

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH DARTMOOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ashburton, Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113519

Principal: Mr R Tarleton

Reporting inspector: Keith Richard Simmonds
3238

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th February 2003

Inspection number: 249797

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 with specialist sports and training status
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ballard Lane Ashburton Devon
Postcode:	TQ13 7EW
Telephone number:	(01364) 652230
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Billington
Date of previous inspection:	17 th – 21 st March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect Responsibilities
3238	K Simmonds	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9334	J Mynett	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?
16434	R Samways	Team inspector	English Drama Media Studies	
8530	J Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology	
19278	R Allan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3827	J Knight	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship	
30072	J Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Psychology	
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
31772	A Kelly	Team inspector	History	
24026	C Holland	Team inspector	Music	
30695	G Dinan	Team inspector	Art	
22953	P Dacombe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
14429	A Stillman	Team inspector	Science	
15590	S Slocombe	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs (SEN)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19278	D Leonard	Team inspector	Health and Social Care	
10679	M Aston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) in the sixth form	
31983	D Makin	Team inspector	Performing Arts	
20324	Vera Morris	Team inspector	Business and Economics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Dartmoor Community College is an 11-18 age range comprehensive school situated on the southern edge of Dartmoor in the county of Devon. Its students are drawn from a very wide area and, each day, almost all travel a significant distance to the college. The backgrounds of many students display aspects of rural deprivation and some disadvantage. The college, with 1580 students on roll, is larger than most other secondary schools. The roll has grown significantly since the last inspection. The students are almost entirely from a white heritage background, although there is a small population from other ethnic backgrounds. The number of students with English as an additional language is much lower than in most schools. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals, at 9.5 per cent, is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs, 11.6 per cent, is below average, though higher than at the last inspection. The main needs catered for are emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties with reading and writing. The students' attainment on entry, in Year 7 is overall average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective and successful school. In a significant number of aspects its work is outstanding. Students' achievement is very good and in many subjects standards are high and improving. The teaching is very good. Students are mature, responsive and very engaged in their learning. The college's leadership provides clear-sighted development. The college is effectively managed and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve very well and standards at the end of Year 11 are high.
- Particularly high standards are achieved in music, drama and physical education.
- Students show enjoyment in and responsibility for their own learning.
- The very high quality of teaching and learning in the college has a positive impact upon students' achievement.
- Students' pastoral care and the very high quality of their personal development.
- The focus on improvement and the achievement of students, by the college's leadership.
- The impact of the outstanding staff development programme upon the students' achievements and the quality of their learning.
- The impact of the outstanding curriculum enrichment programme, the extra-curricular provision and outreach programme upon the opportunities for learning of the students and community.

What could be improved

- The match of the accommodation to the learning needs of all students.
- The lack of a library has an adverse effect on the achievement and learning opportunities of all students.
- Self-evaluation is not sufficiently used to identify the needs and actions for further improvement.
- The further development of information and communication technology (ICT) subject provision, as in science and design and technology.

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 March 1997. Since then the high quality aspects of provision have been maintained and further improvement has been very good. Standards are mainly high and overall students' achievement is very good with particular strengths by the end of Year 11. The introduction of NVQ level courses, in Years 10 and 11, is proving successful. Significant improvement has taken place in boys' performance and their overall engagement in learning. The college's 'Training and Sports' status

is being very effectively used. The college's continued focus on teaching and learning and staff development has been very effective. The pastoral leaders are very effective and have a positive impact. Assessment and the evaluation of progress and performance are significantly improved, though minor work remains to be done. Attendance is now satisfactory and statutory responsibilities in respect of religious education in the sixth form and the governors' annual report to parents are fully met. Where any weaknesses remain they are known and are being acted upon. The principal is taking appropriate action to continue the college's success.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

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

Since the last inspection standards have risen broadly in line with the national trend by the age of 14 and 16. The achievement of boys has shown significant gains.

At the age of 14 the students' results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools (based on free school meals data) the results for English are above average, in mathematics they are average and in science they are below average. Over a three-year period, the results in English, mathematics and science have been slightly above average, though mathematics and science show a decline in 2002. Literacy and numeracy skills are average but those in information and communication technology (ICT) are below expectation for a significant group of students at entry in Year 7. The inspection found that the students' achievement was at least above average by the end of Year 9 in almost all subjects. The achievement for those students with special educational needs (SEN), English as an additional language (EAL) and for the gifted and talented is good.

The college's overall GCSE results in 2002 (based on the average points score per student) were above average. Overall results have been at this high level over a three-year period. When compared with similar schools (based on free school meals data) the GCSE results are also above average. A significant group of students also successfully complete NVQ courses and Certificate of Achievement courses. The proportion of students obtaining five or more A*-C grades is above average when compared with all schools nationally and well above average when compared with similar schools. The achievement of students from all ethnic backgrounds and abilities and those with SEN and EAL is at least good throughout Years 10 and 11. The inspection confirmed that students' achievement is good or better in all subjects.

Sixth form results across both AS/A level courses and vocational courses are equally strong, with the average points score for students being above average in 2001. Indications from the 2002 results are of an overall improvement. Most students do at least as well as expected and many achieve considerably better than this, in the sixth form, when account is taken of their GCSE results in Year 11.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Outstanding. Students show enjoyment in their learning and pride in their college.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Outstanding. Despite current site difficulties students behave well in and around the college and in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students are very mature and confident, as with the sports outreach programme. Relationships are of a high quality.
Attendance	Satisfactory. In line with the national average and a significant improvement from the last inspection. The college effectively promotes attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is very good overall and it is of an exceptional quality in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form. Improvement in teaching, since the last inspection, has been effective in promoting further gains in learning throughout the college. The teaching of students with SEN and EAL is also good. Teaching has benefited from the outstanding staff development programme and the way in which the college's 'Training' status has been effectively used to help all teachers reflect upon their practice. The quality of teaching in all years is a significant factor in the sustained and often very good achievement of the students.

The teaching is very good in English and good in mathematics and science. The college has been successful in setting a culture of high expectation. Lessons and the students' tasks, including those for students with special educational needs, are demanding and students expect them to be so. Students know what is expected of them and how to learn. The students' work is made interesting and they enjoy working hard and actively participate in their learning. Where the teaching, in only three lessons, is unsatisfactory the knowledge of students' prior attainment is not well used to inform planning and the students' learning tasks.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Broad and very responsive to the needs of the students. Very effectively planned. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are outstanding. Minor weaknesses, as in the allocation of time to ICT are recognised and being acted upon.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students make good progress and achieve well because of the effective teaching, although for some students their individual targets are not sufficiently focused to their learning needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Although only a small number of students are involved the provision is well planned and effective in helping the students to make at least good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The provision for all students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very good quality throughout the college. Students' social development is of an outstanding quality.
How well the school cares	Very good. Students are well known as individuals. Pastoral care and

for its students	guidance are exceptionally effective.
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The links with parents are very effective and they take pride, with their children, in being part of the college. The curriculum is responsive, very well planned and matched, as with the Year 10 and 11 vocational and inclusion provision, to the needs of students. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is being successfully implemented. Students benefit from the motivating courses and high quality experiences in many subjects. Literacy skills are well developed. Numeracy skills are overall satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The principal provides an exceptional quality of vision and strategic leadership to the college. He is well supported by the leadership team. The leadership of houses is a key strength. Almost all subjects are well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Outstanding. Governors are a significant strength of the college. They challenge, are well informed and play a full strategic role in its improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The evaluation of teaching and the use of data to set targets and raise standards are well developed. However systematic self-evaluation is not always fully applied in identifying the needs and actions for further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning is closely linked to improvement priorities. The principles of best value are well applied.

Accommodation, though significantly improved since the last inspection is still unsatisfactory. Resources are overall satisfactory. New technologies are well employed to reduce workload. The match of and deployment of all staff to the college's needs is a significant strength and improved since the last inspection. The principal has a strong strategic vision and with the senior staff team and governing body is skilfully continuing to move the college forward. The principles of best value are understood and well applied in the college's work.

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 achievement of their children. • The willingness of staff to discuss concerns. • That their children are expected to do well and work hard. • Their children's personal development. • The quality of the college's extra-curricular activities and community involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of a college library. • The provision of homework. • The level of open contact with the college.

Parents are overall positive about the college. The inspection team agrees with the parents' view of the college. Concerns in respect of homework and the college's contact with parents are not supported by the inspection. The college makes very good provision to inform parents and be open to their needs. Overall homework is effective and well managed. The inspection team supports the parents' concerns over the lack of a library.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

SOUTH DARTMOOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form in this large mixed comprehensive college has 232 students on roll. This is a significant increase from the time of the last inspection (154 students), when the sixth form was in the early stages of its development. Around 90 per cent of students now stay on into the sixth form from Year 11 and a small number join from other local schools. There are a small number of students from minority ethnic heritages in the sixth form. No students are currently in receipt of special educational needs (SEN) support and no students are statemented. The college has an open enrolment policy and the sixth form offers a good range of AS/A level, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and other vocational courses to meet the wide range of student needs. Three quarters of the students are following a two year course leading to A level or AVCE. The remainder are following vocational courses or taking a mix of AS/A level and vocational courses. Retention from Year 12 into Year 13 is high and the proportion of students continuing into higher and further education is increasing and was 78 per cent in 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and overall cost effective. Standards in many subjects are high and improving. Vocational courses are developing as a particular strength, though standards and provision in AS and A level courses are equally strong. The teaching is very good and has a positive impact upon the students' achievements. The sixth form is very well led and the provision caters well for the needs and aspirations of the students. Enrichment activities are outstanding. However, accommodation for sixth form students does not always meet their needs, particularly in the main college.

Strengths

- Standards are overall above average and improving; there are particular strengths in English, business and economics, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and drama.
- The very good quality of the teaching enables all students to achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and relationships between the students and staff are outstanding.
- Leadership and management are very good. Senior managers are committed to high standards and give students effective guidance and support.
- The enrichment programme is of outstanding quality.

What could be improved

- The range of sixth form accommodation in the main college.
- ICT related learning tasks are insufficiently used in some subjects.
- Subject trends in performance are not as effectively monitored as those for individual students.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards overall are in line with the national average and correspond closely to those expected on the basis of students' GCSE results. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Biology	Good. Students achieve well and results are above average. Very good teaching and high quality relationships effectively support the progress of all students.
Design and Technology	Good. Standards overall are in line with the national average. Teaching is good and students' results are often better than expected on the basis of their GCSE grades in Year 11. Staff provide good individual support and guidance.
Business and Economics	Very good. Standards are well above average. All students make good progress. Teaching is very good. Students are very well supported and improvement since the last inspection has been significant.
Information and Communication Technology	Good. Standards are average. Effective subject teaching and high quality of course planning supports the students' good progress.
Health and Social Care	Very good. Standards are at least average and students mostly achieve what they should. Teaching is very good and time is effectively used to support individual tutoring.
Art and Design	Good. Results were above average in 2002 in art and design and outstanding in photography. Students following the newly adopted AVCE course are making good progress in coursework requirements. Teaching is outstanding.
Music	Very good. Standards are improving and numbers are rising. Teaching and learning are very good and students' attitudes are excellent. The subject is well planned to allow students to achieve their best. Restrictions in accommodation affect some lessons and private study periods.
Performing Arts	Good. First examination in summer 2003. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching is very good. Both planning and assessment effectively support the students' achievement.
History	Very good. Examination results are broadly average for the subject, although students' work is above average. Teaching is very good, at times innovative and very effective in developing the students' learning, though the most able in Year 12 could be challenged further.
Psychology	Good. Standards in Year 12 and 13 are at least average and often above. Progress through the course is good. Teaching is good and effective marking and assessment supports the individual tutoring.
English	Very good. Results in examinations are above average and students achieve well, given their entry profiles. Teaching is very good, teachers know their subject well. High quality marking, assessment and individual tutoring.
Modern Foreign Languages	Very good. Results over the last four years are well above average although groups are small. Written work is of a high standard and the quality of teaching is very good.

In other subjects, work was sampled. The above average standards achieved in geography are well supported by the improved teaching. In physical education standards in the examination course are well

above average and the teaching is very effective. Standards in drama are well above average and the work of AS/A level students has been filmed as an exemplar by the examination board. Similarly the well above average standards and achievement in media studies are well supported by the 'real' student projects, as with the current Buckfastleigh broadband project.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students are well known as individuals and receive very good support and guidance from all staff. This has a positive impact upon their academic and personal achievements. Mentoring and tutoring arrangements are very effective. All students benefit significantly from the outstanding enrichment programme available to them.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. There is a strong commitment to high standards and the setting of a clear educational direction. Monitoring at individual student level is very effective and performance data is well used to analyse progress. Similar processes are not as effectively applied in evaluating subject performance.

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"> • They feel that the sixth form courses meet their talents and aspirations. • The information they receive is clear and helpful. • They are well inducted to the sixth form. • They are taught very well and helped to study independently. • Teachers are helpful and accessible. • The range and quality of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. • They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More helpful and constructive marking and advice on progress. • More advice about future options, particularly higher education. • Support and help with their personal problems. • Having more account taken of their views. • More provision for their needs in the main college.

Just over half of the students responded to the students' questionnaire. Overall their responses were positive, though more negative than those expressed in discussion with inspectors. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by the students. Where students expressed concern, as with marking and advice on progress and help with personal problems, inspectors do not support the students' view. Marking and advice on progress are usually very good, though there are distinct differences between systems used for vocational and AS/A level courses. The overall tutoring and counselling system of the college is very good and in discussion students stated that they were happy to discuss problems with staff and felt very well supported. The concern over advice on future options reflects the college's changing of the time of the normal higher education fair event, which was due to take place after the inspection. Overall the college takes reasonable account of the student views. In respect of the lack of accommodation in the main college for sixth form students, inspectors support the students' views.

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 students' achievements

1. Students' attainment and achievement are higher than at the last inspection. When account is taken of the large increase in the college's roll, during this period, this represents significant improvement.
2. The students' attainment when they arrive at the college at the start of Year 7 is broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In the remaining subjects of the National Curriculum attainment varies from slightly above, as in history, to well below average, as in art. Students' overall literacy and numeracy skills are average and show improvement over recent years. Skills in ICT are improving but for a significant group of students are below the expectation for their age, with particular deficiencies in data handling and control. The students' social skills and personal development are average for their age.
3. At the age of 14 (at the end of Year 9) the performance of students in the 2002 national tests (based on the average points score of students) was above average in English and average in mathematics and science. At the higher levels of the test, results are above average in English, in line with the national average in mathematics and below in science. In all three subjects the 2002 results show some decline on previous years, although the three year trend for all three has been slightly above average. In comparison with similar schools (based on free school meals data) the results for English are above average, in line for mathematics and below for science. Girls outperform boys in English and in mathematics and science there is no significant difference. Overall boys perform better in the college than nationally.
4. Since 1999 the GCSE results have been above average. The 2002 results were above average in respect of the students' average points score. When compared with similar schools nationally the students' points score is also above average. In respect of the proportion of students attaining five or more passes at A*-C (61 per cent) the results are above average in comparison with all schools nationally and when compared with schools with similar intakes were well above average. For those students attaining five or more A*-G (91 per cent) the results were in line with both the national averages and averages for similar schools. For most students this represents very good achievement over Years 10 and 11.
5. Examination of students' work and what was seen in lessons showed that students' achievement over time is good throughout Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The subjects that performed best in GCSE in 2002, both in relation to the national average for the subject and relative to other subjects in the college, were English, mathematics, science, history, music and physical education, although all subjects achieved results at least in line with the national average for grades A*-C. Girls outperform boys, although in many subjects the boys' performance is higher than the national average for the subject. Though some weaknesses still exist as in geography and French, boys' overall performance is significantly better than in many secondary schools. The gap between boys' and girls' performance has been significantly reduced since the last inspection and is now much narrower than the national gap. There is no difference in the achievement of students from differing ethnic backgrounds. Students with English as an additional language (EAL) also achieve well and usually meet their individual targets.
6. A significant factor in the college's achievement of high standards is its improved and effective use of data to analyse performance and set targets at a whole college and individual student level. The college met its five A*-C grade GCSE target for 2002. The agreed targets for 2003 are challenging but realistic goals for improvement. The planned move to an increased vocational option, in Years 10 and 11, should have a positive impact upon achievement for some students. The overall quality of teaching and learning together with the students' very positive attitudes and enjoyment of their studies are further significant factors in the standards achieved.

7. In work seen during the inspection the students' attainment in English was well above average throughout the college and almost all make good progress. Students' speaking and listening skills are a particular strength and oral work is prominent in most English lessons. Year 9 students speak with confidence and Year 8 students can discuss challenging work, as with a nineteenth century American poem. By Year 10 many are confident public speakers and can talk or discuss very effectively. Students read widely and often. In Year 9 they respond positively to guided reading effectively acquiring the skills of skimming and scanning a text. However, this aspect of reading is not always developed in Years 7 to 9 lessons. Writing skills are well taught and students are effectively supported in planning and drafting their ideas, as in a Year 8 reconstruction of an extract from a Phillip Pullman novel into a poem. Marking and good teacher commentary are well used to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar. In GCSE coursework the more able students produce an impressive range of writing. Those with weaker skills are well supported, as in Year 11, where writing frames are well used to structure the response. Standards are high and the students' learning is well supported by effective teaching and very good subject leadership.
8. In mathematics, standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. The students' progress over time is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 7 the students' work builds well on their prior experience. Number and basic numeracy skills are well emphasised. Thinking and investigation skills are effectively developed by the end of Year 9. However, on occasion the objectives of the work are not clearly explained and students, as in Year 8 are unable to present their mathematical understanding well in a written form. By Year 9 pattern recognition, linear sequence and angle properties are well known. Data handling is secure and most can produce charts and appropriate graphs. During Years 10 and 11, students build effectively on their prior knowledge, understanding and skills, as in a Year 10 able group's application of angles in three-dimensional problems. The students' achievement in mathematics is well supported by the effective teaching and subject leadership. However, marking does not sufficiently give students information on how to improve. For a small minority of lower attaining students their limited attendance slows the progress they can make.
9. In science, standards are average in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11. Over time students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in years 10 and 11. Progress is slower in Year 8 than in Years 7 and 9 and some students' writing and presentation is hindered by weaknesses in basic literacy skills. Similarly the high number of groups which are taken by more than one teacher, has an impact on the students' achievement. By Year 9, students' scientific knowledge and understanding and their ability to investigate are secure. All can effectively organise their experimental work and use a range of apparatus safely. During Years 10 and 11 students effectively develop their knowledge and understanding, as with a Year 10 lesson on fractional distillation, where students displayed a good knowledge of the hydrocarbon chain. The use of data and graphs to support the drawing of conclusions is good. The higher gains in achievement in Years 10 and 11 are supported by the more effective quality of the teaching and learning in the subject.
10. The college has a very strong and well co-ordinated stance on the development of literacy skills and its work has been nationally acknowledged. Standards in literacy are above average and students make good progress. Students' writing benefits from the skilled use of writing frames in art, history and geography. Technical vocabulary and key words to improve spelling and students' understanding are effectively used in music, drama, media studies, ICT and design and technology. Standards and provision in numeracy are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. Weaker students in Year 7 make good progress, though students' overall progress in numeracy skills is satisfactory. Students benefit from the effective development of their numeracy skills in a number of subjects, as with science, ICT, geography and design and technology. However, too many opportunities to develop the students' skills are missed in the other subjects of the curriculum. As a result they do not make the same progress, over time, as with their literacy skills. Students' progress in their ICT skills is good overall. Though at entry many have some weaknesses in data handling and control, almost all have reached the expectation for their age by the end of Year 9. During Years 10 and 11 students effectively make use of their ICT skills across the subjects and continued progress is good, though the limitations of access to ICT

facilities reduce opportunities for some students. Effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum support achievement in ICT. However, the low amount of curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 limits the pace at which many students make gains in their learning. Standards have benefited from the college's effective implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

11. Students' achievement is very good in music, physical education, drama, media studies and religious education in Years 10 and 11. It is good in geography, history, ICT, art and modern foreign languages and design and technology in Years 10 and 11. In both design and technology and modern foreign languages students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In music and physical education, particularly dance, standards are outstanding in Years 10 and 11. Across all subjects the students' achievements are very effectively supported by the overall very good teaching, the interesting and demanding tasks they are given to do, their own interest and enthusiasm and the usually effective information they receive on what they have achieved and what to do next to improve.
12. Students with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress, their work being usually well matched to their learning needs. Effective support based on a detailed knowledge of individual students raises their confidence, self-esteem and achievement. The students with statements of SEN make good progress towards the targets specified in their statements and individual education plans. Many students who experience literacy difficulties follow specialist SEN programmes to develop their reading and writing skills and they make good progress in Years 7 to 9, developing improved fluency and accuracy. The students who have the greatest difficulties make more limited gains, but usually show at least good progress in relation to their previous attainment.

