 116. In lessons standards are higher than national expectations for their age. Pupils are responsive and attentive to very good teaching, an improvement since the previous inspection. A Year 9 set 1 understood the concept of Upper and Lower Bounds in the first lesson on the topic, helped by a stimulating introduction checking their knowledge of estimating and rounding off. The teacher had a very good relationship with the class, used humour well and effectively corrected boys who were calling out. The use of real-life examples to demonstrate combinations of measures was a good way to end the lesson, leading into the next stage. Overall, teachers plan well, but plenary sessions at the end of lessons are often less successful as too little time is left for these.
 117. In Years 9 and 10 there is a wide range of ability in each class. Although teachers usually try hard to match work to pupils' aptitude and prior attainment, often the higher attaining pupils in each class are insufficiently stretched and challenged. Lower attaining pupils are given more support and individual help by those teachers who circulate well round the class, explaining methods in different and sympathetic ways. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. There are many pupils with behavioural difficulties, especially boys in lower sets and these demand much attention from adults in the class, such as the Year 9 bottom set consolidating work on data-handling, where little progress was made. A Year 9 set 3 learnt very little when several poorly behaved pupils took a long time to settle and where the pace set by the teacher was too slow for many in the class. Year 10 top sets are stretched well. One group working on compound interest was extended further by an investigation into premium bonds.
 118. Appropriate challenge was seen in several Year 11 groups. A top set used graphical calculators well to find the relationship between curves and their quadratic equations. A set 5 taught by the curriculum team leader were aiming for the Intermediate level GCSE and they responded well to work on the n th term of number sequences by the difference method. The use of mental calculation 'starters' recommended by the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy is being used effectively in most lessons in all years. Recall of multiplication facts and number bonds is generally poor and problems with numeracy are sometimes hindering development of concepts, knowledge and understanding. Pupils who reach good standards for their prior attainment in lessons often have problems with the recall of facts and methods in examinations. Teachers are encouraging pupils to talk about mathematics, to explain their own successful methods and to use specific mathematical terms and this should help them internalise and consolidate their learning.
 119. The quality of teaching is good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed. Strengths include very thorough planning, a variety of teaching strategies and activities, good class management in a quiet, calm manner and good relationships with pupils. Most pupils behave well, settle down to work quickly, are attentive, responsive to teachers' questions and work very well together. Learning activities, however, are limited, with no structured paired-discussion or group-work, few examples of practical work, little use of equipment or ICT and little opportunity to show initiative. Homework is set regularly, but often not matched sufficiently to an individual's ability. Homework and classwork are regularly marked, more effective where comments help pupils know what is good about their work and how they can improve. Target setting for individual pupils is not yet fully developed.
 120. Many extra activities are provided for particular pupils. The 'Strength in Number' project involves

sixth form students helping Year 9 pupils. Summer schools are held for Year 8 pupils, to improve their mathematics before entering the college. Booster sessions are also held in the summer holidays for Year 10 pupils and at Easter for Year 11 pupils. One-day conferences are also held in the summer term for Year 10 and there is an e-mail help-line provided.

121. The curriculum team leadership by a mostly experienced and well-qualified team is good and most aspects of management are good. Policies and schemes of work are well written, but do not yet include the use of ICT, citizenship and the spiritual and cultural dimension of mathematics. The numeracy policy is good and whole school training was received well, but there is mixed evidence of responses from all curriculum areas. Standards of numeracy are a concern, as in the last inspection report. Numeracy across the curriculum needs further development and close monitoring. Improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall, with improved teaching and enhanced Year 9 achievement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The above average results in the national tests at the end of Year 9.
- The good teaching in Year 9.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE, particularly but not only those of boys of average ability.
- The use of ICT to support the pupils' learning.
- The impact of teaching the three sciences as separate GCSE courses to most pupils.
- Greater co-ordination of the three science subjects.
- The monitoring of teaching to ensure greater consistency.

122. The attainment of pupils in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. In the previous two years, attainment was above the national average, and in 2001, above the national average for similar schools. Boys' attainment is slightly better than that of girls. The current standard of work of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 3 is above the national average. The achievement of pupils, including progress since the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and gains in lessons, is good. The major factors contributing to the good achievement are the positive attitudes of the pupils and good teaching, including providing more demanding work for the more able pupils. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also good. Overall, standards at Key Stage 3 have improved since the last inspection.

123. The percentage of pupils attaining A* to C grades in GCSE sciences in 2002 is below the national average and below the pupils' average performance in other subjects. The percentage of A* to C grades in science has fallen significantly since 2000, when performance was above the national average. The current standard of attainment of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 4 is below the national average. Given the well above average results of these same pupils two years previously in their end of Year 9 national tests, their achievement, including progress over time, is unsatisfactory. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Underachievement is mainly on the part of middle ability boys. Factors contributing to this underachievement include:

- a lack of rigour in monitoring the overall academic progress of individual pupils;
- the uncooperative behaviour of a minority of boys;
- insufficient co-ordination across the three sciences for those pupils entered for double award science; and
- the over-burdening of average ability pupils with the extended content required for three separate sciences.

In addition, the building of new laboratories and the refurbishment of some of the existing ones considerably disrupted the work of the department in 2002. At that time, the department was also experiencing staffing difficulties.

124. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils have a good knowledge of scientific facts and the higher ability pupils are developing a good understanding of concepts such as particle theory applied to solids, liquids and gases; the calculation of speed; and pyramids of numbers, of biomass and of energy, in the study of ecology. At Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils add to their knowledge and understanding. Higher ability pupils, for example, have a good understanding of polymers and their properties, Ohm's law and the accommodation of the eye for near and distant visions. Investigative work is an integral part of the curriculum at both key stages; many pupils produce careful and well-documented work. Throughout the school, pupils make good use of graphs and charts. The higher attainers are learning to apply mathematical principles to science, for example, calculating acceleration, braking distances and rates of reactions. The middle and lower ability pupils often struggle with the concepts; some have difficulty in basic numeracy. The majority of pupils produce good quality written work and are learning effectively to use and spell scientific vocabulary. Specific learning targets for ICT in each year group, for each of the three sciences, have not been formally agreed; aspects of ICT taught through science, including data logging, are not assessed. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in Year 9 and sound in Years 10 and 11.
125. The teaching in Year 9 is good; this has a positive effect on the pupils' learning. In Years 10 and 11, most of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory and some was good. At both key stages, most lessons are well planned and well prepared and teachers have very good subject knowledge. In the majority of lessons, teachers give clear expositions and engage pupils' interests, enabling them readily to gain knowledge and understanding. They also skilfully question pupils, encouraging them to think through ideas for themselves. Many teachers make use of examples of the everyday applications of science, adding interest to the lessons and helping to maintain pupils' concentration. Weaknesses in the teaching over time have also contributed to the underachievement at GCSE. Some of this was evident during the inspection. For example, in order to cover fully the large volume of work required for triple award science at Key Stage 4, in some lessons the teachers are tending too much towards didactic methods, with too much note taking. This does not inspire or stimulate pupils and has an adverse effect on the quality of learning. In the best lessons at both key stages, teachers show enthusiasm and provide challenging tasks; pupils work with keen interest and often at a good pace. The vast majority of teachers deal effectively with uncooperative behaviour; however, in a few lessons, from time to time, work is disrupted. A small number of lessons seen at Key Stage 4 were unsatisfactory. Shortcomings in these lessons include weaknesses in managing the pupils' behaviour; a lack of challenge; and an insufficient focus on the main objectives of the lesson. The least able pupils are taught well. Characteristics of these lessons include a calm and patient approach, a good variety of activities to maintain pupils' concentration and making effective use of the help of learning support assistants.
126. Overall, the leadership in the department, in spite of considerable hard work, is not currently effective in reversing the downward trend in the GCSE performance. Key priorities must now include the provision of a more suitable curriculum for pupils of average ability; more rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and intervening in cases of perceived underachievement; more systematic monitoring of teaching; and improving the sharing of assessment information across the three departments. Since the last inspection, substantial improvements have been made to the accommodation, which now offers a very good learning environment. There is still, however, insufficient access to ICT resources, including data logging equipment.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards in the photography course.

- Very good teaching in some lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Pace and variety of activities in some lessons.
- Assessment and target setting.
- Ensuring that all pupils have access to a wide range of media and materials.

127. The department is undergoing a period of transition. Two of the four art teachers are new this term, including the second in department and a third teacher is covering a long-term absence. Only the head of department and the teacher with responsibility for photography have been in post for longer.
128. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were almost identical to national standards. The percentage of boys gaining A* - C grades was significantly lower than that for girls, but was no greater than the difference nationally. The percentage of boys and girls gaining the highest grades A* and A was also very similar to the national average. The department's results have broadly mirrored the national results each year since the last inspection and preliminary indications indicate that the results in 2002 confirm the trend. More detailed scrutiny shows that those pupils specialising in pottery and photography are more successful than those studying art and design. This is because the curriculum and assessment strategies are well organised and pupils are very clear about what they need to do to achieve high standards.
129. The standard of their current work in Year 11 is broadly average, although too many have work outstanding from last year. Teachers have set individual projects and there is a wide range of outcomes, with some projects being far more successful than others. For example, pupils undertaking the Surrealist project struggle with the complexities of the task and produce studies that are weak. They attempt to develop ideas that are ill conceived. By contrast, students studying "Organic Growth" produce lively sketches. They understand well how to develop their linear and tonal studies in order to make their work more interesting and are exploring a wide range of media. Most pupils in Year 10 have made a good start to their GCSE course and are developing good research and drawing skills. However, as in Year 11, projects set by some teachers are producing higher quality outcomes.
130. Standards in photography are well above average and almost all pupils attained grades A* - C last year and all are on track to attain similarly this year. The opportunity to study photography at GCSE is having a very positive impact. It is a popular subject and is a significant reason why a much higher proportion of pupils are opting to follow an art course than is the case nationally. Pottery has also proved a popular option, particularly for some lower attaining pupils, and the standards they have attained have been above average.
131. Standards in Year 9 are in line with standards nationally. Pupils enter with broadly average standards, often with better knowledge and understanding of artists than with developed drawing skills. They make appropriate progress during the year, although some projects set are more appropriate for higher rather than lower attaining pupils and overall there is too much emphasis on analysing works of art and writing than on developing the pupils' drawing skills.
132. The teaching is sound. There are significant variations, with teachers new to the school having a significant impact on raising standards. Some of this teaching is very good. Conversely, during this transition period there is some teaching that is just sound and at times unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is very good, for example in the teaching of the pupils studying pottery in Year 11, the teacher has very high expectations. The pupils are given precise advice and support as to what they need to do to improve, their work is very regularly marked with detailed feedback given and the project set is relevant and interesting. In lessons, not a moment is wasted and the pupils work intently at all times. Where the teaching is less effective, there is a lack of urgency and the teaching style is too reliant on giving pupils one-to-one support, leaving the rest of the class to work unsupported. As a result, the pupils work with little enthusiasm going through the motions rather than actively engaging in their work.
133. Leadership and management are sound. There has been a very good evaluation of examination

results and an audit of current strengths and weaknesses. In assessment, however, whilst there are some very good assessment strategies being used, these have not been adopted by the whole department and, as a result, not all pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

134. In most rooms, teachers make good use of the appropriate space. However, one room is poorly organised and work poorly displayed. The department has a very good record of working with the local community in assembling exhibitions and there is a good range of art visits to support the pupils' learning.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The level of awareness of what is required to introduce the subject effectively.
- The audit to determine where elements of citizenship are being taught.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of how it is being provided.