Sixth form

13. In 2001 the college's performance in AS and A level (based on the students' average points score) was above average for both male and female students. For those students entered for Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) or Advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations it was also above average. The students' performance against their prior attainment at entry to the sixth form was at least as expected and often better than might have been expected. In the individual subjects, results when compared to the national position at A level were excellent in sports/PE studies; above average in art and design, biology and dance; average in chemistry, German, history, mathematics and sociology; and below average in English literature, design and technology and physics. Results in the business vocational course and AS mathematics course were well above average. In other courses the number entered for examination was too small for a comparison to be drawn. Indications from individual students' performance in the 2002 examinations are that the college has sustained an above average performance, with a significant number of students achieving the higher grades of A and B. As yet there are no national figures for 2002 against which the college's performance can be compared.
14. Students' current work shows that their attainment is at least in line with the national expectations in all subjects in the sixth form. In biology, geography, art and design, history, psychology, business and economics it is above expectation. In English, French, music, sports/PE studies, performing arts, media studies, drama and health and social care it is very good. There are no significant differences between the attainment of male and female students or those from differing ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language (EAL). In most subjects, students are achieving above what would be expected when account is taken of their earlier GCSE results. In English, art and design, French, music, performing arts, sports/PE studies and health and social care students are achieving well. There are no significant differences in students' attainment or achievement between academic or vocational courses. Weaknesses in the main college accommodation, particularly the lack of a library, have a negative impact on overall achievement.
15. Students achieve overall satisfactory standards in key skills, with good achievement in ICT. Most have appropriate skills to enable them to cope with the demands of their courses. Students absorb information well and have a strong capacity to take notes and effectively organise their work. However, for some students, weaknesses in basic literacy, as in art and design, can hamper their

achievement. Mathematical skills are satisfactory and most students cope well with the basic numeracy demands of their courses. In ICT students' overall development is good and they can effectively use computers and appropriate software to advantage in their work. However, in some subjects, such as biology, design and technology and history, their work makes insufficient demands upon their ICT skills.

16. Retention rates into the sixth form are good and improving. Those from Year 12 into Year 13 are high and the proportion of students continuing into higher and further education is increasing and was 78 per cent in 2002.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The attitudes of students both during lessons and to activities in the college are outstanding. They are enthusiastic, well motivated and confident when answering questions, participating in activities or engaging in discussions. This leads to a successful learning environment, which has a positive impact on the high standards achieved. Parents are particularly pleased by the high expectations of teachers and the way the college encourages students to work hard and achieve their best. They feel this helps students to develop positive attitudes to work so that they make good and often very good progress. In the lessons seen during the inspection the students' attitudes and behaviour were seldom less than satisfactory in all years and in a majority of lessons they were very good or better. As students move through the college their enjoyment and approach to learning mature, so that by Year 11 they willingly take a considerable responsibility for their own learning. In Year 11 the attitudes and behaviour of students were exceptionally high with almost three quarters of the lessons displaying a very good or outstanding student response. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection and in particular the engagement of boys has been improved.
18. Students enjoy coming to college and are very enthusiastic about the extra-curricular activities in the college. This is well demonstrated by the large number of students remaining at the end of the day to undertake additional courses or engage in the various after college activities. Students spoke enthusiastically about the large variety of sports, clubs and other activities on offer, and were very vocal in their support and appreciation of their teachers and the opportunities the college gives them. Students were happy to share their very positive views with the inspection team. *'We come to the college because it is the best', 'Tutors are very helpful and sort out any problems we have', 'it's a close-knit community... senior students really do look after you'.*
19. Both students and parents commented positively upon behaviour around the college. Although there are a small number of very challenging students the majority of students behave very well both in their lessons and around the college despite the pressures of limited space and the building programme. There is an orderly atmosphere and the students are well aware of the college rules and uniform policy and abide by them. Students act sensibly in the corridors, canteen and the playground with little overt supervision. Behaviour is very well managed, particularly in view of the large number of students and limited space in the corridors and canteen. The college has a very focused approach to behaviour management. The introduction of the inclusion unit has led to substantial improvements in the behaviour of some students and their retention in the college. Exclusions are used effectively as part of its behaviour management strategy. The number of fixed term exclusions in proportion to the number of students in the college has declined since the last inspection. Of these, there are only a small number of students who have repeat offences and only one student was permanently excluded last year. Incidents of oppressive behaviour or bullying are rare. Students feel bullying is *'stamped on', 'they make a big thing of it'* and if incidents do occur *'they knuckle down on it'*. They reported the college to be a safe environment and if anything happens they know what to do.
20. Relationships across the college are outstanding, both between staff and students and amongst the students themselves. The college works hard to promote tolerance and kindness and ensure students do not feel excluded. The house system, with mixed age tutor groups, promotes family groupings enabling students from different backgrounds and ages to mix and work well together,

generating a friendly and harmonious atmosphere. The small number of students from different ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into the college. Opportunities are offered in lessons for students to work together in both pairs and small groups. Students co-operate well in drama and dance sessions sharing their ideas and planning the next activity. In music students are very cooperative and supportive in their group work and in their appraisal of others' work. The friendly and supportive atmosphere promotes a good working environment and makes a positive impact on learning. The extra-curricular clubs including the various different sporting activities, rehearsals for performances and fund raising events provide valuable opportunities for teamwork. In each instance the students respond well to the challenges offered.

21. The provision for students' personal development is very good and one of the strengths of the college. The clear aims and ethos enable students to confidently share their views and feelings, values and beliefs and promote value and respect for each other. Tutorial times are used effectively, enabling tutors to consult with students, monitor their progress and develop constructive relationships. Students respond very well to the opportunities offered to develop their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. They often organise their own work experience programme; undertake personal researches; develop their investigative skills and evaluate their results. Students willingly take advantage of the roles of responsibility offered to them both in class and around the college. The student heads of house and those who run the student, music and sports councils are very proactive and offer strong leadership and support to the college in their various roles. Older students also run some of the extra-curricular activities, act as peer counsellors or take charge of the student information office at lunch and break times. Students spoke positively about the role of the student council and its function of becoming involved in the decision-making processes of the college. *'They are our voice', 'they know what we want and get it, but this sometimes involves lots of compromising'. 'They are the link between the college and the student body... and have been effective in raising large sums of money for charity'.*
22. The level of attendance in the college has improved since the last inspection and is now broadly in line with national averages. Attendance across the years is broadly similar. Where attendance is lower, this is frequently due to parents taking their children on holiday in term time. In some instances, a small number of parents are allowing their children to miss college for insignificant reasons or are condoning truancy. The lack of attendance on a regular basis by some of these students is having a significant impact on their education and standards of attainment. This is very evident in some of the poor attendance rates of students in the lower sets.
23. Punctuality to college in the morning is generally good but with a large percentage of students reliant upon buses there can be problems if the buses are late or do not run. Form tutors have a good rapport with their classes and are using the morning registration period very effectively to monitor students' planners and support their personal development. Very good links have been established with the education welfare officer, who visits regularly. She works closely with the heads of houses and follows up incidents as required.

Sixth form

24. The attitudes of students in the sixth form college are outstanding. Students are highly motivated and well focused on their studies. They know their target grades and what they need to do to succeed. They value the freedom offered in the sixth form and the fact that they are treated as individuals and adults and respond accordingly. In the lessons seen during the inspection the students' attitudes and behaviour were of an exceptionally high order with all lessons producing at least a satisfactory response. Almost three quarters of the lessons displayed a very good response and half gave rise to an outstanding response to learning. This results in a very good working relationship with other students and members of staff and impacts significantly upon the high standards achieved.
25. Attendance levels are good with attendance in classes being frequently very good. Students are generally punctual to lessons. The college works hard to encourage students to register in Place

House in the mornings, however not all students do this, especially if their first lesson is at the far end of the main campus. Year 12 and 13 students have the privilege of being able to undertake home study when they do not have lessons, as long as parents have given their permission. This is well monitored and reviewed if the system is abused and students fail to meet their targets. The college insists that students attend college after their AS examinations when the A level courses commence otherwise they cannot continue with their studies.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching and learning is a significant strength of the college and a key factor in the overall high standards that students achieve. It is good in Years 7 to 9, with Years 8 and 9 being better than Year 7. In Year 10 and 11 it is very good. This high quality of teaching has a positive impact upon the above average results, which students achieve in GCSE.
27. Since the last inspection, the overall teaching has improved from being described as at least satisfactory to very good overall. This reflects the college's investment in an outstanding programme of continuous staff development, the achievement of a consistent culture of reflection upon practice and the effective use of advanced skills teachers. In almost all subjects the teaching and students' learning is at least good and in many it is very good. It is good in English, mathematics and in science it is satisfactory in Years 8 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the lessons seen during the inspection almost all teaching and the students' learning were satisfactory or better. Only a very small minority of lessons were unsatisfactory (two) and one lesson was poor. Well over seven out of every ten lessons were judged to be good or better and well over four out of every ten were very good or better. A significant amount of outstanding teaching and learning was seen, particularly in Year 10.
28. The quality of the students' learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. As students move through the college they progress in their ability to work independently of their teachers. By Year 11 students can effectively organise their work, carry out independent research and take a responsibility for their own learning. All are active in their learning and very quickly become engaged in their tasks, particularly the boys, which reflects the college's successful work on a key issue from the last inspection. This aspect of their learning is well supported by the very effective planning of lessons and the high quality of tasks given to the students. Students clearly find their learning interesting and enjoyable. They expect their lessons to be challenging and demanding and respond well to the high expectations placed on them by all their teachers. In some learning situations, though the work of students is effective, it is limited by the lack of access to a library or ICT resources. Similarly in a very good Year 11 media studies lesson, students were limited by the poor accommodation.
29. In the best teaching (that is in approximately five lessons in ten), the key features are:
 - very good knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the subject;
 - very good access to interesting and demanding tasks;
 - very good relationships with all students and very good management of their learning;
 - very good links with the students' previous learning;
 - high expectations of all students' progress and achievement;
 - very good questioning which extends and "fixes" the students' learning; and
 - very good management of students and organisation of lessons.

For example, in a very good modern languages lesson in Year 7 the students made very good progress in speaking numbers 0 to 60 in French. The teacher captured the students' attention and interest from the very start by effectively using the foreign language and an excellent range of strategies to improve the students' pronunciation. In a Year 8 geography lesson, on tourism in Kenya the teacher's excellent planning and very good use of a wide range of resources quickly got all the students engaged. Students were able to research and share ideas, which, together with the teacher's very effective questioning, had a positive impact upon their learning. In a Year 9 history lesson the teacher very skilfully combined high quality subject knowledge and resources

by using clips of the television series 'Blackadder' to develop understanding about attitudes to the 1914-18 war. The effective use of the video material engaged an initially reluctant group of boys and the teacher's high expectations and questioning enabled all to articulate their views and learning by the end of the lesson. This lesson, by the way it was taught, also provided students with a strong spiritual and moral experience. In an outstanding Year 10 science lesson, the teacher very effectively used the assessment knowledge of students to target activity, to reinforce their understanding of plastics and polymers. Students responded well to this individual approach, within a whole class topic and made significant gains in their understanding of key concepts. In ICT, the teacher of a Year 11 class very effectively used a discovery approach to the introduction of a new piece of graphics software. Excellent questioning and well planned discussion allowed students to quickly access higher order skills in this aspect of ICT. By the end of the lesson all students were becoming very skilled in using the new software for specific tasks.

30. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, for example in Year 7 mathematics and art lessons, taught by supply staff, the knowledge of students' prior attainment was not well used to inform planning and the students' learning tasks. As a result students do not always understand where their learning is going and their knowledge and understanding do not coherently link together. These lessons also give less opportunity for the students to work independently and share their ideas. This feature is also evident, to a lesser extent, in a number of the otherwise satisfactory lessons, as in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9. In the one poor lesson in religious education these features combined with too high a noise level in the group discussion so that the learning of the majority of students was restricted.
31. The teaching of literacy skills is good in all years both within English and across subjects, where, for example, there is good attention to key technical vocabulary. In history, art, music, media studies and ICT, the teachers provide good help for the students in structuring their writing. The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Support for numeracy is effective in science, geography, design and technology, art and ICT. However, the teaching of numeracy skills could be more effectively promoted in other subjects. ICT skills are well taught and by the end of Year 9 most students have made up the gaps evident at entry in Year 7. This progress is continued in Years 10 and 11 and by the start of Year 11 most students are independent in their use of ICT. Though students' progress and achievement are above average, the limits of time allocation, particularly in Years 7 to 9 are a constraint on the students' progress.
32. A strength in most of the teaching is the teachers' accurate assessment of the students' progress and informed feedback to them on where they are at and how to improve. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection, where assessment was a key issue for action. Some weaknesses are still evident in Years 7 to 9 where some marking and target setting, particularly in the foundation subjects, is too general and focused to effort rather than achievement. Homework is effectively used in all years and often involves demanding tasks, which promote independent research and study.
33. The teaching of the students with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The specialist programmes for the students with SEN are taught well. The teachers and the learning support assistants (LSAs) leading the lessons are knowledgeable about the students and use the individual education plans (IEPs) effectively to set appropriate challenges. However, the targets in students' individual education plans are not sufficiently focused to the students' learning needs to fully inform lesson planning. This deficiency is often overcome by effective liaison between the subject teachers and special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and teachers in many subjects, if it is appropriate, will set additional targets. The teaching of the small number of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good.

Sixth form

34. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. It has a positive impact upon standards and the students' achievements. There is no significant difference in the quality of

teaching and learning between Years 12 and 13 or across the range of AS, A level and vocational courses.

35. As with the main college the overall quality of teaching in the sixth form has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. This reflects the college's investment in continuous staff development and the effective use of its training status to support the development of teaching and learning. In all the subjects inspected teaching was never less than good and in many it was very good or better. Where the work of subjects was sampled a similar picture was seen. Almost nine out of every ten lessons were judged to be good or better and well over six out of every ten lessons were very good or better. A significant amount of outstanding teaching and learning was seen.
36. The quality of the students' learning is very good and often outstanding. In many lessons a key feature of the learning is the way in which teachers facilitate and act as mentors to the students, developing and using their own ideas. Discussion is very effectively used to advance learning and very strong examples were seen in history, psychology and business and economics. Students are encouraged to be adventurous and take risk in their work and learning. This is seen to real advantage in English, dance, drama, music and media studies. All are active in their learning and very quickly become engaged in their tasks, particularly the male students, though there is no overall difference between the learning of males and females in the sixth form. Students clearly find their courses and lessons enjoyable, demanding and appropriate to their aspirations. Relationships are excellent and impact upon the way in which many students share the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Work is very effectively planned and students are clear in where they are and where they have to go in their own learning. Whilst ICT is well used in a number of areas, as with business and economics there are occasions where the students' tasks miss opportunities for them to effectively apply ICT to their learning, as in biology and psychology. Similarly there are occasions, as in art and the lack of a library and study spaces for the sixth form, where the limitations of the main college accommodation restrict the learning of students.
37. In the best teaching (that is in approximately six lessons in ten), the key features are as in the main college with the following additions:
- very good use of assessment and self-assessment techniques to advance the students' learning;
 - very effective use of discussion to explore ideas and key concepts; and
 - very good mentoring of individual students to improve their work.

For example, in a Year 13 English lesson on Hughes' 'Salunaci's and Hermaphrodite' the teacher displayed high quality subject knowledge and skill in directing students' work and deepening their powers of reflection and self-criticism. The students' response in the self-assessment and evaluation part of the lesson was very good. In a Year 12 art lesson, in photography, the teacher very successfully employed self-assessment and individual mentoring to refine the students' critical capabilities and intelligent interrogation of photographs. Students again responded well and produced very high quality work. Students in a Year 13 business and economics lesson were very well challenged and extended, when working on a cash flow forecast topic, by the teacher's effective use of 'real' examples and the use of discussion to explore ideas and alternatives. This lesson was well linked to the students' prior attainment and the individual assignments met the students' needs very well. In a Year 13 performing arts lesson in dance the teachers' demonstration together with probing and challenging questioning and the encouragement of the students' own observations enabled all to contribute to a demanding discussion of each other's performance. This was an outstanding lesson.

38. As with the main college, a strength in most of the teaching is the teachers' accurate assessment of the students' progress and informed feedback to them on where they are at and how to improve. This is well linked to self-assessment, as in design and technology and physical education and students are effectively encouraged to take responsibility for their own improvement and achievement. The effective tutorial system also builds upon this aspect with all students. Students are well aware of their course demands and how assignments fit together in relation to their

modular examinations. This is very well planned to avoid overload and all are clear about the requirements and deadlines for their work.

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

39. The curriculum is of good quality overall and is particularly strong in subjects such as English, art, music, physical education and dance and drama. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. The main weaknesses in the curriculum are, insufficient time for information and communication technology (ICT) and, inadequate resources for ICT in science and design and technology. These weaknesses are recognised and being acted upon, for example courses in ICT are being rationalised and time will be at an appropriate allocation for September 2003. All students have full access to a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs and abilities and which meets statutory requirements. The formal curriculum is considerably enhanced by the outstanding extra-curricular programme. There is good provision for students who are gifted and talented. In most subjects their abilities are clearly identified and well-planned programmes are available to help teachers provide extended and accelerated work. The curriculum is much improved since the last inspection.
40. Links with local primary schools, secondary schools and colleges of higher education are outstanding. A number of well planned, innovative joint developments help to raise standards and improve expertise and confidence. The college ensures continuity in learning through very effective liaison with local primary schools. For example in physical education and games a curriculum is being developed that is common to both Year 6 in the primary schools and to Year 7 in the college. Teachers from the college provide demonstration lessons in the primary schools. These not only improve teaching and learning but also provide strong links to the secondary curriculum.
41. A good range of opportunities, which progressively build on previous learning, is offered in Years 7, 8 and 9. During Year 9 students receive detailed information and individual help and guidance in selecting appropriate courses and options in preparation for their entry to Year 10. The variety of courses available in Years 10 and 11 is very good. A wide range of GCSE courses is offered and the vast majority of students are able to study their selected options. In some subjects alternative accreditation, for example, the Certificate of Achievement, is available for those students not studying for GCSE. The introduction of a number of NVQ vocational courses, such as those in food preparation and catering, is providing opportunities for students to study subjects that reflect their interests and aspirations. A small number of students study neither a modern foreign language nor design and technology in order that they can follow a curriculum that is more closely matched to their individual needs. They take part in extended work experience and focus on acquiring the range of skills necessary for coping with everyday life. The college effectively ensures a curriculum which meets all students' needs.
42. Arrangements for the teaching of literacy skills are good. All subjects have worked actively in promoting awareness of literacy. Specific language requirements are well taught and used appropriately by the students. Opportunities for promoting numeracy skills are identified in subject planning and although these arrangements are satisfactory, there is too wide a variation in their delivery. Because of weaknesses in some subject specific resources and limited access to the ICT suite, there are insufficient opportunities at present for students to use ICT in all subjects. Arrangements to deliver aspects of citizenship are planned across all subjects but it is not clear what has been taught because the monitoring of the subject is not effective. A major building project has meant the closure of the college's central library, reducing considerably the opportunities for students to carry out research and further their knowledge.
43. The college provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) to all students in Years 9 to 11. The teachers of religious education and science are the main providers of this programme, but all subjects have been required to include aspects of PSHE in their planning. The college has completed a thorough audit of this cross-curricular provision. However it has yet to devise an effective method of systematically evaluating the programme to

ensure that all students receive a coherent and complete coverage of all aspects of PSHE. Within these limitations, the college's documentation shows that health education, including teaching about drugs and sexual matters and aspects of careers education is covered satisfactorily. Citizenship is taught across the curriculum in a similar manner. Without systematic evaluation of these two programmes the overlap between them can cause confusion to students and teachers.

44. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The college is welcoming and provides a safe, caring environment. The college caters for students with a range of needs and will, if necessary, locate subjects in rooms accessible to students who are non-ambulant. In Years 10 and 11 students have the opportunity to choose courses that broaden their vocational skills. This is proving to be successful in interesting and motivating students. Students with poor literary skills are withdrawn, for short periods, from some lessons to work in the learning support centre so that they receive intensive intervention and individual teaching.
45. The college's approach to inclusion is clear and well understood. It makes very effective and flexible provision for the individual, based on a secure knowledge of both pastoral and learning needs. Positive examples were seen in the NVQ courses and the inclusion group. Similarly the curriculum for those students with EAL is effective and well planned to meet their needs. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. There is a well-structured programme from Year 7 through to Year 11. Students have an equality of access to the curriculum and the college works hard to ensure equality of opportunity to all.
46. Provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and a major strength of the college. A wide variety of clubs are available before lessons, at lunchtime and at the end of the college day. Most subjects offer help and guidance for their students and homework clubs are available daily. Music, physical education and drama provide an extremely wide variety of activities both to promote interest and enjoyment and to improve skills and techniques. Many of the extra-curricular clubs are attended by staff from the college and members of the local community. Students participate in a number of competitive fixtures with considerable success both at local and county level. A recent performance involving drama, music and dance was very successfully staged to an audience of parents, friends and local people. There is also the opportunity for students to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and to belong to a Young Enterprise group. There are regular residential visits abroad. This extensive range of activities helps to develop a very positive ethos in the college and promotes self-esteem and independence in the students and a pride in their achievements.
47. There are good links with the local community. The Adult and Community Learning Department is based in the college and provides a range of subjects in adult education. Members of the local community attend clubs and college productions. Links with local businesses help to provide a good range of work placements. Many organisations in the locality give presentations at college assemblies, helping to promote students' understanding of the richness of experience within the community. Members of the Royal British Legion gave a very moving account of their part in the Second World War.
48. Overall, the college makes very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Within this area, the provision for their social development is excellent.
49. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Assemblies unfailingly offer students the opportunity to reflect on important issues and they give students a significant spiritual experience, as in the assembly taken by the college chaplain and the Valentine's Day assembly with thought provoking poetry from students and staff. All subjects of the curriculum contribute to students' spiritual development. In music, for example, the subject strives to develop a perception of artistic quality. Students are encouraged to express their feelings in both words and through their music and performances and compositions are invariably thoughtful and imaginative. In art, Year 9 students were enraptured by the teacher's explanation of the spirituality of Chinese brush paintings. Many other examples of spirituality occur in subjects across the curriculum.

50. The very good provision for moral development is manifest in the very high standards of behaviour and consideration for others that was obvious throughout the inspection. The college has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong. The principal and staff are good role models. All subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In most subjects students are encouraged to explore feelings, develop attitudes and values and form judgements. In mathematics, for example, teachers insist on students having respect for the views of others. In modern foreign languages, students discuss such issues as homelessness. In English, Year 9 students discuss the ethics of the tobacco industry.
51. Outstanding provision for social development is obvious in both the formal and the informal curriculum. As at the time of the previous inspection, the college continues to provide excellent opportunities for students to assume responsibility. The student council is an outstanding example of this. It is respected highly by all students for the work it does both within the college and in the wider community. It is largely responsible for the organisation of numerous fund raising events for local and overseas charities. Students' social development is fostered further through numerous residential and extra-curricular activities. In many lessons across the curriculum, students are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups, thus fostering both their social development and their academic learning. The college's vertical tutor groups ensure very good social interaction between students of different ages.
52. Students' cultural development is sustained very well in all subjects. In music, for example, all styles and genres of music are valued equally and respect for music as an art form is fostered throughout the curriculum and in all lessons and clubs. African vocal styles and the music of Indonesia and India are studied in depth. There is a strong programme of cultural visits in the languages department, including exchange links with Canada. The geography department gives opportunities to compare life styles in such countries as Brazil, Japan and Kenya with those in Britain. Religious education makes a significant contribution in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures that support them.
53. Since the previous inspection, the very high standard of provision for spiritual, moral and social development has been maintained. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the way the college promotes self-esteem, responsibility and thoughtfulness in its students. This is an area of real strength in the college's provision.

Sixth form

54. The curriculum in the sixth form has been expanded and effectively improved since the last inspection. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are now very good. The college provides a very good range of academic AS and A level courses together with a widening range of vocational courses at intermediate and AVCE levels. NVQ 2 courses are shortly to be introduced, building on very successful work in Years 10 and 11, as in catering, which will provide good continuity across the 14 to 19 curriculum for a significant group of students who might otherwise not stay on beyond Year 11.
55. The sixth form curriculum is inclusive and the college has an open enrolment policy so that all students who wish to benefit from sixth form education can do so. This is coupled with very good guidance on which courses to take and gives students an equality of access to the provision. The curriculum meets individual needs, interests and aspirations of students very well, a view confirmed by students themselves and it is responsive to local circumstances.
56. Student grouping and programmes of work are very effectively organised. Some small groups exist but this reflects the college's rationale to providing course opportunities, where some students have no reasonable travelling alternative to the college for sixth form education. This is kept under close scrutiny to ensure that these courses provide high quality provision within an overall cost effective curriculum. Course planning is a significant strength. It is of a very high quality in biology, history and business and economics. The planning and overall course organisation has a positive impact upon the students' achievements.

57. Key skills provision is effective and students in Years 12 and 13 benefit from the courses in ICT and communication. Whilst the provision in ICT is good not all subjects encourage students to use ICT. The communication course makes effective provision for most students. However, there is a minority of students, who whilst not defined with special educational needs (SEN), have basic literacy problems which impact upon their achievement in courses such as art and design and currently their needs are not fully met.
58. Careers guidance is good and that for entry into higher education is very good. The college regularly runs a higher and further education fair together with individual counselling on the choice of course and institution. Wider careers guidance is given through personal tutorials and interviews with the careers team. Students in the sixth form benefit from the accessible and well stocked careers area. Vocational courses provide a range of outside visits and placement opportunities, which broaden the students' understanding of the world of work and their potential career. However, there is scope, as in health and social care, to develop this provision further.
59. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is as in the main college very good overall. Students' spirituality is well addressed in the effective sixth form assemblies and when the sixth form join whole college assemblies. Appropriate opportunities are given for pause and reflection. Very high quality spiritual experiences are provided in music, drama and dance and in the high quality performance given by students in often ambitious college productions; as with a music and drama performance on the 'holocaust'.
60. Moral provision is similarly very effective. Students have a clear view of right and wrong and demonstrate an often exemplary attitude to their lessons and the manner in which they conduct themselves in the college. Many subjects provide high quality opportunities for significant debate on relevant moral issues, notably in biology, history and business and economics. A further high quality example was in a Year 12 key skills communication lesson, when students conducted a challenging debate on the morality of the Iraq crisis.
61. As with the main college the provision for students' social development is outstanding. Opportunities for students to take responsibility are well exercised and sixth form students respond as mature and responsible young adults. They take their mentoring role with younger students seriously and many see it as giving something back to the college. The sixth form council is effective and plays a full role with the main student council. There is a good sixth form social calendar, organised and run by the students, with the annual dinner seen as a high point. Social development is also fostered through the wide range of residential visits, placements and enrichment activities. In many lessons students worked effectively in pairs or small groups. Effective collaboration improved the students' achievement in English, history, health and social care, performing arts and physical education.
62. Students' cultural development is, as with the main college, very well sustained in almost all subjects of the sixth form. However, significant and consistent strengths are evident in English, art, music, dance, drama and performing arts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

63. As at the last inspection the provision for students' health, welfare and guidance is very good and makes a significant contribution to their personal and academic development. Parents highlighted the very caring and supportive environment offered to their children in the college even with the increase in numbers. They feel the vertical tutor group system helps support the younger students to develop sensible attitudes and encourages the older students to be more responsible. This is a very inclusive college where staff ensure students have equality of opportunity. The class tutors, subject specialists and the year heads know their students well and act quickly when they see a need. The academic mentoring and tutorial scheme is very successful in supporting both students' academic and personal development by identifying their progress against set targets.

This results in students knowing clearly how well they are doing. This information is reported back to parents through the interim reports.

64. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very effective and contribute well to the very good levels of behaviour. The establishment of the internal exclusion unit with support for more challenging students has led to recent improvements in both their attendance and behaviour. The alternative curriculum offered to some of these students has been very effective in retaining them in full-time education. The college is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its behaviour policy and programme of rewards and sanctions, to ensure a focused approach to behaviour management with a reward system that students value and find motivating. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The college takes the issue of bullying seriously. Older students are being trained to act as peer mediators and are available to counsel younger students who may have problems. Students report that any incidents of bullying which do occur are generally handled sensitively and effectively. They considered incidents of bullying to be a rarity in the college.
65. The college's approach to inclusion is clear and well understood. It makes effective and flexible provision for the individual, based on a secure knowledge of both pastoral and learning needs. Gifted and talented students are appropriately identified and their overall provision is very good. Talented students' needs are exceptionally well met in dance, art, drama and music. The small number of gifted students are known and very well supported in their specific subject learning. Similarly, though students from ethnic minority backgrounds make up a very small part of the student population, their needs are well understood and met. Overall these aspects of the college's work have benefited from the strategic leadership of the principal and the positive working links between the special educational needs team, subject and pastoral leaders.
66. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. There is a well-structured programme from Year 7 through to Year 11. Particular strengths of the programme include the focus on work experience and the small group and individual interviews. Very good relations exist with the contributory primary schools and student induction at Year 7 is of a very high quality.
67. The identification and assessment of the needs of students with SEN is satisfactory. Where students have statements of SEN they are up to date and actions identified in the statements are implemented appropriately. Additional staffing is used as specified and is effective. Students have access to a full curriculum, except during short periods of withdrawal for individual or small group programmes. The statutory requirements outlined in the statements of SEN are met. Annual reviews are held at the appropriate time and are based on effectively evaluated college assessment data. Students and parents are fully involved in this process and a high percentage of parents attend. The SEN co-ordinator for special educational needs receives helpful advice and guidance from professionals in the local support services. Students for whom English is an additional language are effectively identified and supported.
68. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. The college has very well addressed this key issue from the last inspection. Effective feedback is provided to students in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Students confirm that they have a good idea of their attainment and what they must do to improve. Assessment information is well used to guide curricular planning and procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are good. All staff have responsibility for analysing assessment information so that under-performing students can easily be identified. Individual progress is regularly evaluated by tutors and through the interim monitoring reports to parents. These procedures are supplemented by a very good central database, which includes detailed assessment data on all students and their targets, which is well disseminated to subjects and tutors.
69. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Parents are kept well informed of their responsibilities for ensuring students attend college regularly and arrive promptly and the need to inform the college if their child is unwell and unable to attend. The college has implemented a number of incentives to encourage improved attendance towards meeting their target figure of 93 per cent, with tutors and heads of houses closely monitoring the attendance of

their students; this is an improvement since the last inspection. However, the college does not have a dedicated absence line to receive messages from parents if their child is ill and they are not systematically calling all students on the first day of absence in an effort to reduce absence and truanting. With the majority of students travelling by bus each day there is no check when they are away to see whether they have missed the bus through illness or any other reason. The college would currently wait to call home on the third day of absence. With some students coming from outlying areas this is a long delay in establishing that they are safe at home. The college has been considering investigating electronic forms of registering students and automatic call back systems, which would resolve these problems.

70. The college has very good systems in place for child protection and ensuring students' health, safety and welfare. One of the heads of house is the member of staff with designated responsibilities for child protection issues. She is well aware of the processes involved and now ensures other members of staff are kept fully informed of the guidelines and procedures. Well-established systems are in place to meet the medical needs of students or to take care of any who fall ill during the day. There is good welfare support and sufficient members of staff are now qualified to provide first aid treatment. The college also has good links with the various support agencies such as counsellors and the college nurse and these specialists attend as necessary. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and effective procedures are in place to address the issues of safety and security of students in the college or when out on visits. The principal and the governors who have responsibility for health and safety issues undertake regular health and safety checks and risk assessments, as well as reviewing the security arrangements around the college. The transport procedures at the end of the day are well thought out and carefully managed to ensure the safe departure of students on the buses.

Sixth form

Assessment

71. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. Students confirm that they have a good idea of their attainment and what they must do to improve. A very good central database, which includes detailed assessment data on all students and their targets, is effectively used by tutors to monitor progress. This is well supported by individual counselling and mentoring to support students if there are problems. Effective feedback is provided to students in terms of examination board criteria and students often spend time in lessons relating their work to assessment criteria; a very effective example of this was seen in a Year 13 media studies lesson. Subject coordinators make good use of assessment information in planning and very effective examples were seen in mathematics, psychology, design and technology, business and economics and health and social care.
72. Whilst assessment and monitoring of the individual student's performance is very good, the same level of rigour is not consistently applied in viewing the relation of subject performance to the student's achievements.

Advice, support and guidance

73. The college has satisfactory systems in place for monitoring and promoting good attendance in the sixth form. Students are expected to attend lessons on a regular basis and overall attendance is good. If they are away ill they are allowed to phone in and 'self-certificate' their illness. However, this privilege is withdrawn if it is abused and attendance is closely monitored with absences noted on their reports. There is good liaison with the main campus and sixth form tutors are contacted if the buses are late. The sixth form is taking advantage of an electronic registration system via a Connexions card, which has various incentives to encourage students to register at the appropriate time at the sixth form centre (Place House), but this is not always effective with some students preferring to go straight to lessons and register there. New systems are currently being considered to improve matters.

74. Very good systems are in place to monitor and support students' academic and personal development. Very good relationships are developed with personal tutors who offer effective support through regular tutorials, which helps to deal with any academic problems as well as building students confidence and self-esteem. These sessions check progress against targets, identifying any problems or concerns and creating action plans to deal with them. There is a good careers programme and effective links are made with Connexions. Support for entry into higher education is very good and effective links exist with local further education colleges. Students are regularly surveyed about their views, suggestions and concerns. Counsellors and the student information service are available to help by offering advice and support. The sixth form committee is successfully run by the students for the students and acts as their voice in the college.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. The partnership with parents is very good and one of the strengths of the college. Staff have worked hard to maintain the strong links with parents and to continue the effective liaison between home and college. This is very evident in both the college as well as in the sixth form. Parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting expressed considerable satisfaction with the college. They were pleased with the standards being achieved, both in academic and personal developments; the help and support they receive; the college's responsiveness to their concerns and the links they have with staff. They appreciate the efforts made to improve the college in recent years. The inspection team agrees with the positive comments of the parents. There were a small number of concerns raised; they include the amount and quality of homework given. The inspectors considered homework to be used effectively. A small number of parents felt the college did not work closely with them or keep them informed of their child's progress. The inspection team considered the college to have very thorough arrangements for keeping parents updated and informed and any problems may be due to specific individuals or situations. The inspectors did agree with the parents that the ongoing lack of a library was a significant hindrance to some students' independent work.
76. The range and quality of information provided for parents are very good. The attractive college prospectus, 'Connection' newspaper and governors' annual report to parents provide comprehensive information about the college and its activities. Parents are kept fully informed about what is going on, on a regular basis, receiving helpful information on the curriculum, option choices and sixth form courses, whilst the parents' handbook provides a full overview of policies and procedures to ensure they understand what their child will meet when they start at the college and enable them to support their child effectively. The college provides many opportunities for parents to contact or meet with staff and discover what is going on or discuss their child's education. Open meetings, consultations about the national tests, careers evenings and occasional workshops are held to keep parents updated and suitably informed about new initiatives. These are always well attended.
77. Opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning are developed very effectively. Parents are regularly consulted over a number of issues through questionnaires and evaluations. The home/college agreements are signed when students join the college and again in the sixth form. Parents use the students' planners most effectively to maintain day-to-day contact with form tutors. Parents value the fact that they are encouraged to help their children by supporting the homework policy and encouraging independent learning. Useful meetings are held at significant points such as selecting option choices or the transfer to the sixth form and formal annual review evenings are well attended by parents and students. Parents find the annual reports helpful and constructive with full explanation of the grades and targets used. They particularly value the interim reports showing earlier results, current position and future targets to enable them to track their child's progress.
78. Parents appreciate the way the college involves them in their child's education through regular contact and updates. A number of parents offer valuable support by offering placements for work experience or helping at careers events with running mock interviews. The parents also provide a very valuable transport service after college, without which many of the students would not be able

to attend the clubs, activities or extra courses. Parents feel fully involved in the life of the college and many attend drama productions, concerts and the award ceremonies, as well as the facilities provided as an adult education centre. The support and contribution of parents to the flourishing Friends of South Dartmoor Association (FOSDA) are very good. A number of enthusiastic parents run regular social and fund-raising events each year. The annual mid-summer ball is very much a community event. Run in collaboration with local primary schools it is very well attended by staff, parents and students and helps to raise significant sums of money, which benefits the whole college. This has helped to purchase valuable equipment and resources such as musical instruments, sports equipment or helped equip the photography blackout room. Members of FOSDA also offer a valuable service by providing refreshments at college events or parents' meetings.