135. Citizenship within the college is not taught as a separate subject. An audit has been made across the college to determine where the required elements of the citizenship are already being taught or where subject areas are already making specific contributions to it. Extra units of work or special programmes have been added where necessary to ensure that its presentation is as full as it can be at this early stage and so that the three major areas for attention are balanced equally well across the curriculum. Consequently, citizenship is seen as an integral part of the curriculum as a whole and it is delivered as such.
136. It is not possible to make specific statements about the standards of attainment of the pupils in citizenship due to its integrated nature. However, judging by their skills of participation and responsible action which the pupils in the main manifest throughout the college, these standards are at least above what would be expected. The manner in which the pupils conduct themselves in and out of lessons reflects the college's overall ethos of treating the pupils like adults in order that they act like adults. Some subject departments in the college also foster these qualities of participation and responsible action. Work in drama and physical education, for example, places pupils in situations where they have to participate and become part of a team and where they have to think through the consequences of their actions. The pupils also participate in a large number of school and community-based activities. The use of the imagination in English, for example, also helps them to imagine and consider the experience of others.
137. The development of the skills of enquiry and communication is also a feature of college life and in this respect the standards of attainment of the pupils are good as they are competent in expressing themselves well on a range of topics in a variety of situations. In religious education, for example, the pupils often analyse information about spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Specific units of work in citizenship and in personal, social and health education challenge the pupils to examine and respond to their own position on prejudice and discrimination. The many councils, which are a strong feature of the college, enable the pupils to discuss and debate and this they do with considerable competence.
138. On the more factual side of citizenship, the College and its feeder schools have worked out a programme to cover this learning aspect of the requirements. Topics that are not specifically covered in the College are done elsewhere in the other schools. This ensures that the pupils' knowledge and understanding of what it is to be an informed citizen are good overall. The issue of fundamental human rights and responsibilities is covered elsewhere as well as in the College itself. There is some limitation to the work that the College does on the diversity of identities in the UK. Nevertheless, the pupils' knowledge and understanding of some of the major world religions are good and have given them an insight into other ways of life and have helped them develop a respect and understanding for these. The pupils have a developed knowledge and understanding of parliamentary government through their work on voting in history, as well as an understanding of how some parts of the economy function in their studies on war organisation. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations are also sound through their work in English and modern foreign languages.
139. For the reasons discussed above, no specific teaching of citizenship was observed during the inspection other than that which was done in a general sense through the topics of religion and philosophy and other subjects of the school. Overall the achievement of the pupils is good.

140. The development of the subject in the College has got off to a good start and its leadership and management are giving it clear direction and purpose. As yet, the subject has to be monitored effectively to ensure that that which has been identified as essential is being experienced by all.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Well above average results at GCSE.
- The expertise of the teachers and the high expectations they have of the pupils' performance.
- The very good feedback, guidance and support given to the pupils.
- Very good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Faster progress in Year 9.
- The shortcomings in some of the accommodation, access to ICT and several health and safety issues.

141. By the end of Year 9, the pupils achieve average standards. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress, but not as much as they do in the other key stages. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen slightly since the last inspection. The pupils' ability to work with food and textiles is good and they develop a good understanding of electronics, computer control and manufacturing in resistant materials. They successfully develop patterns and use them to construct their ideas in textiles and develop and test pastry products in food. They can make and modify simple circuits in electronics and manufacture confidently in a good range of resistant materials. However, their drawing, presentation and design skills are often below expectations. The progress the pupils make has been limited, particularly in their designing, by teaching that does not always build sufficiently on learning gained with different teachers earlier in the year. New arrangements are now in place to enable the same teachers to work with the pupils throughout the year. However, lesson planning has yet to be modified to ensure continuous progress. Some pupils are not sure how well they are doing or how to improve. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is sound in Year 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.

142. By the end of Year 11, the pupils achieve standards that are well above average and they make very good progress over the key stage. The number gaining GCSE A* to C grades in 2002 was 74 per cent compared with the national average of 53 per cent. These grades were an outstanding 14 per cent higher than the good results of the previous year. Both boys and girls do much better in design and technology than in most of their other subjects. Also, the margin by which the girls outperformed the boys in 2001 was smaller than average. This represents excellent progress since the last inspection when DT was one of the weakest subjects and the boys did less well than in their other subjects. Standards are now consistently high in all material areas. They were very high in textiles in 2002 when 45 per cent gained A or A* grades, compared with 14 per cent nationally.

143. In lessons, Year 11 pupils are currently making good progress in their coursework projects and have the potential to achieve very good standards in their GCSEs. Pupils often make good use of computers for research and presentation of their work. Effective use is made of CAD/CAM in resistant materials and systems and control. However, opportunities to use ICT in food and textiles are poor.

144. Some pupils do not take a design and technology course at Key Stage 4 and in this regard, statutory requirements are not met. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection, although it then affected many more pupils.

145. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is good overall. It is consistently sound and sometimes good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. The teachers are

enthusiastic and often have very good expertise in the subject, which they use well to motivate their pupils. They also have high expectations and pupils respond well to the very good feedback, guidance and support provided. The teachers share their expectations well with pupils and often use very good strategies to promote learning in lessons. For example, in one good Year 11 lesson, the teacher explained how pupils could get the most from their practical food session. In a textile lesson, the teacher helped pupils to improve their response to written examination questions by taking the role of the examiner.

146. The teachers are often versatile and have a wide range of subject interests. However, there are occasional relative weaknesses. For example the pupils' progress was adversely effected when a teacher was unfamiliar with the most successful way of constructing ellipses when teaching graphics. In other instances teachers talk for too long, denying pupils opportunities to undertake their own work. While the start of lessons is generally very good, few teacher make good use of the end of lessons to reinforce and check on key learning, before pupils leave. The pupils are generally confident, clearly enjoy their work and want to do well. Consequently, their behaviour and attitudes to work are consistently good and they enjoy the creative "buzz" of the department. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught in Years 10 and 11.
147. The subject is very well led by the new curriculum team leader, who has made very good progress in her first year. The teachers work well as a team to share expertise and develop new teaching materials together. Development plans are focused, achievable and targets well chosen to raise standards. There is a common desire to improve standards further, which is central to the success of the subject in the school. However, insufficient diagnostic use is made of data to highlight where teaching could be more effective, for example in Year 9. The department is short of a resistant materials room, which results in some pupils having insufficient access to manufacturing facilities and poor storage is a safety concern. Also, worn furniture in food rooms is unhygienic and several of the school's very good technicians lack safety training and certification.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The teachers' knowledge of the subject.
- Relationships.
- Resources are good and lessons are well planned.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at both the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are not as high as they could be.
- Expectations are not sufficiently high.
- The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work.

148. Standards are close to average at GCSE which represents good progress as, inspection evidence shows, attainment is below average in Year 9. At GCSE in 2002, almost all pupils entered gained a graded result. Few achieved the very highest grades. Girls' and boys' achievements are similar and standards echo those they attained in their other subjects. Examination results are better than at the previous inspection and are improving.
149. On entry at the age of 13, the pupils' skill and knowledge base is below average. The teaching time allocated to geography is below average. Together, these factors have a detrimental effect on standards attained by the end of Key Stage 3. In Year 9, progress in rectifying these deficiencies is too slow. Not enough is demanded of pupils and the standards of work accepted are not high enough. Year 9 pupils studying climate and vegetation in Africa have to be taught to use atlas scales and to interpret rainfall and temperature graphs and this slows down the rate of their learning about the main topic of tourism in developing economies. Lessons cater well for the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs but work does not stimulate and extend middle and high attainers or gifted and talented pupils. In work seen, standards are below

those expected of Year 9 pupils nationally.

150. In Year 10, pupils preparing for GCSE, including lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, work hard and make good progress in response to good teaching and varied, well planned and resourced lessons. In one lesson, for example, they learned well about factors leading to migration from arid rural areas of Brazil to live in cities like Sao Paulo. Pupils showed enthusiasm for the subject by the quality of their questions about life expectancy, diet and life style contrasts between countryside and city and between standards in the UK and less economically developed countries.
151. Year 11 pupils, in the most successful lessons, work hard and support each other well. This was seen in research work comparing thermal, nuclear and hydroelectric energy sources where direction was clear, resources were very good and the task was demanding. A lower attaining class, including pupils with special educational needs, well supported by a learning support assistant, also made good progress studying national parks because the tasks and materials were well matched to their needs. Pupils had retained earlier learning well and could explain and give examples of primary and tertiary industry and relate arable and livestock farming to physical factors influencing location. In a class studying industrial inertia, although most pupils made sound progress, the most able had their progress constrained by limiting tasks.
152. The teaching is good except for some lessons in Year 9 which lack pace and rigour. In these, pupils are not made to work hard enough, standards accepted are too low and expectations not high enough. Teachers have good understanding of the subject. They use questions skilfully to check understanding and give clear explanations of key ideas, new techniques and subject vocabulary. Relationships and behaviour are good and pupils' work shows care and effort. Work is well resourced and activities within lessons are varied. Pupils have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience. Good use is made of information and communication technology. Relevant homework is used effectively to extend learning. Marking tells pupils how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Pupils rarely leave work unfinished.
153. To raise standards further, teachers need to increase demands on pupils, particularly those capable of reaching high standards, to ensure they benefit from strengths in the teaching. Literacy is supported by well-designed materials, but these also need to be refined to extend the learning of the most able pupils. Spelling of key geographical terms is weak. There is too little provision for numeracy and pupils do not have experience of a wide enough range of graphical techniques to prepare them well for examination. Assessment is not sufficiently used as a spur to higher standards. Greater focus on examination awareness would improve work in all years.
154. The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work and progress is not yet identifying weaknesses clearly enough. Better resources are raising achievement. Teamwork in planning for learning across the department is a good feature. Management is sound. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and this is continuing.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management.
- Good teaching.
- The pupils' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Increased use of ICT to support the pupils' learning.
- Better use of assessment for planning.
- Opportunities to learn about the multicultural nature of British society.

155. GCSE results in 2002 are average overall. The A*-C pass rate of 62.9 per cent continues the steady trend of recent years in which pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. Teacher assessment of pupils in Year 9 shows a similar average profile, but standards of work seen during the inspection show that pupils in this year are now working at above average standards and that they are making good progress. The relatively small amount of time given to the subject in Year 9 reduces the range of topics that can be taught and therefore the overall breadth of learning. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good.
156. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. Teachers manage the pupils well and set challenging tasks, for example, by requiring lower attaining pupils in Year 9 to analyse the costs of different methods of transport between Liverpool and Manchester in 1825. All lessons have a good pace, which allows time for reflection but also ensures that learning develops momentum, especially in the GCSE classes, where consolidation of learning is well planned, as seen in coverage of the problems faced by Mormon settlers in nineteenth century America. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to express reasoned opinions as to the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945. Year 11 pupils can understand significant features of the conflict in Northern Ireland and use evidence to support their analysis. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with work which is well matched to their needs.
157. Leadership and management are good. A stimulating curriculum is established in Year 9 within the constraints of available time and resources are deployed well throughout the school. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils, particularly through its study of the Holocaust and a residential visit to the battlefields of World War One. Social skills are fostered through debate and role-play and contribute to the participatory element of citizenship education which is also enhanced by many elements of the curriculum. These refer to the role of government, the use of the law, the concept of civil rights and insights into other cultures, for example the ancient world and nineteenth century American Indians. Leadership is supportive of staff development and pro-active in the analysis of factors affecting examination performance. Improvement since the last inspection includes the development of teaching to a good standard. There is recognition in planning that assessment arrangements should make more use of published data and that monitoring requires more rigour.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning in Year 10 and 11, including a good standard of coursework.
- Significant improvement in the number of computers available.
- Good leadership and management that has achieved a lot in a short period of time.
- Good progress in developing the school's website as a learning resource in some subjects.

Areas for improvement

- Sufficient time to meet the full requirements of the National Curriculum in Year 9.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Assessment of the pupils' attainment.

158. The teachers' assessment of the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicates standards of attainment well below national expectations. Standards are improving as the curriculum is being improved for the current Year 9, but the pupils' overall standards are still below expectations. The reasons for this are that pupils have insufficient teaching time for ICT lessons and so the full National Curriculum is not taught. In addition to the ICT lessons, three other subjects make particular contributions to pupils' ICT capability but these contributions are not sufficiently effective. The school does not receive manageable assessment data for ICT from its two main feeder schools and so is not able to quickly build on and extend pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Some of the pupils' work matches national expectations and so, for example, pupils have a good understanding of health and safety issues associated with ICT and

evaluate the handling of data manually and with a computer. Although the teaching and learning in ICT lessons are satisfactory, all pupils do not achieve as well as they should, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs. Strengths of the teaching included a brisk pace of learning in well organised lessons and teachers have good subject knowledge so explanations and demonstrations were clear.

159. In 2001, the results for those pupils taking the full GCSE course were above the national average and the pupils' results in ICT were higher than the average for their other subjects. In 2002, the results improved slightly. There is no national comparative data for the results of GCSE short courses and in 2001 and 2002 about half of the pupils achieved grades A* to C. All pupils successfully add validation to a database and write error messages. A particular strength of pupils' coursework is that they have realistic contexts and usually involve pupils working with someone from a business or another organisation to help improve an aspect of their organisation's work.
160. All pupils in Year 10 take a full or short GCSE course in ICT. Some pupils do not take an examination course in ICT in Year 11. They use some ICT in their other subjects as well as having a taught ICT lesson every two weeks. For example, pupils successfully evaluated different web sites and started to create their own web pages. On entry to Year 10, overall standards are below expectations as the current Year 9 course is not a good preparation for GCSE courses. Early in Year 10 there is some catch-up work for what pupils missed in Year 9. Teaching and learning are good during Years 10 and 11 and pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Gifted and talented pupils have particularly good opportunities to extend their learning during the coursework projects. Occasionally, pupils with special educational needs make slow progress in lessons but there were instances when pupils with special educational needs made very good progress in learning and applying new skills. Pupils make good progress with their learning and overall standards at the end of Year 11 match national expectations.
161. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. Common strengths include well planned lessons with clear learning objectives (although there is insufficient stress on relevant key vocabulary) and the teachers' good subject knowledge so that demonstrations of skills and explanations are clear, especially when using the data projector and interactive whiteboard. The monitoring and support for individual pupils and groups of pupils are effective and help pupils overcome their difficulties and move their learning forward. Worksheets are well structured and lucid and they help pupils work effectively on their own. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the best marking makes it clear to pupils how to improve their learning. Classes are well managed and pupils usually respond positively so that their behaviour and attitudes to work are good. Occasionally, however, pupils do not seek to do their best work and a small minority are uncooperative at times. In one lesson, a significant number of pupils did not record their homework in their journals despite the teacher's clear instruction.
162. Occasional weaknesses in teaching and learning include a lack of clarity about principles of good design when pupils were planning different types of document, homework that did not contribute enough to pupils' learning and concluding plenary sessions that added little to pupils' learning. In the best lessons, pupils had ready access to their previously completed work. For each pupil, teachers have target grades for GCSE but these were not always used effectively to evaluate whether or not the pupils were on track to reach or exceed their targets.
163. The ICT curriculum leader has been in post for a relatively short period of time and all of the staff have been appointed recently. The leadership and management of the subject are good and much has been achieved in a relatively short time. The monitoring of lessons has been done effectively and identified clear points for improvement, although teachers' assessments and pupils' work have not yet been monitored.
164. The use of ICT by other subjects is unsatisfactory. An audit of the use of ICT by other subjects has started but is incomplete. Good use is made of ICT in some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, where its use is planned in the subjects' scheme of work. During the inspection, good use was made of ICT in lessons for several other subjects including mathematics, science,

geography and music. However, a few subjects do not make enough use of ICT to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. A key theme of the whole-school development plan is the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning, but there is not a clear plan for ensuring that all subjects meet statutory requirements for their use of ICT.

165. The number of ICT suites has increased significantly in the last year and now the pupil:computer ratio is better than the national average. However, a few subjects still find it difficult to get enough access to computer suites for their classes. The school has made good progress in establishing a web site that includes learning resources for pupils. Good progress has been made for design and technology. ICT makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although there is insufficient planning for the development of these skills.
166. A good level of improvement to ICT has been made since the previous inspection. The curriculum for Year 10 now meets statutory requirements and this will be extended into Year 11 from next September. Because all pupils now follow taught ICT courses in Years 10 and 11, standards have risen. The number of subjects using ICT has increased. At the last inspection, the teaching was satisfactory for Years 10 and 11, but now it is good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- Good leadership and management.
- Good use of ICT to support the pupils' learning.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- The extension of reading opportunities.
- Better grouping of pupils so that tasks can be better matched to different pupils.

French and German

167. Almost all pupils begin French in Year 6 or earlier and German in Year 8 in their middle schools. All continue French and the vast majority continue German, in addition, to the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, approximately equal numbers take each of the languages, with a small number, eleven in the current Year 11, taking both. Approximately 40 in each year group no longer take a foreign language at this stage. Pupils' standards in French at the end of Year 9 are broadly average for their age. Higher attaining pupils are able to write texts of ten lines or so using verbs in the past tense. In German, standards are below average in relation to what is expected for a first foreign language but correspond closely to what is usually seen in second foreign language classes. At the end of Year 11, standards in French are above average, but in German, where standards nationally are higher, they remain slightly below average.
168. Because pupils enter the school with a head start in French compared with pupils of the same age in most other schools, their achievement is only satisfactory in Year 9. However, they do make good progress in Years 10 and 11 in response to good teaching, and their achievement is good. In German, where time is tighter to reach GCSE, pupils' achievement both in Year 9 and in the GCSE years is good. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in Year 9 provided that they attend school consistently. In Years 10 and 11, those who continue with foreign language work achieve well, although for some this expectation of the National Curriculum does not apply. Gifted linguists have opportunities to make exceptional progress, for example, through exchange visits, which take place each year, but there is no special curriculum provision.
169. Pupils' attitudes to foreign language learning are good. They relate well to teachers and co-operate with them to good effect. They behave well in lessons and practise oral skills effectively with one

another.

170. The teaching is good overall. Three-quarters of lessons seen were good, with good learning reflecting the teaching and there was one very good lesson with high expectations involving all pupils. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good language skills and use them effectively in lessons. Planning is good, ensuring a variety of learning activities, and time is used to best advantage. Good provision is made for pupils to enhance their learning by the use of computers. Marking is good, with supportive comments offered to the pupils, and homework is satisfactorily used. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught.
171. Overall leadership is good. The language specialisms of the two staff responsible complement each other well. They have succeeded in establishing a cohesive team of teachers with a shared vision and commitment to pupils' success. All staff, for example, have taken part in the exchange visits and work experience abroad arranged by the school, this latter in collaboration with other local schools. Staff collectively have created an extensive range of software which supports learning in the fortnightly computer room lessons and which all pupils enjoy. All staff have trained to use new technology to best effect. In the curriculum, citizenship remains to be addressed. Day to day management is good. Assessment is very well used, with the result that pupils are very clear about their rate of progress and what they need to do to improve. Close monitoring of pupils' work ensures that high standards are maintained. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good because above average standards have been maintained.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards in GCSE.
- Very good teaching.
- The pupils work with considerable interest and enthusiasm.
- Excellent leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for practical activities.

172. All pupils in Year 9 follow the National Curriculum course. The course is imaginatively planned and pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in music technology. GCSE music is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form can pursue music courses at A/S and A level. Instrumental lessons are offered for 37 hours per week in brass, woodwind, strings, drumkit, guitar, singing and piano. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, covering a variety of musical styles. Pupils play in school productions and in the wider community too. Musical groups make visits to Europe and links with an Indian school set up in 1996 still continue.
173. By the end of Year 9, standards are good. Most pupils achieve the expected level, with approximately half achieving above that level. In performing, pupils play chords and melodies and they can improvise short patterns using a blues scale. They maintain their parts accurately in ensemble performance and most maintain a steady rhythm. Pupils show imagination in the choice of melodic and rhythmic ideas for their compositions and their control of structure is good. Knowledge and understanding of musical styles are good and pupils use musical terminology accurately in their descriptions. Achievement is good for pupils of all levels of ability.
174. By the end of Year 11, standards are very good and well above national averages. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Results have continued to rise since the last inspection and last year 100 per cent of pupils gained the higher grades in the GCSE examinations. Option group sizes are in line with the national average for music. Standards are very good across all elements of the course but performance is a particular strength. Pupils play different instruments in a variety of styles. Accuracy and musical understanding are evident in most performances and many pupils

play beyond the difficulty level expected for the examination. In their compositions, pupils can maintain their chosen styles very well and they make particularly good use of complex harmony. Structures are convincing and some pupils make good use of music technology to realise their ideas. Pupils have a very good understanding of their chosen areas of study and a very good knowledge of a variety of musical styles. Listening and aural skills are good and pupils use musical terminology accurately. Achievement across the key stage is very good for all pupils.

175. The teaching of music is always at least good. Some very good and excellent teaching was seen. Teachers prepare their lessons well with a variety of tasks that sustain pupils' interest and help them to consolidate and to extend their knowledge. Tasks are structured to suit pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers have very good subject skills and support their clear explanations with good musical demonstrations. They make sure that pupils understand their tasks. Short, timed tasks help to maintain a good pace in the lesson. Questions are well directed to check knowledge and understanding and teachers take care to include all the pupils. All pupil efforts and answers are valued which helps them to develop confidence. Classroom management is good and friendly, encouraging teaching helps pupils to persevere. In the best lessons, expectations are very good; teachers establish a very good learning environment in which pupils strive to succeed, knowing their efforts are recognised. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to improve their work in these lessons. Teaching in the instrumental lessons is good and some is very good.
176. The curriculum team leader has a very clear sense of direction for the department and management of the subject is excellent. The curriculum is well planned, with a very good range of work sheets to support the pupils and assessment procedures are good. Pupils learn to value and appreciate music in many styles and from many different places and they develop good social skills in both the lessons and the extra-curricular groups. Lack of music technology was criticised in the last inspection. This is much improved. This term the department installed a new 16-station music technology suite and a recording studio. Resources for technology are now very good and new schemes of work linking music and media are already being developed. Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory and adversely affects the progress for some pupils. Some pupils are taught in non-specialist rooms and, in the smaller teaching room, some teaching time is lost in setting up equipment for the various lessons. The practice rooms are situated some way from the main teaching rooms, which makes supervision very difficult. When pupils are working in small groups, not all have an appropriate space in which they can hear their work clearly.
177. Improvement since the previous inspection is good overall and very good in some areas. Standards have been maintained and improved; good, very good and excellent teaching has been sustained; resources in technology are much improved. With sufficient suitable accommodation, the department is well placed to move even further forward.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average results in the GCSE course.
- The excellent quality of the extra-curricular activity.
- Relationships.

Areas for improvement

- More systematic monitoring of teaching to ensure better consistency.
- The provision of more creative activity, eg dance and gymnastics.