79. Sixth form students are overall positive about the college. Most feel that their choice of sixth form study meets their talents and aspirations and that the college is flexible and supportive if they need to change course. They see their work as challenging and readily acknowledge the very good quality of teaching in the sixth form. Induction to the sixth form is seen as very effective and many students were quick to praise the overall support and guidance they receive. Concerns raised over help with personal problems in the student questionnaire were not reflected in discussion with students. The overall tutoring and counselling system is very good and students stated that they were happy to discuss problems with staff. Similarly concerns over marking and advice on progress were not supported by the inspectors' view. Marking and advice on progress are usually very good, though there are distinct differences between systems used for vocational and AS/A level courses. The concern over advice on future options reflects the college's changing of the time of the normal higher education fair event, which was due to take place after the inspection. In respect of the lack of accommodation in the main college for sixth form students', inspectors support the students' views. Overall the college takes reasonable account of the students' views and the sixth form play an effective part in the College Council. Almost all sixth form students enjoy being at the college and would recommend the sixth form to others.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The leadership of the college is very good. At all levels there is a focus on teaching and learning, which is a key factor in the overall high standards and very good achievement of the students. The principal's exceptional strategic vision, innovation and commitment to the college and its community, have been and continue to be very significant factors in the sustained and continued improvement of provision. The very effective leadership team ably support the principal in giving a clear and corporate lead to the college's work.
81. The leadership team have been very effective in establishing a common understanding and purpose amongst all staff on the key priorities, as in continued improvement in standards, the quality of teaching and learning, setting high student expectations and enjoyment in learning. In these areas there is a consistent application and commitment to the well set out systems. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and the management of subjects and years is overall effective.
82. The governors are highly supportive and play a full strategic role in setting the educational direction. They are very well informed by the principal and leadership team and have appropriate procedures and committees in place to ensure that they fully fulfil their role. Expertise is exceptionally well used, as with the achievement of best value in the building project and minibus purchase. All governors, but particularly the chair of governors and chairs of the committees, show a strong grasp of the college's strengths and weaknesses and the priorities for improvement. They are appropriately questioning and challenging of the college's improvement, as with standards, the quality of teaching and learning and the maintenance of the 'South Dartmoor' ethos and high expectation of all who are a part of the college. Statutory requirements are met and the governors have played a full role in ensuring the very good improvement since the last inspection.
83. The college knows its strengths and weaknesses and takes appropriate and well-prioritised action, as with the developing work on the NVQ curriculum, to secure improvement. The leadership team

is effective in innovating, as with the sports outreach and scholarship programmes and the advanced skills teacher support to primary schools. Its aims and values are clear and understood by staff and students; in its work the college effectively demonstrates that it lives and meets them.

84. Planning for the future is set out in a thorough and rigorous management plan. In setting appropriate priorities and targets this plan recognises the need to be pragmatic. This is very well reflected in the strategic approach to the long-term building plan. Procedures to monitor and evaluate this plan are very good. Precise success criteria allow improvement to be easily measured and shared with governors, staff and parents, as with the sports development work. Costs are well identified and accounted for when setting the budget. The priorities of this whole-college plan are not as consistently reflected in subject improvement plans, where too often the systematic processes of self-evaluation are not fully applied in identifying the key actions and priorities for improvement. Where this is done well, the subjects are highly successful as in English, music, drama and physical education. Whilst the concepts and processes of school self-evaluation are understood they need to be more effectively developed throughout the college.
85. The leadership of the houses is a key strength, which has a positive impact upon students' achievements, their personal development and their behaviour. The management of subjects is good overall. It is very good in English, art, history, drama and media studies and outstanding in music and physical education. In design and technology there is currently a joint subject leadership, which the college needs to resolve. A very strong sense of common direction, very good teamwork and thorough curriculum planning are characteristic of the house and most effective subject management. Though there is a clear and consistent view of teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluation procedures are less effectively used to identify issues or secure improvement in other aspects of subject management. Subject leaders are well supported and challenged by the leadership team.
86. The college meets statutory requirements regarding the SEN Code of Practice. All documentation related to SEN is maintained well. Statements of SEN and IEPs are up to date, reviewed on time and are fully and effectively implemented. The monitoring of the progress and teaching of students with special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator for SEN provides effective leadership. The management of provision for students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good. Students make good progress and achieve well.
87. The financial planning is effective. Spending is very closely linked to key educational priorities and the achievement of high standards, for example the funding of the inclusion group and the support of often minority subjects such as drama. Financial control is tight and the college benefits from the support of its good financial and administrative team. The principles of "best value" are well understood by senior managers and governors. Good investigations of costs and potential benefits were made before the agreement of the building contract. There are good procedures for competition in the award of contracts.
88. The college makes very good use of specific grants and additional funding. It uses its funding for SEN appropriately and gets good value from the work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and learning support assistants. Funding from its specialist sports and training status has been prudently used.
89. The college works hard at and is successful in staff recruitment and retention. The match of staff to the college and students' needs is very good. Most staff movement from the college is to promoted posts. Through its training status the college makes effective use of the graduate teacher programme and there are strong and very effective working partnerships with initial teacher training institutions. Advanced skills teachers are being very successfully used both within the college and for outreach programmes, as in sports and inclusion, as part of the college's sports status. Similarly work, as a specialist and training college, has provided a range of staff development opportunities, which have not only benefited other schools, but enhanced the teachers' skills for the benefit of students at South Dartmoor.

90. The induction and training arrangements for teaching and non-teaching staff are of an outstanding quality and ensure that teachers have exceptional opportunities to develop their skills. The performance management requirements for the appraisal of teaching staff are of a similar quality. They are very well supported by senior staff and teacher mentors. The range and quality of the continuing staff development work are outstanding and have deservedly received national recognition. There is a culture of high staff expectation and reflection. Non-teaching staff are of a high quality and are very effective, both in supporting students' learning as classroom assistants and in providing administrative and technical support to subjects and the college as a whole.
91. The resources for learning are satisfactory. Whilst in many subjects the resources are good and often better there are some significant deficiencies, which impact upon the students' learning. The most significant is the lack of a college library, which is a source of concern to students and parents. When the new building is completed this will be rectified but there is a need to consider the wider impact the loss of the library has had on the development of some students' study skills. In a number of subjects, particularly science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music there are limitations in learning because of the shortage of access to specific ICT resources, such as data capture equipment. Learning resources are outstanding in physical education and very good in drama and media studies.
92. Since the last inspection the college has grown significantly in size and although there are a number of areas of outstanding accommodation, as in physical education and drama the overall accommodation is unsatisfactory. It is a credit to the management and students that standards, students' attitude and behaviour have been so well maintained, whilst the college has been severely short of classroom space and undergoing a major building project. The strategic building plan is a good basis for the final provision. However, its full completion is a matter of urgency if achievement is not to be adversely affected. Once the current building project is complete the facilities for English, mathematics and the new library will be of a high quality. However, those for media studies need urgent attention; the high quality facilities for music will have already outgrown the demands of student numbers and the number of science laboratories is already inadequate for the number of students.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

93. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective and well co-ordinated with that of the main college. The deputy principal who is sixth form co-ordinator sets a clear educational direction, which has a commitment to high standards and quality provision. Day-to-day management is effective and well focused on the individual student. The college has been successful in creating a sixth form ethos where working hard and doing well are the expectation. The very good quality of teaching and the students' outstanding response to their work are testimony to this. Improvements in the sixth form, as with the widening course range, high retention rate and student take up from Year 11, since the last inspection, have been very good and the capacity to improve further is strong.
94. Governors make a very strong and effective contribution to helping to shape the strategic direction of the sixth form. They fulfil their responsibilities well. They play an active role in ensuring the quality of the sixth form, effectively analysing performance and appropriately challenging the outcomes and requests for development. There is a clear rationale for operation and development, which build effectively upon the priorities for the main college so that the sixth form enhances the experience for all students. The governors open enrolment policy demonstrates their commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all. However, though there are currently no students with SEN needs in the sixth form, they need to give greater awareness to the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice in respect of provision for students entering a school based sixth form.
95. There is an effective sixth form management plan, which forms part of the college's overall rigorous management plan. Strengths and weaknesses are well known and as in the main college

appropriate action is taken to secure improvement, as with the development of vocational courses and the links for the NVQ courses into the 14 to 19 curriculum. Procedures to monitor and evaluate this plan are very good and costs are well identified and accounted for when setting the budget.

96. As with the main college the pastoral leadership of the sixth form is a key strength. Students appreciate the way they are managed as individual young adults. Overall the management of subjects is good. As with the main college it is very good in English, art, history, drama and media studies and outstanding in physical education. In the sixth form it is also very good in business and economics, health and social care and music. Thorough curriculum planning, very good teamwork and a clear sense of direction characterise the pastoral and most effective subject leadership. Monitoring at individual student level is very effective and performance data is well used to analyse progress. Students are clear in what they have achieved and what they must do next to improve. Similar processes are not as effectively applied in evaluating subject performance and trends and patterns across the subjects are not being used to raise common issues, such as the development of study and research skills.
97. The sixth form is cost effective and the college uses its resources well to support the work of the sixth form. Funding is prudently used in providing for the curriculum and students' needs, including a range of outstanding enrichment provision. Relationships and the management of links with the community and commerce, together with the local further education college are effective. New technologies as with the statistical database on students' progress are effectively employed and reduce the staff workload. The principles of best value, as in the main college, are well understood and applied to ensure cost effective expenditure. In terms of its range of provision, the standards achieved and the very good quality of teaching, the sixth form provides good value for money.

Resources

98. Teaching staff are well qualified in the subjects they teach and there is a very good match of subject expertise to the range of courses taught. All staff have benefited from the college's outstanding continuing professional development programme. The college has also effectively used its training status to develop existing expertise, as with the catering manager, who has the precise vocational background to be able to develop a high quality NVQ catering course and is being trained to qualified teacher status through the college's own training programme.
99. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. In many subjects they are good and often better, as with the very good resources in media studies, business and economics, drama and the performing arts. However, in some subjects there are specific weaknesses in ICT, as in science and design and technology. Also the lack of a main college library, though partially relieved by the small library in the sixth form centre, has had a significant impact upon the learning of some students.
100. Accommodation as in the main college is overall unsatisfactory. Though there are a number of outstanding facilities, as in drama, catering and physical education many subjects lack appropriate sixth form provision in the main college. In media studies the accommodation is poor, science is short of laboratory space and in art limitations on space restrict the range of the students' work. Also the growth in size of the sixth form is placing a significant burden upon the sixth form centre accommodation at Place House.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. The principal and governors should now:

(1) ensure the continued implementation and completion of the strategic accommodation plan to:

- improve the quality of all accommodation and its impact on the students' learning to that of the best areas;
- remove significant weaknesses as in media studies and the lack of science laboratories;
- ensure the provision of sufficient classrooms for the student numbers; and
- provide more adequate circulation and internal pastoral bases for students.

(paragraphs: 28, 42, 92, 114, 120, 126, 170, 196)

(2) Urgently provide appropriate library accommodation and resources and develop a more consistent study skills programme in the main college by:

- ensuring completion at the earliest opportunity of the main college library;
- ensuring that the library is fully equipped as a media resource centre; and
- establishing the provision of a study skills programme within the main college.

(paragraphs: 28, 91, 206, 218, 221, 263)

(3) Improve the capacity at all levels for systematic self-evaluation by:

- the further development of the middle managers' leadership and monitoring skills;
- implementing a common system for recording and evaluating improvement; and
- developing the subject and pastoral leaders' role in comparison of data and information to determine patterns and trends.

(paragraphs: 43, 67, 69, 84, 85, 87, 102, 114, 133, 138, 149, 156, 164, 170, 177)

(4) Improve the students' access to ICT in the subjects by:

- ensuring subjects have adequate access to ICT facilities;
- providing subject specific ICT resources as in science and design and technology; and
- monitoring the subjects' use of ICT.

(paragraphs: 10, 28, 31, 39, 42, 91, 113, 114, 119, 120, 136, 138, 148, 151, 153, 186)

Sixth form

(1) Provide appropriate sixth form accommodation within the main college by:

- ensuring that sixth form student needs are taken account of in the completion of the strategic building plan; and
- ensuring that new subject provision takes account of the different learning and working needs of sixth form students.

(paragraphs: 14, 36, 42, 92, 99, 100, 221, 236, 239, 255, 257)

(2) Improve the use of ICT related learning tasks in subjects, such as science and design and technology by:

- ensuring subjects have adequate access to ICT facilities;
- providing subject specific ICT resources; and
- monitoring the subjects' use of ICT.

(paragraphs: 15, 36, 39, 42, 57, 91, 99, 204, 250, 255)

(3) Improve the monitoring and analysis of subject trends in performance by:

- developing the subject leaders' role in using data and information to determine patterns and trends; and
- providing subject based information to the same level as that for individual students.

(paragraphs: 72, 84, 85, 96, 200, 206, 209, 223)

Most of the areas for action are already identified in the college's management plan and the strategic accommodation plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	213
	Sixth form	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	25	45	51	32	2	1	0
Percentage	16	29	33	21	1	0.6	0
Sixth form							
Number	10	27	15	6	0	0	0
Percentage	17	47	26	10	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1348	232
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	150	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	53	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	183	0

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	143	113	256

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	96	94
	Girls	96	87	84
	Total	186	183	178
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (78)	71 (71)	70 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (40)	46 (47)	29 (43)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	103	113
	Girls	101	89	94
	Total	210	192	207
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (82)	73 (65)	81 (74)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (40)	31 (40)	30 (36)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	116	97	213

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	61	104	111
	Girls	69	90	92
	Total	130	194	203
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	61 (63)	91 (91)	95 (94)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.9 (41.2)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	46	42	88
	Average point score per candidate	249.4 (16.0)	261.0 (16.5)	234.8 (16.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	38	34	72	8	8	16
	Average point score per candidate	262.4	277.7	269.6	250.0	190.0	220.0
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

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

* National comparison data for results in 2002 is not yet available.

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1427	23	1
0	0	0
7	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
2	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
133	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	96.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	16

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	35
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1013

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	4,754,897
Total expenditure	4,697,150
Expenditure per pupil	3,138
Balance brought forward from previous year	96,947
Balance carried forward to next year	154,694

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.7
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.48
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	856
Number of questionnaires returned	226

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	46	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	58	7	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	53	14	2	3
The teaching is good.	39	55	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	42	10	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	41	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	51	12	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	76	24	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Very good quality teaching.
- Very good student behaviour and attitudes.
- Good achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring the use of systems and procedures for tracking and recording students' progress.
- Further developing guided work in reading and writing.

102. Attainment on entry of the current Year 7 is broadly average for students gaining level 4 or above. In the National Tests taken at the end of Year 9 there has been an upward trend over the last four years for students gaining level 5 or higher when compared with similar schools nationally. Results in the 2002 tests were well above the national average, with girls outperforming boys by a considerable margin. In the lessons observed across Years 7 to 9, and in the scrutiny of work, standards overall are very good. It is clear that the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Students with special educational needs (SEN) are well supported and make good progress. Because the subject has good systems and procedures for tracking and recording students' attainment and progress, most students have a clear understanding of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. However, these systems and procedures are not consistently used by all teachers and there is insufficient monitoring of this aspect of this subject's work.
103. GCSE results for 2002 in English were well above the national average for students gaining A*-C grades. In English literature the standards achieved were also above the national average. The gap between boys' and girls' results was smaller than the national average. Overall, this represents good progress and achievement since Year 9, particularly for boys. In Years 10 and 11, in lessons and in the scrutiny of work, it is clear that students make good progress and standards are well above average. Students with special educational needs (SEN) continue to achieve well. The most able students achieve very well with boys in particular reaching better standards than their peers nationally.
104. The quality of teaching at both key stages is never less than good. Most often it is very good and, at times, outstanding. This high quality teaching is characterised by a combination of secure subject knowledge, well planned sequences of work and explicit sharing of learning objectives and assessment criteria. Where teaching is outstanding, work is very well matched to students' learning needs, lessons proceed at a brisk pace with plenty of challenge and the marking of written work is detailed and diagnostic. Consequently students know what they have to do to improve their use of language and increase their appreciation and understanding of literature. Due to the very good quality of the teaching, students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are consistently very good and often excellent.
105. Oral work is prominent in most English lessons and students enjoy opportunities regularly to talk through and share ideas. In two Year 7 and 9 lessons, for example, studying novels by David Almond and Michael Morpurgo, students collaborated most effectively in pairs or small groups to investigate how authors create and convey characters. In a Year 8 lesson, paired talk allowed students successfully to improve their understanding of the effect of poetic devices as they analysed a challenging nineteenth century American poem. Year 10 and 11 students go on to

- develop these skills as they meet the more formal demands of GCSE oral assessments. In an outstanding Year 11 lesson, students worked extremely well in groups to discuss and develop different interpretations of poems. They were then able to report back to the whole class with confidence, showing good listening skills and taking account of differing viewpoints.
106. As an integral part of the statutory curriculum and in preparation for GCSE, all students read a wide range of good quality literature, including work by Shakespeare, pre-twentieth century authors and texts written by recent and contemporary writers. They also read a variety of texts from different cultures and traditions as well as non-fiction and ICT-based information texts. Students across Years 7 to 9 build effectively on their shared reading of novels in class by choosing from a good range of fiction for individual reading. They are given a reading journal in which to record their responses and many of them display a strong critical awareness and evaluation of the genres they read. Some students, however, do not maintain their journals regularly and teachers' monitoring needs to be more regular, especially for weaker readers. The subject is beginning to develop its approach to guided reading and this was well demonstrated in an excellent Year 9 lesson. With the majority of the class working individually on a very well focused reading task, the teacher was able to give quality time to a group of six students, teaching them the skills of skimming and scanning a text. Although teachers give students plenty of opportunities to practise their reading skills in Years 7 to 9, there were some lessons where opportunities for this approach could have been further developed. Overall, however, most students enjoy their reading and are very confident in reading aloud. This was illustrated most clearly, perhaps, in the Valentine's Day assembly, when a large number of students, both boys and girls, read each other's poems to a very large audience of students, staff and inspectors.
107. Students in Years 7 to 9 plan and draft their ideas in a wide range of writing. In a very interesting Year 8 lesson, for example, the class were given a challenging extract from one of Phillip Pullman's novels with the task of reconstructing it as poetry. They worked very well in pairs and enjoyed reading some very good first drafts to the whole class. In another lesson, Year 9 students responded positively to an example modelled by the teacher, to improve and redraft a persuasive letter. With the increased emphasis on word and sentence level work students improve their spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Year 10 and 11 students produce an impressive range of coursework writing in their responses to poetry, plays, fiction and non-fiction. They effectively adapt their style for different purposes and readers. They showed considerable skill and control, for example, when writing about the effectiveness of film trailers or taking a directorial stance to 'Romeo and Juliet'. They also learn to develop their skills in writing critical responses to literature for the GCSE examination. This was exemplified very effectively in some of the coursework where students compared short stories by Dahl and Conan Doyle. The teachers encourage students to publish their writing in both local and national competitions and some of their poetry is of a very high quality. A lunchtime writing club is very well attended and allows students to read and discuss their work openly with teachers and each other.
108. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and there is a shared sense of purpose and direction. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The new subject leader is already building on existing strengths and has established secure working relationships with her team. Curriculum provision is very good and is well enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities. There is an extensive departmental action plan, which identifies priorities for development. The four newly qualified teachers are very well supported and are having a positive impact in what is a strong, reflective and often adventurous department. Accommodation and resources for learning are good. There have been many improvements since the last inspection including the high standards in Year 9 national tests, schemes of work, reading standards and marking.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are above average.
- Challenging teaching in Years 10 and 11 raises students' achievement.
- Management is effective and committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Improve marking and information to students so that they can focus their efforts more effectively.
- Increase the consistency with which good teaching strategies are used in Years 7 to 9.
- Further raise the attainment of boys in the subject.
- Use ICT more effectively to support students' achievements.