178. GCSE results in 2002 improved considerably from 2001 and have now returned to being above the national average at grades A*-C. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

179. Standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are average. When the pupils arrive at the school, they are below average. This shows good achievement over a short period of time. The girls know how to warm up effectively before exercise and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The boys are less well informed. A minority of boys and girls have above average skills in games such as basketball, hockey, football and netball. They understand and apply advanced attacking and defensive strategies. Pupils are generally not confident to ask or answer questions using technical vocabulary. They have a satisfactory level of fitness.
180. Standards reached by pupils in Year 11 are average. Their skills become more refined in a number of activities. In football they are able to outwit their opponent with change of pace and the more able have good control of the ball at close quarters. In badminton a minority has a good range of shots and, although not fully refined, can outwit their opponent, some using disguise in their serve. The majority are slow to anticipate the shuttle and often hold the wrong grip. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when in a competitive situation but are less inclined to practise in order to refine their skills. Pupils from ethnic minorities achieve well, particularly African and Caribbean pupils who have good ball skills. Overall, in all years, pupils achieve satisfactorily.
181. Those pupils in Year 11 who are taking GCSE are overall above average. The vast majority achieve well relative to their ability especially in the theoretical aspects of the subject. Higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of all modules and write fluently, using good technical vocabulary in notes and under test conditions. They have too few opportunities to record and analyse number in relation to performance but the new recording booklet should solve this weakness. Lower attaining pupils generally have a poor recall of facts in the long and short term and find it difficult to link theoretical facts to practical activities. They retain knowledge best when there is a good focus on key words and facts but struggle when teaching is too difficult for their needs. Their achievement is satisfactory. The pupils reach high standards in activities such as trampolining, football, hockey and badminton.
182. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are good, with some very good features. The best teaching is in the examination lessons that challenge the pupils with tasks allowing them to achieve at their own level. The question and answer sessions challenge ideas and provoke thought. There are high expectations of quality of work. For example, homework or tests are repeated until pupils reach their expected target grade. This has been particularly successful in raising the boys' standard of work. In practical lessons, skills progress logically, building to the final activity. Success is always celebrated. The teachers are all good role models and provide good and often humorous practical demonstrations that result in improved technique. The well established code of conduct is consistently applied in all lessons. This creates an atmosphere that is caring, safe and conducive to learning. Some, but not all teachers, include tasks for pupils to plan and evaluate. Lessons are often late to finish and opportunities are lost for pupils to answer questions about what they have learnt. At present there is no formal monitoring to ensure that the best features of teaching are shared between teachers, although ongoing day-to-day discussions results in good team work. The pupils nearly always respond with enthusiasm although a few Year 10 and 11 girls are less well motivated. The curriculum is heavily biased towards games and does not reflect the interests of adolescent girls.
183. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There are positive features. For example, the management of the examination courses is good and gives clear educational direction. Since the last inspection above average results have been maintained, with the exception of 2001 when pupils were not strong in practical aspects. The pupils respond very enthusiastically to the excellent extra-curricular programme where many enjoy team and individual success at county and national levels in activities such as basketball, football, trampolining and athletics. The girls Under-16 football team are currently the national champions. There has, however, been too little improvement on curriculum issues. Opportunities for pupils to study dance, gymnastics or trampolining are still too limited. Dance is offered at GCSE but as an after school activity. Assessment systems are effective and examination results are thoroughly analysed. There is better continuity between units of work and better transfer of information from middle schools, although ideas of standards are too variable. The very good sports facilities make a positive impact on standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- A relative lack of subject expertise in some of the teaching.
- Some of the accommodation.

184. In 2002, of the 26 pupils entered for the examination, 22 gained the higher grades A* to C. In 2001, six pupils were entered and three gained the higher A* to C grades. In 2000, nine out of 20 pupils gained the higher grades. On these figures, the standards of attainment are at least in line with national averages and the most recent are above them. In 2002, the first group of pupils was entered for the short course GCSE examination. This was a large group of pupils numbering about 250. The standard of attainment reached by these pupils is broadly in line with the national average. The standard of attainment seen during the inspection, that is in their books, in the lessons and in discussions with pupils, is also broadly in line with national standards. In the case of the pupils doing the full course GCSE, the standards of attainment are often above national standards. Overall, the pupils have a good working knowledge of the two religions that they are studying, that is Christianity and Sikhism, and they can talk meaningfully about some of their principal teachings and beliefs. They can discuss readily many issues of a moral and social nature but they are more limited in discussing the religious viewpoints on these things. Extended writing is not strong. In general, however, their written skills are adequate. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys but not on the full course GCSE.
185. The standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The pupils have a sound working knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Sikhism and they can talk meaningfully about them. The pupils also have a sound grasp of other more general religious topics such as survival after death and the problem of suffering. The pupils also know and understand how religions play an important role in the social life of their followers, such as in the rites of passage and they have a good understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the community. The ability of the pupils to talk confidently about the central beliefs of the religions they study is not so strong. The pupils can use religious language in a meaningful way. Their written skills are adequate and they can express themselves well in speech. There is no very significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
186. Generally the achievement of pupils in all years is satisfactory but good for the pupils doing the full course GCSE. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory as some differentiated work enables them to achieve as best they can, although more structured differentiated work would help them further. Additional extension work would be of benefit to the more able and to the gifted and talented pupils, although they too are making satisfactory progress.
187. Overall the attitude and behaviour of the pupils are good to very good in about equal proportion. Occasionally, they are satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Where the response is good and very good, the pupils are well behaved and concentrate on their work and they are able to maintain their concentration. They also show an interest in what they are doing and engage themselves actively in the lessons. Where the response is less than good, the pupils are largely well behaved but they find it difficult to maintain their concentration and so their learning is weaker. This usually reflects uncertainty in the teaching.
188. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, the lessons are well planned and they include a wide range of learning objectives which are clearly

communicated to the pupils themselves. The expertise in these lessons is strong and so the lessons are delivered with drive and confidence and the pace and expectations are high. The religious content of the lesson is also strong and connections are made with work previously done. Learning consequently is very significant and the fast pace ensures that the pupils maintain their concentration and so a lot of work is done in the time available. These lessons also have a good sense of purpose. Where the teaching is satisfactory, the lessons are well planned but a lack of expertise or low expectations allow the lessons to 'drift' and few demands are made of the pupils. Some of these lessons are also characterised by limited religious content. The limited sense of purpose allows the pupils to lose concentration and so the learning is less strong. In some instances, the amount of learning that pupils do over the longer period of time is weaker than the amount of learning that is done in individual lessons. The use of information technology is in the early stages of development. The teaching makes a good input to the pupils' standard of literacy in its reading from a range of texts. The teaching also makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in its examination of such things as the meaning and purpose of life, as well as in its study of a range of moral and social issues and world religions.

189. The department is very well led and managed. Overall the staffing is very good in that there are three specialists in the department. However, a good deal of their teaching is done in the sixth form and so about 40 per cent of the teaching in Years 9, 10 and 11 is done by non-specialists. As such, the staffing is unsatisfactory for these years as it is having some effect on the pupils' learning. The monitoring of teaching is done on a limited basis. Statutory requirements are being met in Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Progress since the last inspection has been very good as the schemes of work and lesson plans now contain much more explicit religious content. Some aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory. The resources are very good.

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 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	100	62	0	15	2.3	1.5
Business Studies	4	100	77	25	12	2.8	1.7
Music	5	80	84	0	29	1.8	2.4
Geography	1	100	75	0	7	1.0	1.2
English Literature	1	100	-	0	-	1.00	-

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	17	100	87	65	43	7.7	5.8
Chemistry	10	100	90	20	43	5.2	5.9
Biology	14	86	88	36	34	5.4	5.3
Physics	8	100	88	50	40	7.5	5.7
Design Technology	19	100	91	58	30	7.8	5.4
Design Technology – Textiles	7	100	83	43	28	5.7	4.7
Business Studies	24	100	92	25	32	5.7	5.5
Information Technology	6	100	86	67	23	7.3	4.6
Physical Education	20	100	92	40	25	6.0	5.1
Art & Design	18	100	96	56	46	6.9	6.6
Photography	5	80	-	20	-	5.6	-
Music	2	100	93	50	35	6.0	5.7
Dramatic & Expressive Arts	9	89	99	56	38	7.1	6.6
Geography	13	69	92	15	38	3.4	5.7
History	8	100	88	25	35	5.3	5.5
Religious Studies	4	100	92	100	38	8.5	5.8
Government & Politics	4	100	-	50	-	7.0	-
Law	2	100	-	50	-	6.0	-
Sociology	13	92	86	77	35	7.7	5.3
Psychology	23	83	-	35	-	5.7	-
English Literature	25	96	95	52	37	6.8	5.9
Communication Studies	21	76	93	19	31	4.2	5.5

French	6	100	89	83	38	8.0	5.6
German	4	100	91	50	40	7.0	5.8
General Studies	54	89	85	44	30	5.9	4.9

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	10	100	85	40	40	40	25
Health & Social Care	9	100	83	44	40	44	28
Leisure & Tourism	5	100	84	20	42	0	21

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health & Social Care	4	100		0		0	
Leisure & Tourism	12	100		71		0	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. The biology A-level results in 2001 were above the national average; in 2002, standards were considerably lower. Two biology lessons were observed; the teaching in both was good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- High standards at A-level.
- Good teaching.
- Very good academic support for students.

Areas for improvement

- Breadth of courses; to provide choice and depth of study.
- Improve recruitment of female students and their retention from Year 12 to 13.

190. Standards of work by students in the current Year 13 are above average. In 2001, A-level examination results were well above the national average, as they were in the previous year. Students' progress from GCSE to A-level is generally better than expected; their achievement is therefore good. The results in 2002, the first following the new AS/A level programmes, are not of such a high standard. They cannot be compared to national results as these are not yet available. However, when compared to their targets, higher attaining students achieved well, although a number of those of more modest capability did not attain the results expected by the college. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection. Although small this year, the number of students continuing to A-level is generally good and the retention rate in Year 12 is good. Few students withdrew from courses in the last two years. Proportionately fewer female students are recruited onto A-level courses than is the case nationally.

191. The standard of students' written work and that seen during lessons is above average. That of the most capable students shows them to be making good progress. Students discuss their work well, showing a good grasp of the underlying principles. However, they do not readily use their knowledge of pure mathematics to work in other areas - for example in the application of the general binomial expansion to finding specific probabilities in a binomial model.
192. The standard of work done by Year 12 students is good. The most capable can use and interpret derivatives well and apply them to the analysis of functions. Students who studied intermediate mathematics at GCSE level struggle with algebraic routines but they work hard to bridge these gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, all students make good progress during the first term of the course, on track to achieve above average standards at A-level. A small number of students re-take GCSE examinations and significantly improve their grades.
193. The teaching is good. A well-qualified and experienced team of teachers prepares students for three modules in each year. These include pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Currently, only a small number of students wish to study mathematics at a higher level; consequently the college is not offering AS Further Mathematics. Teachers provide clear explanations and use questioning well in order to assess students' understanding but also to hold students' attention by involving them in discussions of reasoning. As a result, students invest the intellectual effort needed to follow proofs and generalisations closely. This enables them to explain results in their own words as well as apply them in solving problems. The teachers challenge students by, for example, engaging them in discussions of the principles underlying the vector equations of a line in space. In this way they not only master the techniques required but gain useful insights into different representations of linear functions. Where relative weaknesses in the teaching exist, they relate to the additional challenge needed to stimulate the highest attaining students or those with greater prior learning, such as those who have already completed statistics to GCSE level.
194. The subject is well led and managed. The teaching is monitored regularly and issues of classroom practice form the subject of regular dialogue between teachers. The effectiveness of courses is evaluated and leads to improved provision. For example, the teaching of pure mathematics has been restructured to provide a more consistent strand throughout the AS/A-level programmes in order to address the shortcomings revealed by the first results following the new specifications. The subject leader regularly calls in students with their work to monitor standards of their work and the quality of marking and feedback that they are given. Generally, high standards have been reached and maintained; improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good.

CHEMISTRY

Overall provision in chemistry is **good**.

Strengths

- The students are performing as well as or better than expected, given their GCSE results.
- The teaching is good.
- The students' attitudes and motivations are very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessment of the students' learning in lessons.
- Written feedback to the students on how to improve further.
- Use of ICT to support the students' learning.

195. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were broadly average. In 2002, all students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the average grade achieved was grade C. Most performed better than expected, given their GCSE results. The standards of work of students currently studying chemistry are at least average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13.

196. In the lessons seen the students were doing well as a result of clear, logical teaching that referred to the key concepts in a topic and provided activities related to the syllabus content they needed to know. This lesson structure and the written activities, in both Year 12 and Year 13, clearly directed their learning towards good attainment. Students in Year 12 are achieving much as expected from the time they have spent on the course. In an activity to draw and name different isomers, the teacher clearly set out the basic rules which enabled the students to tackle the activity logically and all the Year 12 students could apply the nomenclature rules accurately. In Year 13, students work to a higher level of attainment as would be expected. The students doing coursework could explain the purpose and methodology for their chosen investigation and were able to work completely independently. The standard of work produced by these students is in line with that expected for the higher grades at A2 level.
197. The teaching was good in virtually all lessons seen and all lessons were at least satisfactory. The principal features of the lessons are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a strong emphasis on the reinforcement and development of ideas. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning, explanations and in the tasks they set. Although the lessons show a clear focus, there are some missed opportunities to identify what the students are thinking when they undertake the various tasks. Identifying these opportunities in lessons would allow the staff to support the students even better and enable them to achieve at a higher level earlier in the course.
198. Day-to-day marking checks for errors and most contains comments about what the students have done wrong but there is little written evidence of informing students what they should do to improve and in particular to develop higher order skills. For example Year 13 students know their target grades, but are not clear about what they need to do differently in order to achieve them. However, there is evidence of oral feedback in the lessons influencing improvement, for example, in coursework.
199. The students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the structured teaching that they experience. Overall, they are very positive in their attitude to work in class and in the comments they make about their teachers. They recognise that the tasks will support them for their exams. The teachers are willing to give as much extra time as is needed for individual students and many students confirm they have received extra support. This partnership is producing well-motivated students.
200. Work in the subject is well led and managed. Monitoring is good. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. There was strong evidence that the curriculum is completed on time and students have adequate time to meet coursework deadlines. Science resources are good and used well and there is good support from the technicians. There was no evidence of the use of ICT in lessons or students' work seen. The department has identified this as an area that needs developing.

PHYSICS

The overall provision for physics is **good**.

Strengths

- Results are well above average and the students achieve well.
- The teaching is good.
- The students' attitudes and motivation are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessment of the students' thinking in lessons.
- Written feedback on how to improve further.
- Use of ICT to support the students' learning.

201. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average. In 2002, all students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the average grade achieved was

grade C. In both years, the students performed better than expected, given their GCSE results. The standards of work of students currently studying physics are at least average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13.

202. In the lessons seen, the students were doing well as a result of clear, logical teaching that referred to the key concepts in a topic and provided activities related to the exam and syllabus content they needed to know and clearly directed towards attainment. Students in Year 12 are achieving the expected standards for this stage of the course. In an activity to represent graphically the features of damped oscillations the students could use the explanations given by the teacher to apply this knowledge and understanding to new examples. Most students could represent the graphs successfully. In a Year 13 class, students had prepared presentations on the topic of the gas laws. These included some very stretching activities which involved complex manipulations of equations. The standard of work produced by these students in this lesson is in line with the requirements for the higher grades at A2 level.
203. The teaching was good in virtually all lessons seen and all lessons were at least satisfactory. The principal features of the lessons are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a strong emphasis on reinforcement and developing ideas. The teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning, explanations and in the tasks they set. Although the lessons showed a clear focus, there were some missed opportunities to identify what the students were thinking. For example, in one lesson a student had misunderstood an example and produced a graph which matched his interpretation, but not the teacher's. Identifying and addressing these opportunities would help the teachers to assist the students in achieving higher levels earlier in the course. Conversely, in another lesson on the same topic, one student queried whether the orientation of the damping card would affect the results. This led to a good discussion of preliminary trials and the decision to extend this piece of work. The department should be proactive in identifying and disseminating these opportunities in lessons as this would encourage the students to think more deeply about what they are doing, developing both their motivation and attainment.
204. Day-to-day marking checks for errors and most contains comments about what the students have done wrong, but there is little written evidence of students being informed of what they should do to improve and in particular to develop higher order skills. For example, Year 13 students knew their target grades, but were not clear about what they needed to do differently in order to achieve them. However, there is evidence of oral feedback in the lessons influencing student improvement throughout the course.
205. The students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the structured teaching that they experience. Overall, they are very positive in their attitude to work in class and in the comments they make about their teachers. They recognise that the tasks will support them for their exams. The staff give as much extra time as is needed for individual students. For instance, one Year 12 student receives regular extra tuition and many other students said they had received extra support. This partnership is producing well-motivated students.
206. Work in the subject is well led and managed. Monitoring of the subjects' performance is good. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. For example, the department is reviewing the various A-level courses on offer to find the one most appropriate for their students. Science resources are good and used well and there is good support from the technicians. There was no evidence of the use of ICT in lessons or students' work. The department has identified this as an area that needs developing.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology: product design in resistant materials. However, product design in textiles and graphic products was also sampled. In 2001, textiles results were well above average and students generally did at least as well as in their other subjects. One textiles lesson was seen; the teaching was very good. There were no candidates in graphic products in 2001, but the Year 12 students seen in a lesson were making good progress at this early stage of their course.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (PRODUCT DESIGN IN RESISTANT MATERIALS)

Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

Key strengths in the subject:

- high standards achieved and the very good progress which students make;
- enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers;
- the good ethos for learning and the high expectations;
- very good relationships and individual guidance and support for students;
- the good range of experience of industrial design which the teachers bring to the course.

Areas for improvement :

- design skills in Year 12;
- the students' skills in self-assessment;
- the range of computer-aided applications available and increased access to specialist facilities.

207. The students achieved high standards in their 2001 A Level examinations and had made very good progress, relative to their GCSE results. Most pupils do appreciably better in design and technology (DT) than in their other A Level subjects. Standards have been consistently high in recent years and have improved significantly since last inspection, when they were average.
208. The standards of the current Year 13 students are well above average, with 70 per cent gaining A or B grades in their AS Levels at the end of Year 12. In a lesson seen, these students successfully researched different aspects of glass reinforced plastic on the Internet, which they then presented confidently to the class. Their coursework is often of a very good standard, with good research work providing key features for initial design ideas. Many also demonstrate good skills in graphical presentation that they use well to explore and develop their ideas. Many students often show flair in their ideas and present their views with clarity. The detailing of their ideas is sometimes less strong. However, in one instance, a student developed a water feature, imaginatively using a wide variety of materials with very good consideration and development of the fine constructional details of his product. Students have some experience of computer-assisted design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM), although this is not well developed. The pupils in Year 12 have developed good knowledge and skills in a wide variety of materials. They also have well-developed skills in product analysis. However, their design skills are relatively undeveloped at this stage.
209. The teaching is generally very good, with particularly good individual support and guidance, which the students value. The teachers have good levels of expertise and their diverse skills and backgrounds enrich the course. Their expectations are high and they continuously evaluate the students' work and explain how to improve. However, the students are often too dependent on the teacher and self-assessment is not well developed. The teachers are enthusiastic and form very good relationships with their students and the ethos for learning is very good. A particular strength in a lesson seen was the teacher's ability to extend the learning using very good examples with which pupils were familiar. The students appreciate the accessibility of teachers beyond lesson time. There is a good culture of private study. The technicians provide good support, for example, with construction work. The course is also enriched by visits and good industrial links. For example, Year 13 students are individually mentored by a Neighbourhood Engineer and they have just returned from a stimulating study trip to Paris. The students enjoy their work and are very keen to succeed.
210. The subject is very well led. It is well resourced in many respects, but the range of CAD/CAM equipment is limited and the students often have insufficient access to manufacturing facilities and computers due to a shortage of accommodation. The students high opinion of the course reflects the very good standard of provision overall and the enthusiasm and dedication of staff.

BUSINESS

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

Strengths

- Both the teachers and the students show a strong sense of commitment and purpose in all they do.
- The students value highly the way they are taught in lessons and the support they get from their teachers in helping to improve their performance.
- The students use information and communication technology very effectively in their work.

Areas for improvement

- The link between the monitoring of student work and planning.

211. GCE A-level business studies has been a popular option over the past three years. The results have been above average, although there was a slight decline in a generally improving trend of results in 2002. However, the results in 2002 represent good achievement in relation to the grades attained by the students in their GCSE examinations two years previously. Girls have generally outperformed boys but not in every year. Once embarked on their AS and A2 courses, very few students drop out.
212. The standards reached by the current A-level students, as seen in lessons and their written work, are above average for both boys and girls. When their GCSE grades are taken into account this represents good achievement. The students have a very sound grasp of economic terminology and most can use it effectively in context. Their work is well organised in their files. While they are steadily gaining the analytical skills required to attain higher grades, there is still need of further development for most students. The most able students produce coursework of a very high standard. For instance, an assignment researching the feasibility of Wessex Rail building another station in the locality was thoroughly researched and the information carefully analysed and evaluated. The appropriate business terminology was used relevantly and confidently and the text benefited from very effective use of the computer. A relatively small number of students need to gain a more thorough grasp of topics, to relate business theory more closely to company practice and to be more critical in their approach to data.
213. The progress made by the current students in Year 12 is also good. They have a good understanding of the concepts they have studied to date. Most recognise the different circumstances which determine the ways in which businesses raise finance; they understand the impact of advertising and sponsorship on a company's profile and they use supply and demand analysis confidently in their interpretation of current business practice. In one lesson the students applied their understanding of general business terminology very well to what they had learned on a recent visit to Manchester United FC and Bass Brewery. Their skills of evaluation are currently limited for the most part and the lower attainers have some important gaps in their knowledge. The lower attainers also lack precision in their written work when showing the relationship of theory to current practice.
214. A small number of students entered the advanced vocational course (AVCE) which was first examined in 2002. All passed with results that represented above average progress from what they had achieved at GCSE level. In GNVQ Advanced Business, which preceded AVCE, students' performance was generally good, with girls tending to gain higher grades than boys in most years.
215. A very small group of students in Year 13 are currently taking the AVCE course. They have made good progress in terms of attainment prior to taking the course. The students can apply concepts of supply and demand well and make confident and accurate use of techniques such as SWOT and PEST analysis. They use ICT effectively to produce a good standard of presentation in their coursework. They use the Internet for research purposes but are not always as selective in how they use the information acquired. The students find topics such as cash flow forecasts difficult and their skills need much greater refinement in these areas. Their analytical and evaluative skills also need further development, as does their use of business terminology in context. The Year 12

AVCE group is much larger. The students work enthusiastically and are making good progress. Their level of attainment is slightly higher than that of the Year 13 students at a comparable stage. They confidently tackle topics on sales promotion, marketing and consumer demand, but a minority still experiences difficulties in linking business theory to practice. Most students currently need to develop their capacity to evaluate business data much more.