109. Results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with both the national average and that of similar schools. Boys' results were marginally below average, those of girls, slightly above. Girls have attained higher results generally over the last three years. During this time standards have fluctuated but considering their standards when they joined the college, both boys' and girls' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Results were below those in English but comparable with those in science.

110. In 2002, GCSE results in mathematics were above the national average, continuing the steady improvement above the national trend in the last few years. Girls' results were well above average; those of boys were average, mainly reflecting the differences in their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. These results represent good progress since that time. Higher attaining girls achieved very high standards. The proportion of them gaining the highest grades of A* or A was greater than that nationally. The proportion of boys attaining a grade of A*-G was below that found nationally, whilst that of girls was above the national average. Students, mainly boys, in lower attaining groups do not, on average, achieve the results of which they are capable but this is particularly the case for those students whose attendance at lessons is low. Other students achieve results that correspond well with their targets.

111. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly average. Students, including those with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress. They acquire a good range of knowledge in all areas of study, achieve satisfactory levels of numeracy and come close to being above average by the end of Year 9. They can accurately produce bar charts and simple pie charts and can find the line of best fit on a scattergraph. Higher attaining pupils can identify patterns in quadratic sequences, use trial and improvement to solve cubic equations and calculate missing lengths in right angled triangles using Pythagoras' theorem. Teaching in these years is satisfactory, as is learning. In the most effective lessons, the teacher stresses the importance of clear thinking by expecting a high standard of explanation from students. This was the case in a Year 8 lesson during which students were discussing ratios and percentage changes, clearly increasing their understanding of this important topic. On occasions when the teachers' objectives are not sufficiently well thought through, students do not know exactly what is expected of them, so do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, while developing strategies for investigating arrangements of shapes, although the teacher explained various approaches well, in the absence of clear objectives for their written work, students were unable to structure their results effectively. Students did not understand how this work was linked to their targets for attainment. As a result, some did not see the point of making much effort, became uninterested and presented their work carelessly.

112. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average. The improvements evident in earlier years continue but at a greater rate. Students develop good algebraic skills and use geometric relationships reliably, such as finding points where lines intersect and applying Pythagoras' theorem. Calculations and graph work in statistics are good. Students are taught to apply techniques well but they do not generally interpret the significance of their results as well as they

carry out calculations and draw graphs. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good, although the range is wide, from satisfactory to excellent. Students usually learn well and sustain good progress, especially the most talented, who achieve very well. Standards of numeracy are usually good; although some lower attaining students who do not attend regularly have enduring weak knowledge of number relationships which hinders their progress in other areas. Teachers provide students with stimulating challenges to which they respond very well, paying close attention to explanations. For example, in an excellent Year 10 lesson, the teacher provided students with very good insights into difficult examples of angles in three-dimensional problems. Students concentrated closely on explanations and discussed situations in fine detail, showing a clear determination to overcome their difficulties. Their facility for self-evaluation was refined very well during high quality reflection on their learning at the end of the lesson. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher exercised very good judgement by conducting exposition at a pace that demanded and received the very sharpest attention from even the most capable students. With well directed questioning, the teacher provided sufficient support for less confident students so all were able to make very good progress in their understanding of the links between algebra and co-ordinate geometry. Marking is usually thorough and identifies mistakes but provides little indication of how students might improve their work. Most students have a clear idea of their target grade but have only the most general sense of how they can focus their revision effectively. The attendance of some lower attaining students is irregular and so they do not make sufficient progress. However, all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN) learn effectively, make good progress and achieve well. Those who have a particular talent for mathematics achieve very well.

113. Four of the ten full time teachers in the department were absent during the inspection but the work of their students was inspected. Overall, teaching is good. In Years 7 to 9, where a number of supply teachers were observed it was satisfactory but the work, over time, of the students indicated that the teaching is usually good. Teachers incorporate much of the most recent Key Stage 3 National Strategy guidance into their work. This is used well by some teachers and is particularly effective in the work done with weaker Year 7 students who catch up rapidly. Teachers usually make a purposeful start to lessons, but only in a few instances conclude lessons efficiently and refer back to the objectives of the lesson to good effect. Those that do so effectively provide students with the time to reflect on their learning and insist that students show respect for each other when commenting on their own learning. Often students do not see the final, very important part of the lesson as something requiring much effort, many seeing it as an opportunity to pack away. Teachers usually emphasise the correct use of specialist vocabulary and, in the best lessons, promote speaking and listening well. ICT is not currently incorporated sufficiently into mathematics teaching, as there is little access to computer rooms at the times when mathematics lessons occur.
114. The subject is well led and managed. The introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been well managed and is already showing beneficial results in both teaching effectiveness and students' achievement. Progress of students in different teaching groups is analysed to identify where the curriculum might be improved such as by providing the fast groups in Year 8. Monitoring of teaching is good and effective action is taken to secure improvements. However, in marking and the quality of information given to students so that they can better understand how to improve, there has not been the same level of monitoring and evaluation of performance. Current accommodation is unsatisfactory, as many lessons have to be taught in widely dispersed locations and temporary buildings; access to ICT facilities inhibits the work of some teaching groups. However, new technology is well used to assist management and provide information to students and parents through the website. The improvements in standards of work by the end of Year 11 and much improved assessment procedures indicate that overall, improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- High standards in GCSE and the progress students make in Years 10 and 11.
- Quality of the teachers' planning and subject knowledge.
- Quality of curriculum enrichment.
- Assessment and student target setting.

Areas for improvement

- Development of boys' writing and presentation in science across Years 7 to 9.
- Students' progress in Year 8.
- Attention given to the science elements of ICT and its resources.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation for the number of students.

115. Students' attainment in science by end of Year 11 is above average. In 2002, 60 per cent achieved A*-C grades and 99 per cent achieved A*-G grades in GCSE examinations. The college achieved this result with 96 per cent of the year group entering the double award examination compared with the national average of only 83 per cent. In doing so, students achieved an average 9.2 GCSE points each compared with 7.2 nationally. This is well above average. GCSE results were slightly lower in 2002 than in 2001 but are on line to rise in 2003. Observation of students and their work shows attainment to be above average and over 70 per cent of Year 11 students have already achieved A*-C in parts of the new modular course which was introduced in September 2001. Girls' performance was better than the boys' in both 2001 and 2002 with an average point score of 9.6 per girl in 2002 compared with 8.8 for the boys. On average, girls achieve nearly one GCSE science grade more than boys. Of particular interest is the high percentage of girls, 22 per cent, who achieved A or A* grades compared with 8 per cent for the boys (the national figures are 11.9 per cent and 9.8 per cent respectively). Students' progress in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall. By the age of 16 they have become confident and apply their previous knowledge to new situations well, often accurately predicting the outcomes of experiments and forming useful hypotheses. Practical skills are good and students work safely understanding the need to develop effective routines when working in a laboratory.

116. Student performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average with 70 per cent of the students reaching level 5 and above and 29 per cent reaching level 6 and above, although the proportion reaching level 6 or above is below the national average and suggests insufficient challenge for the college's brightest students. The college's performance was below average when students' average point scores were compared with their results at age eleven and with the results achieved by schools in similar circumstances. The science results are now lower than they have been in all years since 1998. Observation of standards in class and of students' work shows their work to be in line with the national average, though progress in Year 8 appears to be slower than in Years 7 and 9. Girls are doing better than boys, but the differences are relatively small. These weaker results can be partially accounted for by some weaknesses in literacy, particularly the boys' writing and presentation. Overall progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, though work in Years 7 and 9 is more productive than that in Year 8. By Year 9 students are competent in carrying out practical activities and drawing appropriate conclusions from experiments, as with work on energy, where all displayed a secure understanding of the forms of energy and could describe a range of transfer devices. Higher attaining students were able to hypothesise about the conservation of energy within a system. Recording of observations is becoming well developed and many can effectively relate these results to their predictions and initial hypothesis for an experiment.

117. Attainment in the sixth form is good with biology and chemistry producing better results than physics. (The provision of post-16 work in physics and chemistry was not inspected: that for biology is reported separately.) From the scrutiny of students' work it is apparent that they make good progress in science at this age, with their books showing high quality work completed at a

fast pace and with understanding. Most students satisfactorily complete the courses and achieve as expected from their GCSE entry performance.

118. Overall the quality of teaching in science is good. In Years 7 to 9 it is always satisfactory or better. In Years 10 and 11 it is always good or better. Virtually all lessons have good pace and high expectations for achievement and behaviour. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and often coupled with good use of planning. This allows complex ideas to be well structured and developed to enhance learning. For example, one teacher of a Year 7 class used a wide range of appropriate strategies to help the students understand that mass is conserved when substances are dissolved. He also showed that this was consistent with their developing ideas of the particle theory. Through good use of demonstrations and well described student-friendly analogies, including detailed discussions about sugar and cups of tea, he built up a very good argument for the conservation of mass and then took them on to consider using particle theory, whether substances dissolved more readily in hot solutions than in cold. The students were intrigued and joined in fully. In another lesson, a teacher gave an interesting and memorable revision session on renewable and non-renewable fuels, fractional distillation and the catalytic cracking of oil. The teacher emphasised throughout that the students should identify their own areas for revision and make their own notes. He pushed the emphasis for their learning firmly in their direction. He also used a wide range of strategies to help the students to move forward and develop their thinking. As a result, these Year 10 students were able to volunteer, with understanding, a general rule for the relationship between the carbon chain length in hydrocarbons and their boiling points, and others in the class were then able to use this to predict the names of the fractions emerging from the top of the column. This was good progress. The students' learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. However, a good proportion of the boys' recording of work and presentation of diagrams and graphs is often below average and potentially slowing their understanding of key ideas. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of learning is very good, students are focused on their progress towards their examinations and are working hard.
119. The subject meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. However the ICT elements are given insufficient attention. Students' continuity of experience can also become fragmented through successive changes of teacher, as they move through the modules in Years 10 and 11 and from the large number of split classes. The curriculum is enhanced with the inclusion of some good ethical issues, for example, genetic engineering, the Human Genome Project and the issues of renewable and non-renewable fuels. The quality and range of learning opportunities are overall good with the conventional curriculum supported by booster classes, clubs, trips and longer visits. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority scheme of work are both beginning to increase the pace and challenge of work in Year 7 and the new modular GCSE double award examination is already proving to be successful. Assessment is good, with considerable strengths coming from target setting. Conventional biology, chemistry and physics courses in the sixth form are enhanced with a Public Understanding of Science Course which apart from providing an award in its own right, supports students' learning in the other science subjects.
120. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is bedding in well and development planning is carried out effectively. All teaching is monitored and support for improvement is very good. There is effective delegation of responsibilities. The subject's staffing for both teaching and technical support is very strong. The subject's conventional resources for learning are fine, but there is a lack of specialist ICT equipment. The loss of the library and the associated books and workspace to support science learning is a problem. The subject's overhead projectors and their projection screens give unsatisfactory support for visual images. The science accommodation of eight laboratories is inadequate for the current size of the college.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Teaching and learning of photography in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour.
- Assessment of students' work so they know the progress they are making.
- Quality of leadership and welcoming ethos in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers have to spend too much time preparing practical materials.
- Additional literacy support for students with special educational needs (SEN).
- Space for storing large three-dimensional work between lessons.
- Use of display.

121. Many students join Year 7 with low standards in aspects of practical work and in their knowledge and understanding of art and design. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average, which represents very good achievement. Boys are as committed to the subject as girls. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. More attention is now given to developing students' knowledge of artists and designers from many cultures. Procedures for gathering assessment data are sharper, better used by teachers and contribute effectively to the students' progress.

122. By the end of Year 9 attainment in the work seen is above average and students' achievement is very good. Students use a wide range of media effectively, including painting, printmaking, modelling and carving. Most have a good knowledge of a wide range of painters and sculptors from different times and cultures. These include Aboriginal and ancient Chinese painters, William Morris, Picasso and Alexander Calder. Students make useful comparisons between their own work and that of these artists. They use similar materials and techniques in their own sculptures and recreate the style and colour range as a starting point in their own paintings. In Year 8 students use computers well to analyse aspects of Pop Art, in particular the work of Richard Hamilton. They do this as a basis for generating their own pictures using montage techniques (layering images on top of their own pre-designed background). They build effective, often humorous composite images. Students enjoy this approach and many achieve near professional standards. A few students also use the Internet to research new projects. There are clear lines of development in students' sketchbooks, from initial drawings done as homework to finished presentations in class. Most develop good subject vocabulary and use it appropriately when discussing their own work and that of other artists. For example, students in Year 9 engage with the poetry of Richard Long inspired by his journeys on Dartmoor. They use a similar format when depicting their own experiences of journeys, using paint. They make interesting comparisons with Aboriginal Walkabout paintings and try to reproduce, in their own paintings, some of the shimmering effects, which Aboriginal artists include to capture the feeling of 'life force' of the spirits of their ancestors. Students develop increasing confidence, skills and imagination because teachers teach the skills of painting and three-dimensional construction on a step-by-step basis. This helps all students but particularly supports those with special educational needs. Because of the welcoming ethos in the department, all students, regardless of gender, ability or background, including those with special needs, increase self-esteem and make very good progress.

123. Standards in the GCSE examinations are well above the national average for the subject. In 2002 82 per cent of students gained A*-C grades and 47 per cent gained the higher A*-B grades. All students entered achieved an A*-G grade. Over the last three years the trend has been for results to be well above the national average. In 2002 girls outperformed boys but the boys' performance was well above that nationally for the subject. Attainment in the work seen is above average, with a particular strength in photography. Students' achievement is very good. In Year 10 students adapt quickly to the more rigorous requirements of GCSE coursework. They sustain concentration

through extended themes and develop ideas creatively. In Year 11 students make good use of homework projects to practise skills and techniques, making detailed preparatory sketches from mainly secondary source materials such as books, periodicals, the Internet or visits to galleries. About a third exhibit poor drawing skills when making close observational pencil, ink and charcoal sketches from natural and manmade forms. Their painting skills are well developed but often lack the necessary underlying rigorous drawing structures, to enable them to gain the higher examination grades. Students are keen to talk about their work. They give good reasons for choices of media and how their ideas develop.

124. Teaching is very good overall. The teaching of photography is outstanding reflecting the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of students. Relationships are very positive because teachers know their students well, provide good support and take pride in their achievements. All teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and practical expertise, which students recognise, admire and try to emulate. However, there is too much variation across the department in the teaching of close observational drawing skills from first hand sources. Teachers have high expectations and plan attractive, stimulating and appropriately challenging learning tasks. Teachers strike a good balance between whole class and individual help. Because teachers insist on good behaviour from the outset, students respond positively. Teachers regularly track students' progress and give clear feedback to explain grades, so that students know what they need to do to improve. Teachers give generously of their time outside lessons. There is open access to art rooms and the photography facility at lunchtimes and in after college clubs. Students appreciate this because it enables them to keep abreast of coursework deadlines, try new techniques and develop ideas fully.
125. Leadership and management make very good provision for future development and sustain a very good level of teamwork. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in the assessment procedures and practices. The revised schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are more effective in ensuring students now receive a broad and balanced curriculum.
126. There is little technical support for the subject's five practical workshop areas. Display is insufficiently established to extend the learning environment and support the development of students' work. There is insufficient storage space for large three-dimensional work to be kept safely between lessons. This restricts students' experiences of larger scale works in sculpture. Students with special educational needs (SEN) do not receive additional support with the increased written requirements of the subject, which can adversely affect their overall achievements.
127. The subject makes a very strong contribution to the aims of the college, particularly in photography and publicity. Currently higher achieving students in Year 10 co-operate in an excellent pilot project, entitled 'Light Shifts' incorporating a specially commissioned poem by the local poet, Lawrence Sail. This successfully combines work by students from the music, dance and photography departments. Students also play a major role in the production of the college's newspaper, the photography for which is of a professional quality.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- There is a detailed audit of the coverage of citizenship by subject departments.
- The enrichment activities that take place outside of the formal curriculum contribute to citizenship education.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures are insufficiently precise and clear to all teachers.
- Tighter monitoring of the contribution of subject departments to ensure a coherent delivery of all aspects of the citizenship curriculum.

128. The subject is at an early stage of development. It is provided, for the most part, within and through other subjects and also through citizenship activities and events.
129. Due to its emergent nature, both nationally and in this college, there are no levels of attainment, achievement or progress in learning. The earliest end of Year 9 indicators will be available in 2004.
130. Assessment procedures are not yet finalised. Initially, assessment will be in the form of a centre pull out section of the student planner that will record skills acquired and experiences of responsible action as members of the college community and beyond. Parents will receive an end of year report as per statutory requirement. This will be included as part of the end of year record of achievement. These procedures are to be refined as the subject beds more firmly into the curriculum.
131. During the week of the inspection, aspects of citizenship were observed in only a small number of lessons. Where these aspects had been clearly identified in lesson planning, teaching was good. In a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson, students were preparing a leaflet on arguments for and against the adoption of the Euro as our unit of currency. They were thus improving their computer skills at the same time as becoming more informed citizens. Elements of citizenship were also taught in a number of religious education lessons. In a greater number of lessons, where the content included sections having a direct bearing on citizenship, the teacher had not made this clear either in the lesson plans, or to the students.
132. Several activities that take place outside the formal curriculum make valuable contributions to citizenship education. Teachers on the college's assembly rota frequently include topics that contribute to the students' knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. A particularly good assembly on decision-making occurred during the inspection week. There are several opportunities for students to take on responsibilities. The student council is particularly strong in this respect. This elected body meets regularly to discuss matters of direct benefit both to the college and the wider community. It is respected highly by the student body for the work it has done in tackling bullying and has assisted in the reduction of vandalism. It organises charity events that raise money for both local and overseas causes. The daily student bulletin carries a regular citizenship section. Future special event days are planned that will concentrate on the promotion of citizenship. Students have equality of opportunity and access to the current curriculum. They all have access to and the majority take part in extra-curricular activities that promote citizenship. However, a considerable proportion are not aware that it is occurring across a range of subjects and few can identify the specific elements of citizenship in their subject work.
133. The college's decision to deliver citizenship mainly through a cross curricular approach places a responsibility on subject managers to ensure that their subjects are making a full contribution and that these contributions provide a coherent programme covering all aspects of the citizenship curriculum. At the current stage of development it is not clear that this is happening. While the current arrangements fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum as far as curriculum content is concerned, there is an urgent need to ensure that each unit is more thoroughly assessed and monitored.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in GCSE examinations.
- The students' consistently good attitudes to learning, which are very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The very good feedback, guidance and support provided for individual students on GCSE courses.
- The quality of graphical presentation in many courses.

Areas for improvement

- The leadership and management of the subject.
- The limited curriculum time in Years 10 and 11.
- Curriculum arrangements in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The very limited opportunities for computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM).

134. Students' attainment is broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 9. The average and lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, often make good progress but many able students are not always extended to the higher levels of which they are capable. The students often develop good graphical communication skills, which they use to develop and present their ideas. However, their design skills are often underdeveloped as teaching fails to build sufficiently on prior attainment. Similarly in textiles and resistant materials, the students' ability to design and make things that work, using systems and control are more limited because of a lack of access to specific ICT resources in CAD/CAM.
135. By the end of Year 11, students achieve standards that are above average and they make good progress over the Years 10 and 11. The proportion of those taking GCSE courses who gained A*-C grades in 2002 was well above average at 72 per cent, compared with 52 per cent nationally. Results in 2001 were similar and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. The boys and girls achievement at grades A*-C is well above the national average. Standards are outstanding at GCSE in textiles and resistant materials. Standards were also well above average in food and graphics. Significantly more students gain A and A*-C grades than do nationally. These students make very good progress over Years 10 and 11, from standards, which are generally average at the end of Year 9. However, only just over half of the students take GCSE courses, which is low compared with other schools. In the current Year 11, students also take an NVQ course in catering, where standards in relation to the course are high, and engineering. The overall expectation of these is equivalent to those at GCSE. But over a quarter of the students take Certificate of Achievement courses with expectations, which are much lower. While these courses are appropriate for many students, some taking them are capable of working at a higher level and therefore underachieve. By the end of their Certificate of Achievement courses in 2002, students in food and textiles achieved standards which were at least as high as in their other certificate courses, but a significant proportion of those working in wood, metal and in motor vehicle courses did less well.
136. In lessons, Year 11 students on GCSE courses are currently making good progress in their project work and have the potential to achieve very good standards in their GCSEs. In textiles, students' work is of a very high standard with very good graphical design work and flair in the products they design and make. For example, one student is using the work of an artist as a stimulus to produce a skirt and top of high quality that could be part of a range sold in the artist's gallery. In food technology, the students show good analytical skills when researching and developing products and in product design, the students develop artefacts with carefully considered shape and form. However, limited access to computer aided manufacturing facilities is limiting their progress. Students in the new GCSE vocational engineering coursework with great enthusiasm on practical work yet need greater attention to detail in order to raise standards.
137. The quality of teaching in lessons and its impact on learning is good in Years 7 to 9. It is overall very good in Years 10 and 11. The teachers are enthusiastic and have good expertise in the subject, which they usually use well to motivate their students. In the GCSE courses they have high expectations and students respond well to the very good feedback, guidance and support they provide to individual students. However, students currently feel under heavy pressure to complete coursework on time, which is largely due to having less teaching time than is the case in similar schools. Difficulties in managing coursework result in a small number of students failing to complete their course and influence others to choose courses with lower expectations. Teaching in the catering and motor vehicle lessons was very good. In catering, the students were learning well through practical work and, as in the motor vehicle course, the teacher successfully built on previous learning in small manageable steps. However, in some instances, teachers of certificate courses needed a greater understanding of the students' potential and progress in other subjects, to ensure they were fully challenged. Across Years 7 to 9 the teaching is best in Year 9 where teachers have the opportunity to develop learning over a longer period of curriculum time.

Examples of good teaching include effective use of environmental images to stimulate ideas for jewellery, the development of good knowledge and understanding which results in successful product development in food and the extensive use of modelling to help students develop and plan their ideas in textiles. The students enjoy their work in the subject. They behave very responsibly and their attitudes to learning are consistently good and often very good in Years 10 and 11.

138. There is currently no subject leader. The subject leader for food and textiles and the subject leader for resistant materials and graphics jointly lead the subject. Both colleagues work hard, but focus mainly on their own subjects and there is insufficient evaluation and analysis of the subject's performance to secure improvement. Senior managers need to resolve this situation and provide clear guidance to the subject. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has limited opportunities for students to work with systems and control. Planning does not sufficiently consider the progression of the students' learning in all aspects of the subject. In Years 10 and 11 time is at the minimum and too many individual courses are offered. The criteria for entry to the Certificate of Achievement courses are not rigorously applied and some students take courses, which are not challenging. The subject leaders make insufficient use of performance data to monitor the success of teaching programmes and individual course outcomes. Subject staff provide very good support for trainee teachers, but the subject lacks expertise in electronics. The limited access to specialist equipment for computer aided design and manufacture impacts on the students' progress and makes the overall subject resources unsatisfactory. The subject has good accommodation, with very good catering and motor vehicle accommodation, which greatly enhances opportunities in these courses. The food rooms, which were a concern at the time of the last inspection, have been successfully remodelled. Health and safety requirements are mostly met though some machines need emergency foot-stops. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but it has been more effective in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Examination results have been above the national average for the last three years.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now very good.
- Very thorough marking, which includes detailed comments, pointing the way forward for students.
- Detailed schemes of work provide a first class guide for teachers and ensure continuity of learning.

Areas for improvement

- The matching of tasks to the needs of individual students, especially in respect of gifted and talented students.
- The use of fieldwork to provide first hand experience in Year 9.

139. Results in the GCSE examinations have been consistently above the national average for the last three years, although they showed a decline from 2001 to 2002. These results represent a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Relative performance indicators show that geography was fifth strongest of 14 GCSE subjects in the college. Some students, for whom GCSE would be too taxing, are entered for the Certificate of Achievement. Results in this examination have consistently been above the national average. Similarly, results in the AS and A level examinations have improved and are above the national average. These improvements are, in part, due to improvements in the overall standard of teaching in recent years.

140. At age 14, the attainment levels of most students are in line with the national expectation. Girls outperform boys by a wider margin than the national gender gap, though boys' performance is usually better than that nationally for the subject. This represents good progress since they entered the college. All students have good map reading skills. Higher attaining students take accurate notes and can explain thoroughly the links between tourism, leisure time, scenery and climate. Lower attaining students can express such ideas orally, but have difficulty in doing so in writing. In general, weak literacy skills hamper the progress of about one fifth of students.

141. At age 16, the attainment of most students is above the national expectation, with several students well above. This is in line with recent examination results and represents good progress over the last two years. Teachers' detailed knowledge of students with special educational needs results in their making similar progress to that of the other students. Higher attaining students are adept at extracting relevant information from a range of sources. They have a good understanding of why levels of economic development vary between countries and which indicators are best used for determining these levels. In their coursework, they set up hypotheses and test them, using simple statistical methods, to analyse their fieldwork data. They use computers to improve the presentation of both text and graphs. Lower attaining students record their results accurately, but are less sure in drawing conclusions from their graphs. There is no obvious gender difference in attainment in any year group.
142. Sampling of sixth form work reveals standards in line with the recent A level results. Students write detailed notes and have a thorough understanding of such topics as coastal landforms and the hydrology of river basins. They use advanced statistical methods to analyse data. About half have yet to achieve that fluency in essay writing that will guarantee the highest examination grades.
143. Overall, teaching is very good, never less than satisfactory and occasionally excellent. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. Students' response to this quality of teaching is overwhelmingly positive. In an excellent Year 8 lesson on tourism in Kenya, the teacher's expert classroom management allowed five groups of students to work collaboratively both within and between groups. By circulating between groups he ensured that students' concentration was sustained. Teachers make good use of technology as a teaching aid, as seen in a lesson on development when a computer, linked to a projector, was used in a simulation exercise. Students enjoyed acting in the role of the president of a developing country and seeing how crucial decisions can radically affect a country's future. Their learning is assisted by the helpful guidance they receive in the use of a range of resources. In several lessons teachers help the development of students' literacy through the use of such devices as writing frames and practice in reading aloud. Good inclusive questioning ensures all students are actively involved. Lessons start with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling students to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. In a small number of comparatively less successful lessons, tasks are not sufficiently closely matched to individual needs, especially those of gifted and talented students. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Any potential disruptive behaviour is dealt with effectively and tactfully. Homework is set appropriately and provides valuable reinforcement to classroom learning. Work is marked regularly; teachers give helpful comments on how to improve performance.
144. Leadership and management of the subject are good and have been effective in raising standards. Support for new teachers is very good. All the minor points of criticism raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully and overall improvement is good. Well organised fieldwork gives students opportunities to enjoy the practical aspects of the subject, both individually and in small groups. There is no fieldwork currently in Year 9. Schemes of work are detailed and well written, providing very good coverage of syllabus requirements. The subject is not resting on its laurels. It realises that if current improvements are to be maintained more work is needed to ensure that tasks are more closely matched to individual needs, especially those of gifted and talented students.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The overall high quality of planning and of teaching.
- The effective progress made by students in individual lessons.
- The effective use of assessment, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to inform students of what they

have achieved and what to do next to improve.

- The very effective leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Precision of assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- Relationship between teaching pace and student understanding in Years 7 to 9.
- Application of ICT to the study of history.

145. The proportion of students achieving Grades A*-C at GCSE in 2002 at 81 per cent was well above the national average of 63 per cent. This figure has risen consistently since 1998 when 68 per cent students gained A*-C passes. Students performed better in history than in most other GCSE subjects. A level results in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages and improved in 2002. A significant indicator of the success of the subject as a whole is the rise in recruitment for examination courses at GCSE and A level. In 2002, 100 students were entered for GCSE history, compared with 75 in 2001 and 36 in 2000. In 2001, 29 students embarked on the A level course, compared with 12 in the previous year. Improving standards of performance, particularly in Years 10 and 11, where achievement is very good, can be attributed to a combination of good teaching and very sound subject management.
146. At entry to the college, students' standards are slightly above average. Standards in work seen across Years 7 to 9 are above national expectations. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average and students' achievement is good. Many gain the higher levels of the National Curriculum. Students in Year 7 are well grounded in the critical use of source material and understand the usefulness and limitations of different kinds of sources, including artefacts. They can also construct causal accounts, for example of the Norman victory at Hastings. In some classes, students demonstrate impressive skills of analysis, but because of the rapid pace of teaching, outcomes tend to be episodic, short-lived and infrequently captured in extended written accounts. This is rectified in Year 9 with well structured evaluative accounts of the treatment of former slaves in the period of Reconstruction following the American Civil War. Students make good progress, particularly in Year 9. For example, students in a middle set are able to use their knowledge of conditions in Europe in 1914 to propose a German military strategy for the opening months of the war, compare this with what actually happened and, on the basis of this, offer a critical analysis of the Schlieffen Plan. The ablest students in Year 9 can make sophisticated inferences from source material, for example on the attitudes of those 'joining up' in 1914, which allow them in turn to establish a plausible sense of period, of seeing the issues through contemporary eyes. Despite the high standards achieved, the ablest students in Year 9 lack a strategy for demonstrating the relative importance of causal factors.
147. By the end of Year 11, standards are above national averages and well above in Year 10. The ablest students in Year 10 show sound subject knowledge that they apply as context for evaluating evidence about Stalin's role in the Russian Revolution, for example in questioning the images Stalin subsequently produced of his 'heroic' role in the events in 1917 by reference to their knowledge that he played little if any part in these events. In explanations of the American economic boom, Year 10 students can assess the importance of different causal factors and begin to analyse the relative importance of causal factors. By Year 11, students can find patterns of cross-reference when analysing contemporary recollections of the Vietnam War. For example "Those who appear positive about the experience tend to have been higher ranking". They also understand that biased interpretations of the war can still be useful, once the circumstances and perspective of the authors are taken into account as with "This man may not be right, but he clearly felt he had done a good job". Impressive results are achieved by the least able students by the end of Year 11 as part of a very well organised Certificate of Achievement course. For example, when investigating methods of recruitment for the First World War, or aspects of the Hitler Youth Movement they show an ability to evaluate primary sources for both reliability and usefulness.
148. The overall quality of teaching is very good. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The scheme of work is exemplary and this provides a tight, lesson-by-lesson framework for teaching across the whole range from Year 7 to the sixth form. All lessons

contain a variety of learning 'episodes' with activities such as card sorts and data capturing that are consistent with the development of higher order thinking skills. This sort of approach is also suited to meeting the needs of students, since it makes tasks accessible whilst allowing students to 'exit' at different levels. Consequently, progress in learning is more than usually visible in most lessons. Occasionally, however, the planned framework is too tight for Years 7 to 9 and the pace of learning episodes too fast for students to consolidate their learning and gain a deep understanding of events. Particularly good use is made of video in many lessons. Teachers make good use of assessment to raise standards of attainment. Marking is both diagnostic and developmental and detailed portfolios are kept of students' work across all years, cross-moderated to achieve a consistency of outcome. In Years 7 and 8, because of lack of precision in marking criteria, the quality of assessment can be less accurate. Too few lessons make effective application of ICT to the students' historical studies.

149. Leadership and management in the subject are very good. The subject leader has created a shared vision and employs an inclusive, collaborative style of management. Planning is of a very high order and resources are well husbanded. The head of department provides strong subject leadership. This includes self-review but not as yet on a regular or systematic basis.
150. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in terms of standards reached at GCSE and standards of work seen in all years. Noticeable improvements have occurred in both lesson planning and methods of assessment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching by specialist subject teachers.
- The effective use of assessment to support progress, including the use of student self-assessment.
- The learning gains students' make particularly in the most effectively taught lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The adverse effect of the low curriculum time allocation in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Lack of access to resources for cross-curricular use of ICT.
- The number of lessons taught by non-specialist teachers in the subject.

151. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. Standards since the last inspection have improved, with an increase in the number of students reaching level 5 and above. There has been some fluctuation in the numbers who reach level 6 and above, but overall the trend is upwards. As a significant group of students' attainment is below average, on entry in Year 7, this represents very good achievement, especially as the time devoted to the subject is limited. Students' overall attainment in the work seen was average. In Year 7 in working with spreadsheets, students can organise and refine their work for presentation. By Year 8 they are able to produce a range of graphical data and integrate it with text to meet the needs of a variety of audiences. Year 9 students working on a database project quickly developed skills in incorporating a 'front end' that includes the setting of control buttons to help a user handle queries more efficiently. Whilst students' achievement is good the time allocated allows little opportunity to reinforce their learning and apply their ICT capability in a range of subjects.
152. All students in Years 10 and 11 now follow courses leading to examination. These courses have been adopted following students' 100 per cent success in Certificate of Achievement courses. Students follow either the compulsory course leading to a key skills qualification and those who have chosen to study ICT in their optional choices follow courses leading to examination in either full or part one GNVQ at intermediate level. In previous years students followed other courses, which recorded their capabilities and achievement. Of a small group of students who followed the course leading to GCSE short course in 2002, 25 per cent achieved in the range A*-C and 100 per cent in the range A*-G. In some cases the students' grades were well above expectation.

Attainment in the work seen was above average. This and the students' GCSE results represent good achievement over Years 10 and 11. Students in a Year 11 GNVQ class displayed good understanding of how to create and manipulate shapes and images when introduced to a new software package as part of their graphics project. The Internet is effectively used and students in Year 10 displayed effective use of logical questioning and search engines to define precise information. Many can effectively link text and digital images, including video editing in media studies and digital montage work in photography.

153. The curriculum time provided in Years 7 to 9 is low, though the students achieve well because of the very good planning of the units of work. This is recognised by the college and plans are in hand to increase time from September 2003. The very good extra-curricular opportunities allow the well motivated students to make further gains and most students make use of these. However, the curriculum as it stands does not guarantee this for all students. Because of the number of courses timetabled to use ICT suites in Year 11, where the vocational options are popular, the opportunities for these suites to be used to provide access to subjects across the curriculum are limited. Consequently there is less evidence of subjects using ICT to support teaching than scrutiny of subject schemes of work would suggest. There are currently three ICT suites and enough wireless networked laptops to provide another complete mobile suite. There are times when as many as six separate classes of Year 11 lessons run concurrently. The Year 10 timetable is more efficient and offers greater opportunity for cross-curricular access. As the college's current building programme is completed this problem should disappear.
154. There are two specialist teachers of ICT. Some 15 other teachers contribute a few lessons each to teaching in the subject. The quality of teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good and excellent. This is especially so in the case of the specialist teachers. The head of department and the other subject specialists provide good support to the non-specialist teachers. All teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and transmit this enthusiasm well to their students. Where teaching is very good or excellent, the teachers' high level of subject knowledge is a key feature. This was seen in a Year 11 class where the teacher demonstrated good knowledge of the software and of examination requirements when helping students who were writing macros. They also have good knowledge of their students' attainment, both current and prior and of their target grades and set work accordingly. Specialist and non-specialist teachers of Year 9 students effectively match the students' tasks to their needs, through the unobtrusive setting of extension activities during lessons. Self-assessment is used well with students in Years 7 to 9 checking the work they do, in class and elsewhere, against level descriptors that have been translated into relevant language. Students are also taught to evidence their work against criteria, as preparation for courses offered in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' expectations of students' work are high. They make good use of projectors linked to computers to demonstrate the skills and techniques needed. Students quickly learn these skills and understand when and how to make use of them. Lessons are well planned, with time for demonstration, activity and discussion being appropriate to maintain a good pace and still ensure thoroughness in skill development and application of procedures learned. Planning of lessons is especially good in Years 7 to 9 where time is very limited. Very good planning allows several strands of ICT to be developed in each topic so students can record progress in different strands at one time. Literacy skills are well developed through the giving of definitions of new vocabulary and its appropriate use in context. Due attention is given to spelling and grammar in students' writing. Numeracy is also effectively developed, as in the selection of graph style to suit the data being displayed by students in Years 7 and 9.
155. Students quickly acquire new skills, make good effort and are well motivated. They sustain concentration well and have a good attitude to their learning. This is apparent in the participation in the extra curricular access to ICT. Supervised access is available each lunchtime and after college, both for homework and for research. Students who are well motivated and avail themselves of these facilities have the opportunity to reinforce skills learned in lessons in Years 7 to 9.
156. The subject is well led. The subject leader has a clear vision of how the subject should be developed to the benefit of the students. Management is difficult with so many non-specialist teachers making small contributions. The monitoring of their teaching and their regular attendance

at meetings cannot be guaranteed. Informal daily contact is an important factor in the management of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The accommodation in the ICT suites is good. The air-conditioned rooms are bright and welcoming and, together with the good display, contribute well to the pleasant working environment created in lessons. The acoustics in these large rooms can cause problems when teachers try to involve all students in class discussion. Some quietly spoken students struggle to be heard. With the addition of mobile suites provided by the wireless networked laptops, the student to computer ratio of 1:7 is in line with current recommendations. Sufficient textbooks to support learning are available for all courses taught.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- 14 – 16 year olds make good progress and reach above average standards.
- There is a consistent approach to lesson planning based on a three-part lesson.
- There is an innovative curriculum for 14 -16 year olds, including NCFE Vocational courses.
- Thorough systems for assessment ensure students know how they are progressing.
- Exchanges, residential visits and letter links support the subject very well.
- There is good use of ICT to enhance learning.