216. Most teaching on the business courses is good. The best teaching incorporates expert subject knowledge and a range of different and relevant teaching styles in order to maintain student interest and pace of learning. The teachers make very good use of real-life case studies as assignments and are sufficiently flexible to adapt to new lines of approach when student needs demand it. Assessment is a particular strength of the department. The teachers give accurate feedback and very specific guidance on how students might improve the quality of their work. The lesson relating to the Manchester United and Bass Brewery visits was particularly successful because a range of teaching approaches was used, including whole class and group work, to help the students tease out the main business principles observed in the activities on the visits. Throughout, the teacher's attention to pace of learning and his high level of subject knowledge ensured significant gains in students' understanding. When teaching is less effective it is because the pace of a lesson is either too brisk to allow sufficient time for reflection, or conversely, slow because of a too relaxed and informal approach, particularly with smaller groups. Occasionally, too, the teachers need to ensure that all students take a full role in class discussion.
217. A common aspect of all business studies lessons is the positive student attitude and the very good relations between teachers and students. The students, when interviewed, strongly emphasised the high regard in which they held their teachers, both for their academic expertise and personal support.
218. The leadership and management of the department are good. Students make good progress, partly as a result of the department's clear sense of direction and comprehensive monitoring of progress. The teachers work well together to ensure they have a common approach to topics and teaching strategies. Even so, the department would benefit from using its monitoring process to analyse its own practice more closely particularly with the most able students. The separate accommodation allocated to the business studies department makes for a congenial area in which to learn and the suite of computers and range of software greatly enhance the range of resources and thus the opportunities for students to incorporate information and communication technology in their work.
219. Among significant improvements since the last Ofsted report has been a steadily rising trend of results and consistently good achievement by the students, the provision of a computer suite, improved software and further enhancement of teaching styles and assessment processes.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

LEISURE AND RECREATION

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

Strengths

- The progress made by the students is often very good relative to their previous attainment at GCSE.
- There is a clear sense of purpose and direction for the department which comes from strong leadership.
- The teaching is very good: lessons are very effective and well planned.
- Very effective support is given to individual students, both academically and pastorally.
- The students show a strong sense of commitment and purpose in their studies.

Areas for improvement

- More time for the students to reflect in lessons.

220. Advanced vocational leisure and recreation is taught as a component of a joint course with advanced vocational travel and tourism. It is an increasingly popular option for students. In 2002, the first year in which the AVCE course ran, the level of student attainment was good and for a minority, very good. In terms of their GCSE grades, these results represented a very good level of achievement for many of the students. In the previous year, the results of the students who sat the former Advanced Level GNVQ in leisure and tourism were significantly below the national average; but this course was different in many ways from the present AVCE programme. There was no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys.
221. In Year 13, the students have a very good working knowledge of provision in the vocational sector and its specific terminology. They show good understanding of a range of topics such as the impact of advertising, the construction of personal fitness regimes and the economic impact of sport. Their knowledge of marketing in the leisure industry is good and they can relate their own experience of developments in local leisure attractions to changes in attractions elsewhere such as Alton Towers. Many students produce well researched assignments and the most able use information and communication technology particularly well in their written presentations. The students' oral presentation skills have also developed considerably over time. A very good example of the high level of competence, initiative and enthusiasm shown by students was in the organisation of a swimming gala for Year 4 pupils from local primary schools. This included all aspects of the event, from the initial planning stage through to thanking sponsors and supporters after its successful conclusion. The students' performance won considerable praise from the participants and their teachers. However, many of the students still need to develop greater sophistication in their evaluation skills if they are to attain the highest grades. The lower attainers also lack sufficient precision in their writing style and are reluctant to process the information they gain from the Internet. Overall, the students' attainment is above average and achievement at least good and often very good in the light of their GCSE results. There is no marked difference between the relative progress made by boys and girls.
222. In Year 12, the students have begun the course particularly well and are producing well structured reports on local leisure facilities in relation to customers' needs. They have a good understanding of the principles of customer service, as was demonstrated in a very effective lesson which involved role play of scenarios relating to customer complaints. There is still room for much more in depth evaluation in the writing of most students. Some of the lower attainers experience difficulties in applying the correct terminology and their work lacks sufficient attention to detail and organisation of material. However, all students are making good progress and a significant number very good progress, relative to their attainment at GCSE. A student with special needs in terms of reading and comprehension is making very good progress due to the support received in all aspects of his work. The progress made by girls and boys is broadly on a par.
223. In intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism, student attainment has been broadly average in the past two years, with the small number of entries all achieving at least pass grades. There was no marked difference in grades between girls and boys. Their achievement in terms of their previous GCSE grades was in many instances very good and there is evidence that a number of students might otherwise not have benefited from post-16 education had they not opted for the programme.
224. Virtually all the current Year 12 intermediate GNVQ students are making good progress. Most have a good grasp of the range of services provided in the vocational area. They have made good progress in surveying local leisure opportunities and the most able students recognise the importance of support services in the leisure industry. A good lesson was observed where the students analysed the factors that make for first-class customer service and practised some of the skills needed. Many make good use of information and communication technology in their presentations. The lower attainers tend to organise their work in a much less structured way and their coverage of topics is more superficial.
225. The teaching is very good overall. The teachers' particular strengths include very good knowledge of the subject; a very methodical approach to lesson planning and practice; use of a range of resources and materials closely linked to practical aspects of the industry, including visits to local and regional providers and an imaginative combining of elements of both the leisure and recreation

and travel and tourism syllabuses to the benefit of all the students. The teachers accurately assess the students' work and give specific guidance as to which future targets they should set and how they should approach them. In some lessons, however, the teachers' anxiety to maintain a brisk pace of learning means that answers are sought from willing volunteers rather than the whole class and there is insufficient time for the students to reflect on what has been learned. The students commented very favourably on the way they were supported with their learning. They appreciate the opportunities they have for independent study and gain confidence from the advice and guidance they receive as individual learners. Several of them referred to the considerable improvement in their work as a result of the personal support and encouragement they had received from their teachers. Very few students drop out of the courses.

226. The leadership and management of leisure and recreation are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction and a highly visible commitment to helping all students to experience success. There is a very well co-ordinated approach to teaching the different course units. Assessment practice accurately matches the course criteria. The teachers closely monitor the students' attainment with a view to ensuring that their approaches meet the range of needs and abilities. The professional development undertaken by the staff, including placements in the leisure industry, has both enabled them to meet the demands of the new examination syllabus and provide a well informed and up-to-date picture of practice in this vocational area.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of planning and teaching of the examination courses, resulting in good achievement for most students relative to their ability.
- The students' ability to learn independently.
- The students' good attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for participation in dance and in recreational and vocational programmes.
- More opportunities for the students to use ICT.

227. A-level results in 2002 showed the majority of students attaining their predicted grades. Results are above the 2001 national average. AS results in 2002 showed the majority of students achieving higher grades than in their other subjects. There was a weakness in the physiology module and many students are opting to retake this exam.

228. Students currently in Year 13 produce above average work and achieve well relative to their attainment on joining the course. Their mature approach to independent learning adds to their achievement. Particular strengths are the students' ability to link personal performance with theoretical aspects. Notes and homework show accurate use of technical vocabulary and a good grasp of principles, intelligently interpreted in relation to their chosen activities. The students are, however, not generally confident in oral presentations. There is some effective use by the students of information and communication technology for research and performance analysis but this is an area for development.

229. Students in Year 12 also reach standards that are above average for AS level. The majority produce written work that is of a high standard, showing good research skills. A few students have poorly-organised files and their notes are limited in depth and sometimes incomplete. Overall they are not so confident orally, although differing teaching styles result in different levels of response. All of the students in both years are actively involved in sport and reach good standards in activities such as football, athletics, basketball and netball.

230. Overall the teaching and its impact on the students' learning are good with some very good features. The most effective teaching involves very high expectations and a good range of tasks

that stimulate a variety of responses and independent research from the students. Modules are cross-linked to ensure a greater understanding of the big picture. All of the teachers have good knowledge of their subject, resulting in lessons that stimulate the students' interest. An example of this was seen in a lesson on 'sensory deprivation'. The teacher's use of goggles and earplugs to illustrate different types of deprivation when playing netball clearly illustrated factors that can affect performance levels. As a result the students made rapid gains in their understanding of theoretical terms relating to performance. There are lost opportunities to develop the use of number in most modules. Analysis of exam results and students' work is very thorough. Targets are set and remarks are constructive.

231. The students respond well to all aspects of examination work. Several of the students assist in younger pupils' lessons and help to run clubs and coach teams. The curriculum for PE is restricted to AS and A-level sports studies courses. There are no other recreational or vocational programmes or the opportunity to study dance. Many of the students avail themselves of the extra curricular programme and play in teams against other schools. Between the teachers and the students there is a mutual respect that creates an effective and supportive learning environment. The teachers extend a high level of independence to the students and this mostly results in a mature and diligent approach to their work. They are appreciative of the support given to them by the teachers and feel that their work improves through the constructive criticism that they receive. The teaching is hampered by not having a base suite for the storing of resources and the creation of a stimulating environment. Leadership and management of the current programme in the sixth form are good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The provision for health and social care is **good**.

Strengths

- The good progress made by the students who achieve grades that are above predictions based upon their GCSE results.
- The good leadership of the subject which uses external agencies well to provide opportunities for students to relate theory to practice.
- The supportive learning environment which encourages students of all abilities to do well.

Areas for improvement

- A wider range of teaching methods to ensure that the students develop more independent learning skills.
- A greater consistency in staffing to provide continuity and depth to the teachers' knowledge of the subject.
- More pace and vigour in lessons by reducing the number of information sheets and worksheets.

232. Smaller groups do not allow for effective comparisons with national averages. Nevertheless, students at both Intermediate GNVQ level and AVCE make good progress achieving grades that are above predictions based upon their GCSE grades. The progress made by students with special educational needs is particularly good. All students report that the course has improved their self-confidence.
233. Students in the current Intermediate GNVQ group are making good progress. They already have a sound understanding of the core values that underpin health care and fully appreciate the need for effective communications. They have visited a number of care establishments and are able to relate the work they are doing to the places they have visited. They are currently completing a portfolio on healthy living and are gathering information to assist their case studies. They use computers well.
234. Students in the Year 12 AVCE group are making good progress. They have a very good understanding of the systems of the body and are gathering information in preparation for their first coursework portfolio. Their folders contain evidence of good research skills. The Year 13 AVCE

group is also achieving well. Using their placements for information, they are currently looking at the whole structure of care in both the NHS and voluntary sectors. They use these visits well, analysing and discussing the various problems that can be found in client/care worker relationships.

235. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Not all of the teachers teach the course each year and consequently their knowledge of the subject varies. However, the subject leader compensates well for this, providing good support for her colleagues. Most lessons proceed with satisfactory pace and challenge, but in a minority of lessons this was not the case. In these lessons an over-reliance on worksheets and information leaflets tends to stifle the development of independent learning skills. The supportive and encouraging ethos of the department provides a learning environment in which all students flourish. They are confident in group discussion and gradually improve their written work. In particular, the essays produced by the AVCE groups demonstrate a very good level of literacy skills. They are able to evaluate the information they have found and use such graphs and diagrams to illustrate their findings. Assessments are accurate. All of the students enjoy the course and are pleased with the standards they are reaching. There is a high retention rate.
236. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader is involved in the performance management procedures but unfortunately does not monitor the teachers in her own subject.
237. In the last inspection, the subject was only referred to in passing. However, there is every sign that the department is making good progress and has the potential to continue improving.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on media studies and art. Work in music and photography was sampled. At A-level in 2001, results in music and photography indicated good achievement and an excellent music lesson was seen.

ART

Strengths

- Students' research skills, particularly the development of surface decoration studies, are having a significant impact on raising standards.
- The department's evaluation of areas for improvement provides a good base for improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at A Level are below average and Year 13 students have not made sufficient progress in the first year of their course.
- Students' drawing skills are not being sufficiently rigorously developed.
- There are too many lessons where the pace of lessons is slow and the range of teaching strategies used too narrow.
- Mid-project assessments are not sufficiently rigorous and do not clearly point out areas for improvement.