Areas for improvement

- Progression in the German curriculum for 11-14 year olds is too slow.
- There are not enough opportunities for younger students to write paragraphs or short texts.
- There are some weaknesses in teaching approaches, eg in the use of the foreign language in lessons.

157. Results at GCSE have fluctuated since the last inspection, where they were well above the national average for students gaining A*-C grades. In 1998 they fell below the average, but by 2001 had returned to above average. In 2002, both French and German results were broadly in line with the national average. In French, girls did significantly better than boys and this gap in performance was larger than that found nationally. Eighty per cent of students were entered for GCSE French, which is well above the national norm.
158. In the work seen the students' attainment is overall in line with the national average by the end of Year 9. In French it is above average and in Year 9 German it is below average. Students, in both languages, are able to talk about the hobbies they enjoy most and higher attaining students can extend these sentences to include details of where and with whom they go. In writing, they record vocabulary and write both short and extended sentences on a regular basis. However, in German, few consistently write paragraphs or short texts and whilst some easily provide sentences in different tenses, there are few occasions where students use more than one tense at a time. In French these weaknesses are not evident and students make better progress. Overall students' achievement is satisfactory, though higher attaining students are not sufficiently extended in German.
159. Students' attainment, at age 16, is improving and is above average in both languages. Students are producing longer passages of writing from early on in the GCSE course and are combining different tenses, stating their opinions and explaining their reasons. For example, Year 10 students are building up short oral presentations in French on work and future plans, increasingly relying on memory. In German, hotel role-plays are spoken with some confidence and students are able to deal with unexpected questions. Average attaining students do better in reading and listening than in speaking and writing. Students following the NCFE level one vocational courses are able to understand key details from tape recordings and are building up a good range of vocabulary, which they then effectively use in role-plays. The students' achievement over Years 10 and 11 is good.
160. For students of all ages, pronunciation is better in German than in French. In French, most students are able to repeat material successfully based on the teachers' spoken models, but average and lower attaining students in particular then find difficulty in reading aloud from the printed word during pair work.
161. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory; in Years 10 and 11 it is good. For all year groups careful attention is paid to the structure of lessons and three-part lessons including plenaries are a consistent feature. Lessons frequently begin with oral activities involving fast paced question and answer work, often supported with visuals on the overhead projector. Teachers have a good repertoire of techniques to practise the core vocabulary and structures. Pair work is also

consistently used to give students the opportunity to extend their speaking skills. Students in Years 7 to 9 hear consistently good spoken models of the language they are learning. However, the written models are not always sufficiently clear and bold to help students learn easily. In addition, there is not enough explicit teaching of the relationship between sounds and writing, which leads to weaknesses in pronunciation, especially when students are working independently of the teacher.

162. In Years 10 and 11 teachers plan lessons and use materials, which are closely matched to examination requirements and they regularly explain to students the relevance of their learning activities. In Years 7 to 9, learning objectives are less precise and students are less aware of where lessons are leading and what they will be able to do by the end of a unit of work. As a result, students' interest and motivation are not as high as they might be. In German, the tightly focused topic based approach does not allow the younger students to develop and extend their learning sufficiently.
163. In all year groups there are examples of very good teaching where French or German is used consistently to run the lesson. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, on numbers, very effective use of mime and gesture helped make sure that students understood exactly what they had to do. Similarly, in a GCSE class a sequence of activities was skilfully managed entirely in German and students coped very well. In these circumstances, students make additional gains in listening skills and also come to see the practical value of the language as a means of communication. However, this approach to teaching is not consistent across the subject and in a minority of lessons both teachers and students speak too much English. There is a good, planned programme for students to combine ICT with language learning and teachers are also experimenting with ICT in their classrooms.
164. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum for 14 –16 year olds has been enhanced by the addition of Certificate of Achievement level one courses, which are well matched to the interests of students following vocational courses. Exchanges, residential visits and letter links have been developed and enhance students' classroom experience considerably. Procedures for assessing students' work are good and older students receive helpful feedback on how to improve the standard of their work. Three newly qualified teachers were appointed in September 2001. The induction and support for these teachers is a strength and has developed the capacity of the subject to improve further. The subject management plan contains relevant aims and objectives, but self-evaluation is at present carried out too informally. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. In the last few years the subject has undergone major staff changes, which have led to some lack of continuity in learning and also in curriculum provision.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are very good in Years 7-9 and outstanding in Years 10 and 11.
- Progress and achievement are very good in all years.
- Students enjoy their lessons thoroughly and work with commitment. Numbers in the option groups are above the national average group size and are rising rapidly.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Standards and provision in the enrichment curriculum are outstanding.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient resources to develop skills in music technology in Years 7-9.
- There are insufficient rooms for both whole class and small group work.

165. At the end of Year 9 standards are very good. Most students are above national levels with a significant proportion achieving very good and exceptional levels of performance. In performing,

students sing very well and with confidence. They can maintain a solo line or backing harmony against a background of chords and they also sing unaccompanied. They play a variety of instruments and their ensemble skills are good. They listen very carefully to each other and maintain their individual parts. Compositions demonstrate good control and understanding of melody, harmony and rhythm and they create imaginative music within appropriate structures. They understand and maintain different styles very well and can create songs and jingles for particular themes. Their compositions are often very thoughtful and expressive. Songs written for a module of work on Anne Frank demonstrate this deeper understanding of the power of music very well. Listening and appraising skills are good. Students listen very carefully and enthusiastically offer opinions and facts about the music they hear. They use musical terminology correctly and understand how different musical techniques can create different emotions and moods. They can use music technology in their work but more resources are needed to develop these skills fully. Progress and achievement in lessons and across the Years 7 to 9 are very good. For those students identified as gifted and talented the progress made in the extension classes is excellent.

166. At the end of Year 11 standards are outstanding. For the last five years over 90 per cent of the students have achieved grades A*-C and approximately 50 per cent of these have achieved A* and A grades. Results are significantly above the national averages for the subject. Work seen and heard in the inspection confirms that these outstanding standards have been maintained. Many performances were worthy of full marks. Performances are accurate and musical and delivered with confidence. Students play a variety of instruments in many, varied styles. They understand and maintain their chosen styles and ensemble performances are thoughtfully balanced and very neatly co-ordinated. In composing, they choose various styles for their work. They demonstrate very good control of minimalist techniques, they use complex harmony in their songs and part writing is well understood in their Pavaues. Structures are developed and balanced in their work. Students use music technology to realise their compositions. In their written accounts they show a very good understanding of their chosen areas of study and the related musical techniques. They use terminology appropriately to describe these. Progress across the key stage is very good. For those who take examinations early, achievement is very good.
167. Teaching is very good overall. It is never less than good and several lessons were excellent. Teachers establish a very good learning environment in their lessons and music is enjoyed and respected by the students who always behave very well. Lessons are very well planned with a variety of tasks, which sustain students' interest. Tasks are timed which maintains a very good pace in the lessons and encourages the students to maintain concentration and to work hard. Explanations are very clear and well supported by musical examples. Teachers are talented and very good subject skills enable them to help all students. In a Year 10 lesson the teacher gave a clear, very helpful and light-hearted musical demonstration of how to overcome the initial difficulties of writing a song. This was much appreciated by the students who were clearly enthused as well as informed. Questions are well directed to check knowledge and understanding and teachers take care to include all the students. They respond enthusiastically and their answers are valued. Performances are valued and celebrated which develops confidence. Classroom management is very good and students appreciate the lively, good-humoured teaching. Relationships are particularly good and the shared sense of trust between students and teachers gives everyone the confidence to do their best. Students co-operate very well and support each other in their group music making. In the very best lessons, teachers set very high expectations for work and behaviour and students respond wholeheartedly. In one inspirational lesson, Year 9 students produced a most effective piece combining their own music, drama and poetry. Taking their lead from the teacher, students' levels of concentration were excellent and the skills and understanding involved in portraying the theme of war and conflict were excellent.
168. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The subject leader has a very clear and imaginative sense of direction for the subject and a successful music student council also contributes to the planning and running of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent. The curriculum is well devised and exciting with all strands of the curriculum integrated. The course is imaginatively planned to develop practical skills, knowledge and understanding alongside an understanding of the wider meaning and role of music. Music makes

a high contribution to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and multicultural awareness of the students. Music is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11. Numbers are above national average group sizes with four groups studying the subject in curriculum time and a further three groups in the extension classes. Assessment procedures, both ongoing and formative, are very good and very clear. All students have a very clear understanding of how to succeed.

169. Provision in the enriched curriculum is excellent and teachers work very hard, giving freely of both their time and expertise. There are extension classes for the gifted and talented students in each year group after college and a music study centre helps with homework. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities takes place during the day and caters for a wide variety of musical tastes. These include choir, orchestra, swing band, folk ensemble, junk band, soul band, company, jazz band, Year 7 band, Year 8 band, World Scene group, boys' band and various instrumental ensembles. Standards are very high in all the groups and a very successful performance of the musical Korczak was staged last term. Standards compare very well nationally and the different ensembles have reached the finals at the South Bank for the last few years. Many performances and concerts are held each year. Students regularly perform in assembly, in college concerts, in the community and at county and national events. Half the college took part recently in the Arts Festival as part of the enrichment activities. Students also have opportunities to travel abroad playing in musical groups. Thirteen peripatetic teachers provide instrumental tuition for nearly 100 hours per week. Approximately 25 per cent of the students have lessons in piano, strings, woodwind, brass, voice, guitar and percussion. This is much larger than the national average of ten per cent. Standards in the instrumental lessons are good overall and are often very good and excellent. Styles of teaching vary more widely in this area of the subject but teaching is good overall and some very good and excellent lessons were seen.
170. In 2001, the subject moved into new accommodation but this is not enough for curriculum needs, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Lack of separate spaces adversely affects progress for some students who cannot hear their own work clearly when working on small group performances and compositions. The subject has a good range of instruments for acoustic music making but more computers and software are needed to allow students in Years 7 to 9 to develop regularly their skills in music technology.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers' outstanding subject knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm.
- The outstanding quality of the extra-curricular activities.
- Outstanding accommodation, facilities and resources that allow the many physical activities, games, and dance to be studied.
- The students' very positive attitudes and consistently very high standards of behaviour.
- Outstanding GCSE and A level examination results.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of teaching and learning.

171. The GCSE results in 2002 were excellent, being very significantly above the national average with 94 per cent of students achieving grades A*-C, and 100 per cent achieving grades A*-D. Results at A level are of a similarly high standard. Over time, at both GCSE and A level, these high standards have been well maintained. There was no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls. In dance, where there is no comparative data nationally, 70 per cent of students achieved A*-C grades and 100 per cent achieved grades A*-D. These very successful examination results are the well earned outcome of the hard work and will to succeed of both students and staff.
172. Assessment data indicates that, on entry to the college, most students have satisfactory levels of attainment overall. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above average. Students make significant progress in all areas of physical activities, games, gymnastics and dance. They know

how to warm up safely and independently before exercise and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. In team games such as hockey and football, they develop the skills, techniques and strategies required to play with confidence and enjoyment. In a Year 9 football lesson students showed very good understanding of positioning and use of space when passing the ball and applied advanced attacking and defensive strategies well. In gymnastics students make very good progress in response to some very challenging tasks. A Year 8 class worked, firstly in pairs and then in small groups, to design and perform a sequence of well co-ordinated movements on a variety of apparatus. They linked balances, jumps and rolls together very competently and varied the pace and direction of their movements. Students displayed a high degree of confidence and relied on each other for support and encouragement. In all years an outstanding feature of most lessons is the development of the ability to evaluate, in a helpful, analytical manner, their own performance and that of others. They increasingly take responsibility for self-improvement by refining their technique and adapting their skills. Where students have benefited from the gifted and talented programme some display individual performances of an excellent quality.

173. As a result of very effective and often inspirational teaching, students' achievement and progress in dance are outstanding in all years. They develop a very good understanding of composition, skills and techniques and use specialist vocabulary correctly. In Years 10 and 11 students continue to improve their level of competence in a number of games and activities they have chosen from a wide range of options. Standards reached by students in Year 11 are very good overall. Strategies and tactics are understood well and demonstrated both in lessons and in sporting fixtures against other schools. Students make very good use of the equipment in the multi-gym to improve their levels of fitness, stamina and strength. They develop a good understanding of the rules, skills, and techniques of a variety of games and practise to improve their own performance. In badminton students in Year 11 are developing a good range of shots and practised a variety of serves and responses to outwit their opponents. All students' work is assessed so that they gain external accreditation for their endeavours. Students with special educational needs achieve very well and at the same rate as other students in the class. They are fully included in all lessons. Their individual requirements are well known to the staff and appropriate support is provided when necessary.
174. A very small number of sixth form lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from these lessons and from the scrutiny of students' written work indicates that achievement and progress for those studying examination courses is excellent, with students reaching very high standards as a result of very effective teaching. The majority of sixth form students have access to a variety of recreational physical activities both during and after the college day.
175. Overall the quality of teaching and its impact on learning is very good. In a significant number of lessons it was excellent. The teachers have extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject and this, together with the very high level of individual expertise in the department, provides students with very well informed and specialist teaching. The planning and organisation of lessons are very good and take into account the previous experience of students, providing challenging tasks at various levels. On a few occasions, students are inactive in lessons for too long listening to coaching tips with the result that lessons lose impetus, students get cold and their concentration wavers. Very enthusiastic teaching and high quality demonstration of skills, for example modelling a cartwheel slowly then quickly in a gymnastics lesson, assisted students in improving their technique and the quality of their sequence of movements. Relationships are excellent; based on mutual respect, they give students the confidence to try new activities and techniques and to ask and answer questions. This provides an atmosphere that is caring, safe and conducive to learning. Behaviour is very good because most students are interested in the lessons and appreciate the teachers' efforts to help them. Students wear correct clothing for PE, change quickly and are keen to do well. Participation in lessons is very good. The wide variety of physical activities and games clubs available to students before lessons, at lunchtime and at the end of the college day has a significant impact on their achievement and progress and reflects the very high commitment teachers, specialist coaches and support staff make to the students and the subject.

176. Assessment procedures are very effective overall with students receiving grades for effort and achievement. They are set appropriate targets and have a clear understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses and how to make progress. The monitoring of the teaching of literacy, numeracy and citizenship is underdeveloped. Though there was some good and very good teaching of these areas in lessons students' progress is not systematically recorded.
177. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Although due to unforeseen circumstances the Director of PE and Sport was not present during the inspection, the procedures in place for planning, organising and documenting activities within the department are of a very high calibre. The subject leader works very well with the PE staff, providing effective leadership and management and giving clear educational direction. Improvements to the subject are meticulously identified, targeted and addressed; since the last inspection overall improvement has been very good. Although teachers frequently observe each other's lessons and share good practice, any comparative weaknesses in teaching and learning are not targeted and addressed systematically as the subject leader and his senior staff do not monitor lessons sufficiently, although the subject has plans in place for this to happen. A number of innovative and exciting developments are in place that help to raise the status of PE, games and dance in the college, raise achievement and progress in neighbouring primary schools and partner secondary schools, and promote sport for all in the locality. The initial teacher training (ITT) status of the college not only provides the department with additional support in some lessons but also provides its teachers with an ongoing programme of staff development as they mentor the students. The collaborative work with its feeder primary schools in sharing expertise through a programme of demonstration lessons is highly valued by all participants. Students respond very enthusiastically to the outstanding extra-curricular programme and enjoy individual success at various levels. Facilities for physical activities, games and dance are excellent and make a very positive impact on standards, allowing students and teachers the opportunity to work in attractive, well-designed settings.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and effectively supports the students' learning and achievement.
- Assessment supports learning and progress.
- Subject leadership has a strong commitment to improving performance.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies to address more effectively the learning of lower attaining students.
- Extra-curricular experiences to enrich understanding.
- ICT is insufficiently used.

178. Students enter the college with standards that are broadly average, though their experience of religious education displays a wide variation. By the end of Year 9 students have made good progress and levels of attainment are above the national average. All students in Years 10 and 11 take the short course in GCSE with about a quarter electing to take the full course. Results for 2002 were above average, with 50 students in the full course gaining 73 per cent A*-C grades and the remainder on the short course 78 per cent A*-C.
179. In Years 7 to 9 students make good progress and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is above average. They can recognise religious symbols and understand their significance not only in Christianity but also Sikhism and Buddhism. They have the opportunity to reflect on the connection between belief and action, as in a lesson on Mother Theresa who lived out gospel values, or consideration of community life in a Buddhist monastery and what similarities there might be to their own experience of communities. Higher attaining students were able to explain religious beliefs more fully although lower attaining students had the opportunity, particularly in paired work, to contribute to discussion. The match of students' work to their learning need was

more by outcome than task and on occasion this did not facilitate the progress of students with special educational needs (SEN) or support the achievement of the lower attaining students. For example, work set was started but remained largely unfinished. All were able to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of key words and religious concepts, which were displayed and rehearsed regularly. Over time the students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good.