238. The department is undergoing a period of transition. Two of the four art teachers are new this term, including the second in department, and a third teacher is covering a long-term absence. Only the head of department and the teacher with responsibility for photography have been in post for longer.
239. At A Level in 2001, half of the students gained Grades A or B; this is in line with standards nationally. It represents an improvement on the preceding three years where standards were lower. In 2002 standards have dipped again, with only a quarter of the students gaining A or B grades. The department attracts a good number of students and 30 completed the AS course last year. Of these, only three gained A or B grades and many attained lower grades than forecast. Female students outperformed males at both levels, although in 2001 males did slightly better than

females.

240. The current standard of work of students in Year 13 is below average. Standards are now not as high as those reported at the time of the school's last inspection. Lower than expected standards in the A/S examination have left many students with a great deal to do this year. Whilst progress is now better, too many have had very limited three-dimensional opportunities, some have weak research skills and their overall drawing skills have not been sufficiently developed. For example, there is very little evidence of students undertaking life drawing or of developing their tonal and linear qualities in drawings other than through some very impressive bold studies of seed-heads. They are now exploring a greater range of materials and because of new ideas introduced this term, there has been an improvement in their ability to explore and use surface decoration. This is having a significant impact as students prepare their final pieces of work.
241. Students in Year 12 are only half a term into their course but generally are making sound progress and there are indications that standards will be higher at AS this year. This is because some lessons are now more structured and students are being given more precise advice as to what they need to do to improve their work.
242. Teaching is sound overall, with some teaching that is good. Groups are taught by more than one teacher and therefore benefit from a wide range of advice. Most lessons involve students receiving one-to-one support. Generally, this is effective, although too often the expectations are not sufficiently clear and there is a lack of rigour in the discussion. Where the teaching is good, teachers provide effective demonstrations of new processes thereby widening the students' abilities to work experimentally with a range of materials and media. In the best lessons the teachers provide students with detailed feedback on what they need to do to improve their work and this is ensuring that most students are now better advised as to what they need to do to improve. However, the sharing of ongoing assessment information between teachers and with students is variable and there is no agreed departmental policy which all staff follow. As a result some students are less well informed about their progress. In some lessons there is a sense of urgency but overall students are not made sufficiently aware of timelines and deadlines. The range of teaching strategies is limited and there is insufficient attention given to group discussion, including sharing information on ideas, the progress of their work and the evaluation of their work. Teachers are free to set their own projects. Project briefs are generally sound but do not clearly spell out expectations nor identify what students are required to do if they are to attain a high standard.
243. Students are keen to improve and work well in lessons. They are committed to their studies and a number indicated disappointment at the results they attained last year at AS, particularly as many achieved good standards at GCSE. They readily engage in discussion and are keen to talk about their work.
244. The overall leadership and management are sound. Examination analysis is very good and there has been a recent, very effective summary of areas for improvement, although these have yet to be shared with all teachers. They include the need for project briefs to be better structured, with further support given to those who find the subject difficult and further development of demonstrations and whole class teaching. These developments are urgent and overdue. The range of resources is limited and there are far too many books that are outdated and too little that is of relevance to current students. The loss of a sixth form area, which can be used by students to continue with their work at college and outside of lesson times, is having a negative impact on the students' ability to continue with their work unaided. However, the department is not making the most of the links with the community art courses and there is no clear expectation that all students would benefit from, for example, life drawing classes from Year 12 onwards.

MEDIA STUDIES

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

Strengths

- The enthusiasm shown by the teachers and their knowledge of the media and commitment to the subject.
- The results now being achieved, which are more in line with students' expectations and with college and national averages.
- The resources available for practical work.

Areas for improvement

- The students' practical skills.
- The students' literacy skills.

245. The media studies course was first introduced in 2000 at AS level. Results in 2001 were in line with the national averages for the subject, with some students achieving more than expected, given their GCSE results. Previously the college had entered students for communication studies; results were well below both the college's average results and also the national averages for the subject. Students completing the 2002 media studies examinations achieved results that show a gradual improvement on the 2001 results. Results also show that students are achieving results that are, overall, better than might be expected from earlier attainment. In 2002 all students entered for AS at the end of Year 12 and for A2 level examinations at the end of Year 13 passed.
246. The standard of work seen during the inspection is good. In lessons, the students make good progress in a subject, that they have not studied at GCSE. They are able to use research effectively to inform their practical work. Good use is made of the 'Digital Brain' site to support written work. Their use of the technical terminology required is good in discussion but they are not as proficient in using it in their written work. In the lessons seen the teachers prepared and planned well, providing students with effective material that assisted their analytical work. Students in Year 12 are quickly developing understanding of the major concepts of media studies. By Year 13 they display greater confidence in their understanding and are able to call upon appropriate references to support their analysis. Practical work within media studies is constrained by the present lack of space that will be resolved when new facilities become available as a result of the college's Media Arts status. At present there is limited technical support.
247. The teaching is at least satisfactory and in most lessons seen the teaching was good. Teachers' planning is thorough and their marking of students' coursework provides encouragement and guidance for improvement. The cover sheet used in assessment helps students to see their progression and set future targets. Work is marked promptly and comments fed back both in written and oral form. Students feel confident and are encouraged to aim high in their examinations. The teachers' knowledge is very good and they use current examples to reinforce the knowledge and understanding which students need to develop their understanding of the media. They use media language at all times which familiarises students with the necessary vocabulary to discuss their work.
248. Students' achievement is at least in line with expectation and often greater. Students have a steep learning curve in the subject that requires them to use a specialised language in order to complete textual analysis. A firm foundation is being laid and students are responding well to the course work requirements. Progress is generally good although some Year 13 students still use general language and not specific technical terminology to describe concepts. Students also have opportunities for peer and self-evaluation which encourages learning and respect for the ideas of others, a vital requirement in a subject which depends on teamwork.
249. The attitude and behaviour of students is mature. They concentrate well in lessons, especially when involved in the close analysis of moving image texts. In a lesson seen using the film "The Lost World: a sequel to 'Jurassic Park'", they were able to use the skills developed earlier in the lesson with some confidence. Students working on their advanced production project worked co-operatively and collaboratively in small groups, sharing ideas and research.
250. The leadership of the department is good. There is a unified approach. Regular discussion takes place about examination results and appropriate action is taken to address issues raised. The previous head of department is still teaching within the department and provides very good support

for the present head of department (appointed September 2002). Resources are well managed and the department has responded positively to the needs of the students. Lessons are well planned and marking is also consistent in the methods used. Students are still making errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar that are not corrected and basic literacy skills need to be more consistently reinforced.

251. Media studies students are involved in a number of community-based projects - for example a project commissioned by a local print works was seen in its planning stages. Greater local and wider involvement is identified in both the department's and the college's development plans and these are likely to be extended as a consequence of the Media Arts College status recently awarded.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, sociology and psychology. Work was also sampled in history, politics and government, religion and philosophy, general studies and law. Small numbers of students achieved very well in A-level religion and philosophy and politics and government in 2001. Excellent teaching was seen in history. Very good teaching was seen in politics and government, religion and philosophy and general studies; good teaching was seen in law.

GEOGRAPHY

The overall quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are mostly good.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject
- Lessons have a clear structure and are very well resourced.
- New technologies are increasingly well used by students and teachers to raise standards.
- The subject is now well led, with good capacity for further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at A/S-level as a basis for further raising A-level attainment.
- Monitoring teaching and learning of all groups of students.
- Assessing and recording progress more systematically.

252. Advanced level results in 2001 were well below the national average. Those for 2002 show a very great improvement on standards attained in previous years. These students attained much higher examination grades than their performance the previous year at AS-level would have promised.

253. Standards overall have been well below those in other subjects. As in previous years students in 2001 did significantly less well in geography than in the other subjects they studied. Male students' results were lower than those of female students. Only half as many students attained the higher A and B grades as was the case nationally. A number of male students received unclassified grades owing to absence from examinations or failure to complete the course. The school's results for A and A/S-levels in geography, prior to 2002, placed them within the range of the bottom quarter of schools across the country.

254. The observation of students in lessons and analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards achieved by students on A-level (Year 13) courses are average but remain below average on AS-level (Year 12) courses. Since the students started on the courses with average levels of GCSE attainment, these standards represent satisfactory achievement at A-level but less than that at AS-level. The very much improved results in the most recent A-level examination were due, at least in part, to better teaching resulting from improved planning and organisation of work.

255. The students show good knowledge and understanding of geographical topics both in physical and human geography. They work quickly and with confidence on their own, collect information from a variety of sources and form sound judgements from data. Their ability to make use of journalistic

and photographic evidence and a range of data tables is sound and, for higher attaining students, good. An example seen was in an AS lesson investigating flood management in Shrewsbury and comparing this with floods in less economically developed areas like Bangladesh and India. Students use research and communication skills well to support their responses to examination essay questions which middle and higher attaining students answer competently. All students use the Internet effectively as a research tool, have facility in using information and communication technology and are selective in the use of a variety of relevant sources recommended by their teachers.

256. Overall, the teaching is good, although there are instances where AS-level pupils are not expected to work hard enough and standards are too low. Generally, however, tasks are challenging to students across the ability range. Critical marking of their work and demanding materials and assignments very effectively extend the highest attaining pupils. Lessons have clear structure and pace. Resources that are characterised by their variety, topicality and relevance in the form of text, ICT, recently published articles and fact files of the students' existing knowledge are used very effectively. One good AS lesson on urban issues involved students in a case study of waste management processes locally, drawing from a Mendip Council publication, as well as a range of other sources, in preparation for an extended writing assessment task. Study support materials were used well to guide all students particularly those of lower attainment. All teachers show good subject knowledge, not only through what they say, but also in how they check students' learning through effective questioning and support individual students, including those of lower attainment. Extended pieces of writing are positively marked and students are given clear and accurate judgements on the quality of their work and perceptive guidance that helps them to improve it.
257. A weakness in some teaching is when there is not close enough supervision of students undertaking research and individual writing. Here, some intervention, encouragement, direction and rigour would improve the focus and pace of working and raise standards to a more satisfactory level. In some classes, earlier assessment of attainment and guidance on requirements to attain acceptable AS grades would benefit students.
258. The students learn well. They are attentive and work effectively, in response to the generally good quality of teaching. Relationships are good. Students work well together and assist their peers. There is in the best lessons a partnership in learning between students and teacher. Most students can talk authoritatively on the aspects of the course they have studied. They understand the importance of accuracy, detail and exemplification in their answers. There is a growth in geographical maturity both in oral work and in writing between the first AS year and the second A-level year. More males than females study geography but both participate fully in lessons. Students are well motivated and express high levels of satisfaction with the teaching and the course.
259. Work in the subject is led and managed well. The good sequencing of topics and themes in the scheme of work and the up-to-date nature of the case studies contribute significantly to good teaching and learning. Target setting for students is being used more effectively, although not enough use is made of available data on students' previous attainment and expected outcomes for current courses. Assessment and high attainment are not always given sufficient emphasis, particularly in the early part of the AS course. Current Year 12 students are not sufficiently aware of how well they are attaining. There has, however, been good overall improvement in the subject, particularly in the last two years.

SOCIOLOGY

The overall provision for sociology is **good**.

Strengths

- Consistently good examination results that are well above the national average.
- The good leadership of the subject.
- Committed and enthusiastic students who achieve results that are above predictions based upon their GCSE results.

- The very good knowledge that the teachers have of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Widen the range of teaching methods to encourage the development of independent learning skills.
- Make better use of ICT in teaching.
- Provide more opportunities for student interaction in lessons.
- Use the information gained through monitoring to inform a clear development plan for the future.

260. The examination results have been consistently good, with the number of A-C grades being well above the national average. All students entered in 2002 passed. All students achieve grades that are above the predictions based upon their GCSE results.

261. The current Year 12 group has made a good start to the course. Many have already completed the GCSE course and this strong base of knowledge is reflected in their work. When considering the work of Bernstein in identifying codes of language, they were able to quickly grasp the contribution that this work made to the study of the relationship between class and education. They are beginning to understand the various traditions that underpin the subject and are able to analyse and interpret data well.

262. The current Year 13 students are making good progress. They have a very good understanding of the specialist language and concepts found in Sociology. They are able to produce extended essays that demonstrate good evaluation and comparative skills. In one class, students fully understood the arguments for and against the secularisation of society. They understand the problems associated with using statistics in sociology and were able to describe the various research methods used in the subject.

263. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Enthusiastic teachers plan lessons well, using their very good knowledge of the subject to provide students with a strong foundation of knowledge. Students respond well, producing work of a high quality. Teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching methods, although the use of ICT is not yet developed. The demands of time and the need to cover the syllabus, especially in the AS course, tend to constrain the amount of time that can be spent upon encouraging student interaction. Suitable homework is regularly set and marked, although the quality of marking is not consistent across all teachers.

264. As a result of this good teaching students show enthusiasm for the subject. The number wishing to take the course has increased and virtually all students complete the course.

265. The leadership of the subject is good. Good assessment procedures are in place, with students being set appropriate targets. Information gained is used to analyse the syllabus and make adjustments where required. Regular monitoring takes place but this is not used to inform a clear development plan.

266. Although sociology was not mentioned in the last report, there is ample evidence to show that this subject is making very good progress.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good: the teachers have high expectations and make lessons challenging.
- Students learn well: they achieve good standards in their research writing and gain good examination results.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject; they work hard, enjoy learning and they are enthusiastic about psychology.
- Careful planning ensures a clear progression in theory and practical work.

Areas for improvement

- The completion of homework tasks to secure knowledge.
- Attendance targets to yield improvements.
- Essay writing skills to overcome a potential barrier to learning.

267. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' achievement, in relation to standards on entry at the start of the sixth form, is good. It is, however, held back in a few cases through poor attendance. Students' attitudes are positive in spite of the subject being difficult. Current provision attracts more females than males. Females out-perform males at every level, although in 2002 the gap was narrowed. The good attitudes of students also cause the quality of their learning to be good. Students make good progress as they move through the sixth form. Retention rates are high. Standards of work in students' books, and the oral responses of a representative sample of students, are above average.
268. Students in Year 12 have benefited from a phased approach to more independent learning in psychology. Even greater independence is needed to raise maturity. They receive a lot of support in the first few months because psychology is a new subject to them. They have time later to reflect and research on their own. The middle and lower attaining students rely heavily on their teachers for support, more than might normally be expected at this stage. However, students do reveal an understanding of psychology that would not be possible without this close support. Drawing on their own research is a feature of higher attaining students' work, with many able to use the electronic media competently to research their topics. The strength of the Year 12 work is that minds are not closed to new ideas and few resist advice on how to express their reports in a more scientific language. This was in evidence in a Year 12 class on 'Flashbulb Memory' or 'Lasting memories' in which the emotional factors in forgetting were technically dissected. Most females and a few males are well above average in their ability to examine critically a wide range of psychological theories. Students are able to provide sensitive reports on acutely sensitive psychological concepts such as suicide and eating disorders.
269. Year 13 students have been well motivated by their research work and by their visits outside the college to observe theory being applied. These enrichment visits expose them to new ways of thinking. High levels of experimentation are impressive features of many students' experiences. The annotated notes of students clearly add a further dimension in communicating students' increasing awareness of psychology practice as well as their evaluation of how successful they feel the theory has been. A Year 13 class examined gender development, looking at sex and gender concepts and biological theories. The levels of exposition clearly showed preparation. Some of the personal studies of the most able students show good insight into current psychological thinking. While all students use the Internet for research, only a few of the higher attainers take the initiative and use computers both in college and at home.
270. During the period 1999-2002 standards at GCE have varied but are above or well above average overall. In 2001 most students passed. The number gaining the higher A-B grades was average for 'A' level. Similarly in 2001 all students gained a pass grade at AS level, with a high proportion gaining A-B grades. There is a significant difference in male/female performance at examination level. More females than males take psychology. The results in 2002 were in line with those gained in 2001. Standards are being maintained. Students are achieving very well in relation to their overall GCSE results. Students enjoy psychology and speak well of their teachers' commitment to them as learners. Higher attainers recognise they are treated as mature adults and they respond accordingly. The middle and lower attainers do well in a difficult subject which calls on them to have both good writing and number skills.
271. The teaching is good and teachers have a strong grasp of psychology as a science. Students benefit from their enthusiasm, knowledge, understanding and skills. More students should be encouraged to plan their time better and make considered decisions about their research. All students behave well and they are consistent in their attempt to model good answers to psychological problems. The best teaching combines theory with practical examples that require the application of research techniques such as laboratory work to build up evidence. Students in

lessons are given appropriate guidance including the use of ICT and they are challenged to work hard. In the lessons seen there was too much exposition, although this allows students to take good notes. These notes, perhaps, could have been researched independently. The sharing of ideas, on the other hand, through discussion and debate, is a strong feature of all classes. Teaching has a very clear focus on the inter relationship between theory and practice. Consequently learning has a strong influence on students' personal development, particularly in terms of social and moral considerations. Few students approve of the more extreme tests on humans and animals that some psychologists use.

272. Psychology is led and managed well. The academic leadership is very good. As a result, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The teachers are well qualified, keep up to date with developments in psychology and share good practice. They form a small but dynamic team and are committed to raising the achievement of students. Procedures for assessment are good and improving. Students have target grades for psychology and their progress is checked regularly. Teaching and learning are evaluated and the development plan for psychology is an effective guide for further improvement. Attendance and writing skills are in need of some additional work to maintain the quality of the students' experience.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and French but English literature and German were sampled. At A-level in 2001, German results showed satisfactory achievement. One lesson of German was seen.

ENGLISH

The overall quality of provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Lessons are well planned and prepared.
- Results consistently above average and often better than expected, given the students' overall GCSE results.

Areas for improvement

- Some teachers need to extend their knowledge base of the media.

273. A level results at the end of Year 13 are consistently above the national average. Students also achieve grades that are frequently above expectation when compared with their GCSE results. In 2001 more than half the students entered for English Literature A level achieved A or B grades. The results for the recently introduced English literature/language examination reflect a slight fall in comparison with results for the English literature examination. However, students studying the combined examination frequently have a more modest grade at GCSE and do achieve well when comparison is made with their previous results. Students' achievement is generally in line with expectation and often better.

274. The standards of the work seen during the inspection were good, with some examples of excellent creative writing from the higher attaining students studying English language. One lesson observed of an A level literature group showed very sophisticated analytical skills in studying a poem by Andrew Marvell. The task involved a student using an overhead projection of the poem to present his annotation and analysis of the text. This was done with confidence and was an insightful reading of the poem. The way in which teacher and fellow students entered into discussion showed not only evidence of sound teaching but engaged learning. The teacher's knowledge of the text and related literature ensured that a very high standard of discussion took place. In AS level language lessons covering media topics, the same level of experience was not as evident.

275. The teaching is good overall. The teachers' planning is thorough. Most staff seen were knowledgeable about the subject. In one Year 13 lesson seen, the extent of the teacher's knowledge about the subject and specific topic was impressive. In lessons where staff are less

experienced, lessons were well planned and well managed but the teachers were not as confident in their knowledge of the topic. As a result, the students were less sure of requirements. In all of the lessons seen teachers had prepared well for their lessons and provided students with good guidance on which to base their written work. Work is marked promptly and comments fed back both in written as well as oral form. The teachers' marking of coursework is detailed, providing students with clear targets for improvement and with suggestions on how they might extend their study. The assessment sheets used also give clear indications of how well students are meeting examination criteria. Assessment is thorough and informative. The students were complimentary about the guidance they receive. In conversation with them, they stated that they appreciated the time given and effort made by their teachers to help them when they experienced difficulty.

276. The students learn well. They concentrate very well in Year 13 lessons and display a mature attitude to both of the courses being taken at A level. The relatively new AS and A level combined literature and language course has given students who are interested in English, but do not want to study literature alone, a good opportunity to continue their interest in English and achieve creditable results in examinations. Students work co-operatively in small groups and pairs, as well as contributing to whole class lessons. Some Year 12 students have yet to show the same kind of maturity as the Year 13 groups and are not always as forthcoming in whole class discussion. A variety of strategies was used by teachers in all lessons seen, providing all students with the opportunity to actively participate.
277. Opportunities are provided for independent work, although there has been a slight reduction in the availability of private study space recently. It is anticipated this will be resolved when the Media Arts accommodation becomes available. One hearing impaired student made good progress during a Year 13 lesson by contributing to discussion on a par with the other students in the group. Pupils identified as higher attainers are challenged in their work. They are given opportunities to be involved in residential writing courses and all students have the opportunity to visit the theatre and be involved in trips which extend their knowledge and understanding.
278. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a positive commitment to high standards. There is a unified approach to lesson planning and preparation. Marking is effective and the department follows policies developed within the school to improve literacy. Discussion and review of results and courses ensure that they contribute to future curriculum decisions.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Good independent work by the students.
- Very good opportunities for work experience in France.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology including satellite television.

279. Results of the six students who took GCE Advanced Level in 2001 were well above the national average, as they have been consistently over three years. In 2002 both candidates passed and one obtained a grade A, which, despite the small numbers, appears in line with earlier performance. Nine candidates took AS level in 2002; eight achieved a grade D or better (one A grade). Most students obtained higher grades at A-level than predicted. National statistics, which are not available later than 2001, show that high achievers did better in relation to their GCSE grades than expected, and most others did as expected. Taking account of the maintenance of high standards, this is good achievement. In each of the last two years, a number of students have given up before reaching AS level. This could indicate that the school has been overoptimistic in wishing to exploit the new freedom for students who are focused primarily on other disciplines to continue with a modern language beyond GCSE.

280. Four lessons of French were seen, including one double period, and Year 13 students were confident enough to engage in conversation in French with the inspector. They reported enthusiastically on their work experience in Biarritz, where some had worked as classroom assistants in a primary school and one had worked in the Tourist Information Office. This very good provision has been maintained over at least three years in collaboration with other Somerset secondary schools.
281. The teaching, by two different teachers in each year group, is good overall and there is some very good teaching. In one such very good lesson, an exercise for Year 12 involved all students by requiring them to arrange word cards into a sentence of appropriate difficulty, repeated as many times as needed for the exercise. Texts used are at an appropriate standard for this level of study. In most lessons the teachers immerse the students in French-language communication and there were instances of students initiating conversation in French. There is some very good lesson planning, sometimes extending across a double period to be taught by different teachers. So far, however, the needs of AS candidates as a specific group remain to be fully addressed.
282. The students learn well independently, getting on with their work on their own, for example, when their teacher was delayed by having to come from a classroom in a remote building. This was one of a number of examples of accommodation problems having an adverse effect on teaching and learning. Students do have access in school to the Internet, but less use is being made of it here to access French-language material than in some other schools and there is no possibility of watching the television news in French. Satellite TV in some sixth forms is an area where students can manage their own learning opportunities. Year 12 is an all-female group but there are male as well as female students in Year 13. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE grades.
283. This area of work is well managed by the second in department who works closely with her senior colleague. Planning and the use of resources are integrated across the department. Other staff have shown commitment over many years which has resulted in the good inter-school relationships which sustain exchange visits and work experience provision. Outcomes at A-level are better than they were at the time of the previous inspection.