180. Students' current attainment is well above average and shows an improvement on the 2002 examination results. In Years 10 and 11 progress is very good so that by the end of Year 11 students can explain confidently the different ways that faith groups express their beliefs, as for example a study of Christian and Muslim approaches to marriage. They respond with feeling and a keen sense of justice to a range of contemporary moral issues. For instance in Year 10 a group discussion on homosexuality and child adoption developed skills of debate, while a discussion in Year 11 on the media's portrayal of Islam after the events of September 11th challenged students to identify prejudice in daily life. These issues were discussed maturely and thoughtfully, using their own and other's experiences. Students of all abilities are included in discussion, although the higher attaining students take the lead in developing arguments more readily. Gifted and talented students are identified and challenged to introduce higher level arguments and reflection.
181. Though no lessons were observed in the sixth form the statutory requirements for religious education are now met. Students receive over 20 hours contact with the subject a year delivered through the key skills communication course. The scheme of work and student tasks have a strong emphasis on current moral and ethical issues.
182. The majority of students have a positive attitude to the subject and their teachers, responding well to the expectations set. Behaviour in classes is usually good. Written work is overall satisfactory and good in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining students have work of good quality while others present less careful and sometimes unfinished assignments. Display work is of a good quality. In lessons, students usually work purposefully, in pairs or in groups, gaining confidence to express themselves without fear.
183. Teaching is good overall with examples of very good practice. In the one lesson where teaching was poor, weaknesses in classroom management and the lack of challenge led to students not making any intellectual effort and quickly losing interest in their work. In the majority of lessons there is a good use of time and resources, a brisk pace and opportunity for students to be involved in their own learning. Homework is set regularly and reinforces what has been learned in lessons. For example, students were asked to design a Sikh sanctuary in a room in their own house. Good teaching strategies support good learning, particularly the appropriate use of video clips and newspaper articles to promote discussion. Teachers' questions do not always challenge the higher attainers, often settling for the first answer without probing further and pushing the student to think more deeply and elaborate their response. Likewise questioning can leave the quieter and the lower attaining students unchallenged or passed over, the teacher allowing the same few to answer all the questions. Where teaching is very good, all students are involved and expected to take an active part in discussion where their views are always valued.
184. Learning is good because the students are given time to evaluate their own progress and they know what level they have achieved at the end of each module. They make medium and long term gains in their knowledge and understanding, for example more confident use of religious terms and fuller answers in Year 9 compared to Year 7. Teachers are precise in their use of religious language and this helps students to recognise the similarities and differences in world religions. Independent learning is encouraged especially in Years 10 and 11 where students are given the opportunity to present a critique of another's work and in that process learn to understand and improve their own. Again a group preparing for the full course GCSE course have extra lessons after college in their own time, demonstrating commitment and good study skills. The learning gap between boys and girls is closing. Just as many boys are now opting to take the full course and their positive perception of religious studies is a reflection of the positive role modelling and inspiration of the male teachers.

185. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students, particularly through the study of other faiths and cultures. Extra-curricular activities such as visits to local places of worship including those of different faiths have yet to be developed and such enriching resources to support learning remain untapped. A committed Young Christian Youth group have visited the college and enlivened the students' experience with music and drama.

186. The subject is well managed with a clear, shared vision and a commitment to improvement and development. Progress and attainment are well monitored and assessment is good because it supports good learning. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Marking has improved and provides the students with clear guidance on how to improve, especially in examination preparation. Resources and accommodation are likewise much improved and there are sufficient text books, but the use of ICT has still to be developed. Provision in the sixth form now meets statutory requirements. The subject's contribution to Citizenship has been outlined but the discrete nature of its delivery and assessment is not fully understood or implemented.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Results in GCSE and AS/A level examinations are well above average.
- The outstanding quality of teaching and high expectations of students.
- Commitment and enthusiasm of students in lessons and public performance.
- The high quality of the extra-curricular provision and enrichment.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The subject has, however, identified appropriate priorities for development in its management plan.

187. The most recent results in GCSE were outstanding, exceeding the national average for students gaining A*-C grades by 25 per cent. AS and A level theatre studies results were also above the national average.

188. In lessons observed and in the scrutiny of work, standards are consistently very good and often excellent at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, outstanding teaching enabled the whole class to create a very moving piece of theatre based on a very challenging prose extract from Haley's 'Roots'. Two Year 10 classes, clearly very well taught to date, combined impressively in their final rehearsal for public performance of a range of Shakespeare extracts on the theme of love. In contrast, a small inclusion group of four Year 10 boys were able to achieve considerable success in their work, exploring character through masks, because of the teacher's high expectations and command of her subject. In another lesson, Year 11 GCSE students showed considerable commitment and skill in their use of 'forum theatre' as they prepared to work with Year 7 and 8 students. In the sixth form students are increasingly able to take responsibility for developing and reflecting critically on their own work. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson where they led their own warm-up to achieve the necessary mental focus for their rehearsal of a Greek tragedy extract. Year 13 students also showed considerable confidence in their critical awareness, using theoretical and practical knowledge to improve their performance of a Ted Hughes piece. These very good practical achievements are reflected in the high quality written assignments produced by Year 12 and 13 students. It is particularly significant that the work of students in AS and A-Level theatre studies has on two occasions been filmed as exemplar material by the examining body and distributed nationally for training purposes.

189. The quality of teaching is consistently very good and sometimes outstanding. Subject knowledge is very strong across the subject and teachers use this most effectively. In Years 7 to 9 the well designed schemes of work enable students to develop and learn a wide range of drama and theatre skills. This lays solid foundations for those who choose to continue drama into GCSE and

then into A level where high quality teaching enhances students' performance skills and also prepares them for the demands of the written examinations.

190. Drama is very well managed. Relationships within the team are secure and open, engendering a reflective and self-critical sharing of ideas. The subject handbook reflects this in its statement of aims and expectations of students' learning. Of particular significance is the excellent work done by the team to map levels of assessment in making, performing and responding to drama. The quality of the work in drama is undoubtedly enhanced by the superb accommodation. Studios are very well equipped technically and enriched by a stimulating range of photographs, texts and posters. Improvement since the last inspection is very good and includes an increase in specialist staffing, developments in the Years 7 to 9 scheme of work, better GCSE results and enhanced resources.
191. Drama is a strength in the college, contributing significantly to students' personal, social, cultural and spiritual development. They are given regular opportunities to link their curriculum and extra-curricular work through high quality performance and in productions for the wider community.

MEDIA STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Results in GCSE and AS/A level examinations are well above average.
- The very good quality of teaching and high expectations of students.
- The quality of resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of subject accommodation.

192. Media Studies is an increasingly popular subject in the college at both GCSE, AS and A level. GCSE results in 2002 were very good, with almost 70 per cent of students gaining A*-C grades, which was well above the national average. AS level results were also well above average for students gaining A/B grades. At A level the results were more in line with national performance, but with half of the students entered achieving grades A-C grades.
193. These high standards are reflected in the lessons observed and in the scrutiny of students' work. Media concepts are well understood by students and their levels of ICT skills are very good. This was particularly evident in Year 11. Students are very keen to discuss their ideas and to take account of different viewpoints on moral and ethical issues arising from their studies. They enjoy the subject's relevance to their own lives and interests, making very good use of Internet websites to support their work. This is seen in some of the Year 13 work on how asylum seekers are represented in the press, enabling students to confront current social, political and economic issues. There is also some especially impressive writing on the cinematic genre, analysing, for example, the development of the 'Star Wars' films or the impact of feminist film theory. Students are able to make very good use of the media resources available to them to create their own products. A very good example of this is the film opening made by a Year 13 student where he shows not only a secure knowledge of the 'gangster movie' genre but also demonstrates his skills in camera use and editing.
194. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject well and use their knowledge most effectively to meet students' learning needs. This is demonstrated in the excellent diagnostic feedback provided in the thorough marking and assessment of the students' work. It is also seen in the quality of teachers' questioning techniques, effectively probing to ensure students think through their responses and modelling the use of appropriate analytical language. Planning is meticulous, as is the tracking and recording of students' progress and attainment. This enables teachers to provide students with individual progress reports and to keep them on target as courses develop.

195. There is good support for learning outside timetabled lessons. Students are encouraged to use media resources at lunchtimes and after college. A group of Year 13 students is working on a real media product featuring the development of the Buckfastleigh Broad Band. A club for Year 7 to 9 students has recently been established and this is already proving popular in giving them a taste of the subject. The subject has introduced an annual media industry day, successfully involving a range of media professionals and open to neighbouring schools.
196. The teaching staff are well qualified and are very effectively supported by their non-teaching technical assistant. Resources are very good, based in the media studies office, which also serves as the main teaching room. This means that a number of lessons have to be taught in ordinary classrooms without proper access to essential resources. Overall, therefore, the accommodation for teaching the subject is inadequate.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	25	92	*	40	*	76.80	*
Biology	35	94	*	46	*	78.29	*
Design and Technology	9	78	*	11	*	46.67	*
Art	1	100	*	0	*	40.00	*
Music	4	100	*	100	*	120.1	*
History	29	90	*	28	*	66.90	*
Government and Politics	11	100	*	18	*	69.09	*
Psychology	17	94	*	29	*	78.82	*
English	34	97	*	44	*	82.35	*
Modern foreign Languages - French	6	83	*	33	*	60.00	*

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	15	93	*	53	*	90.91	*
Biology	21	100	*	24	*	64.76	*
Design and Technology	9	100	*	33	*	71.11	*
Business and Economics	24	100	*	29	*	78.33	*
ICT	2	100	*	0	*	60.00	*
Health and Social Care	5	80	*	0	*	52.00	*
Art	9	100	*	44	*	74.00	*
Music	1	100	*	0	*	60.00	*
History	10	100	*	40	*	82.00	*
Government and Politics	5	100	*	20	*	84.00	*
Psychology	6	100	*	17	*	76.67	*
English	38	100	*	34	*	78.95	*
Modern foreign Languages - French	4	100	*	75	*	105.00	*

**National comparison data for results in 2002 is not yet available.*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on Mathematics and Biology AS and A level courses.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The college provides a good range of options that match students' needs and responds flexibly when individual students need to change course.
- Academic support and guidance is strong.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the achievement of female students.
- Improve the pace and efficiency of teaching by adapting those techniques that are used successfully in other years.
- Extend the monitoring of teaching and learning to raise achievement.

197. Standards of Year 13 work are average and consistent with examination results in recent years. In 2001, A level examination results were in line with the national average, as they were in the previous year. In 1999 they had been well below average. The improvement since that time has been sustained. Students' progress from GCSE to A level is generally as expected so achievement is satisfactory but a disproportionate number of girls do not reach the standards of which they are capable. The results in 2002, the first following the new teaching programmes, are of a similar standard to those in 2001. They cannot be compared to national results, as these are not yet available. However, students made satisfactory progress and generally achieved their target grade. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection. The results of AS level examinations in 2002 were broadly in line with students' targets. Though small in number, students do well in further mathematics. The proportion of students continuing to A level is generally good. Few students withdrew from courses in the last two years.

198. The standard of Year 13 students' written work and that seen during lessons is average and consistent with their GCSE grades. The most capable students are making good progress. Male students discuss their work confidently; female students less so but none-the-less, well. They show a sound knowledge of both processes and the principles underlying them. The standard of work done by Year 12 students studying AS level over one year is average. The most capable can use and interpret derivatives well and use them to find equations of tangents and normals. Students who studied intermediate mathematics at GCSE level follow a two year AS course and are making steady progress although the standard of their work is below average. They struggle with more abstract ideas that characterise advanced mathematics such as those of trigonometric functions but commit considerable effort to master the work. Students intending to follow the course through to A Level make satisfactory progress. A small number of students retake GCSE examinations and significantly improve their grades.

199. Teaching is satisfactory, as is learning. Teachers have a very good knowledge of mathematics and the requirements of the courses that they teach. This enables them to enrich the examples provided by textbooks and respond well to questions raised by students. For example, in a lesson on areas bounded by curves, the teacher drew on telling examples that clarified problems involving polar equations encountered by high attaining students. The high level of help and guidance

provided by teachers extends beyond normal lessons and is much appreciated by those students who have benefited from additional support. The pace of learning in good lessons is rapid; for example, when the teacher provided students with only short periods for checking their understanding of simple partial fractions before moving briskly on to more challenging examples. Where teaching is less effective, the pace slackens, either because planning has been insufficiently thorough or too much time has been allowed for exercises that could have been completed later, allowing students to gain greater benefit from their time in lessons.

200. Subject leadership is good and provides clear direction to developments; its management is satisfactory, with good features. Courses are imaginatively planned so that provision can be made for the small numbers that wish to follow different modules. Arrangements are made to ensure that, when students' ambitions change, they can be accommodated. Analysis of results is used effectively to plan developments imaginatively. This has led to improved standards at AS level. Monitoring of teaching has not been sufficiently effective to promote improvements to the extent evident in the main college. Satisfactory standards have been reached and maintained so that improvement since the time of the last inspection has been good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Above average standards of work.
- Good teaching.
- Very good relationships and a good working ethos.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT as a research tool to support students' learning in the subject and the provision of recommended internet site materials to support their work.
- The more effective use of ICT and visual aids as a teaching resource.

201. Results in A level biology in both 2001 and 2002 were above the national averages. The current students following the biology AS and the A level courses are also working at above average standards and are in line to maintain the college's above average standards in the summer of 2003. The students are making good progress; the standard of their work in Year 12 is much higher than that achieved on their science GCSE courses just a few months ago and virtually all the students are clearly exceeding their target predictions. Progress in Year 13 is similarly good. The retention rates are good.
202. The quality of teaching is overall good and often it is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, as is their knowledge of the students, and the lessons have an effective pace with high, but supported, expectations. The curriculum is well structured to give a good sequence to the lessons to help the students build their understanding of the challenging concepts. Teachers use a wide range of teaching and learning activities, for example, flash cards, group work, discussion and research. They also make sufficient references to everyday issues, to hold the students' interest well. For instance, in the human health and disease section of the course, the teachers take the work into some significant ethical issues in genetics, like the problems associated with weighing up the benefits of knowing if someone is a carrier of a disease against the problems with knowing that one might die early and the concomitant problems for life insurance and employers. The course is well structured and well taught.
203. Group sizes are appropriate with there being sufficient students to be able to explore ideas well within the group and yet each student has good access to the teacher when required. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and effective use is made of named questioning which gives positive feedback to both teachers and students alike. Assessment of students' work is frequent and informative. Students are kept well informed about how they are progressing and what they have to do to improve. Students have access to the syllabus for the

whole course together with guidance on marking criteria. The modular nature of the courses provides good motivation as well as objective measures of performance. Assessment is good.

204. For all the good teaching, the presentation of visual imagery is unsatisfactory, with poor quality overhead slide and projection equipment. These images are not as supportive as they need to be when trying to picture three-dimensional processes, for example, the cycle of the heart and the molecular level processes of transportation in multi-cellular plants. Similarly, the teaching does not make sufficient use of the Internet and the high quality technical sites available to the students as useful learning resources.
205. The quality of learning is very good. Students work hard and with care and are prepared to take risk with their ideas. They work well in groups and respond very well to the pleasant and very positive learning ethos of the subject. The students are very positive about the subject and appreciate the good mix of challenge and support. They were all aware of their target grades and of how well they were doing towards them.
206. The subject is well led and managed and the small group of teachers work well together. There is a good and effective scheme of work, which guides the work well, breaking it down into key learning objectives, suggested activities, texts to read, homework and revision questions. The accommodation within the science building is satisfactory but the lack of a library and good ICT equipment restricts opportunities for learning.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A level courses in design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- The students make good progress.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of staff to the subject and the achievement of high standards
- The very good relationships and quality of the individual guidance and support provided for students.

Areas for improvement

- The development of the students' critical and self-assessment skills.
- The students' access to resources for computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM).

207. By the end of the course, students usually reach standards, which are in line with the national average. However, they vary from year to year reflecting the wide range of abilities of those who study the subject. The A level results in 2001 were below average, but in 2002 they were above average and were the best results for five years. Over the past three years the students have done better than would be expected and their progress over the course has been good.
208. At AS level, a similar picture emerges. In 2001, standards were above average and students generally made greater progress from GCSE than would normally be expected. However in 2002, standards were below average and the students' progress was slightly below average relative to their performance at GCSE. Over the past three years students have done at least as well as expected overall.
209. Students' attainment in Years 12 and 13 is average for the AS and A level courses they are following. Overall this represents good achievement from their Year 11 GCSE grades. In a lesson seen, students in Year 13 were involved in product analysis, comparing the strengths and weaknesses of a range of kettles. They showed good evaluative skills, often challenging the views of others and they argued their views well. The students have the potential to achieve standards

that are close to average overall. In another lesson, in Year 12, students used modelling well to explore and refine ideas for the products that they were designing. For example, one student was designing catering equipment to open “boil in the bag” food products once they are cooked. He had considered a number of imaginative approaches, which he had simulated quickly in soft materials to explore how well they might work. The students have a good understanding of the subject. They are confident in analysing problems and developing solutions and they show the potential to achieve above average grades in their AS examinations. They have some experience of computer-aided design and manufacture, but this is currently underdeveloped, due to limited access to the necessary resources.

210. Teaching is generally good, with particularly good individual support and guidance provided by teachers, which the students value. The teachers have good levels of expertise and their diverse skills and backgrounds enrich the course. Teachers have good expectations 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. Teachers are enthusiastic and form very good relationships with their students and the ethos for learning is good. A particular strength in one lesson was the teacher’s ability to continuously extend learning and to challenge thinking through good questioning techniques. He also made good use of practical resources to exemplify and explore issues. However, insufficient use is made of industrial links and contexts for activities. The students appreciate the accessibility of teachers beyond lesson time. They enjoy their work in the subject and are keen to succeed. For many, design and technology is the subject in which they do best.

BUSINESS

The inspection covered business and economics. The college offers GNVQ business courses at intermediate level, AVCE single award courses in business and AS and A level courses in economics. These provide students with a good range of choice of vocational and more academic courses that meet their aspirations for higher education and prepare them effectively for employment. The subject is proving an increasingly popular choice and has doubled its intake in recent years, with good retention rates.

Business and economics

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved by students in the AVCE examination are high.
- The subject teaching is of a very good quality.
- The effective systems for assessment and tracking of students’ progress.

Areas for improvement

- There are limitations on learning from the lack of access to a college library.

211. In 2001 results for sixth form business vocational qualifications were significantly above the national average both in terms of average point scores and grades achieved; 60 per cent of students achieved a distinction, eight students achieved the double AVCE award of which two students achieved double AAs and all students passed. These results show a sustained improvement over the last four years with an increasing proportion of students gaining a distinction. The latest results for A level economics in 2000 show that standards were in line with the national average, and all students passed. There has been a steady improvement in standards in business and economics since the last inspection with an increasing proportion of students achieving the top grades.

212. Students’ attainment on all courses is above average. Overall their achievement is good and frequently very good. The subject undertakes very thorough analysis of value-added and students

exceed the grades, which could be expected on the basis of their GCSE results, by at least one grade and sometimes two. This is a very good outcome and owes much to the very high quality of teaching in the subject and to the students' own motivation and determination to succeed. The subject's individual tracking records for each student make an important contribution to progress. Through one-to-one tutorial arrangements students have an opportunity to discuss their grades, understand how many points they need to gain to achieve the next grade up and set challenging but realistic targets for attainment. In this, students enjoy effective support from teaching staff.

213. In a Year 12 intermediate GNVQ lesson on administration linked to a visit to Cadbury's World students demonstrated good understanding of how to compile action plans and their purpose. Each student successfully completed individual action plans, listing objectives of the trip, planned activities, ordering and allocating tasks and monitoring progress throughout the week. The second part of the lesson focused on planning a meeting, setting the agenda and thinking through the meeting structure. The complexity and detail of these meeting plans were very good; students were able to speculate and anticipate how the meeting might progress and the roles of people present.
214. Two lessons were seen of the Year 12 AVCE/AS group, in both the overall level of student achievement and learning was very good. In one lesson on the competitive business environment students considered how UK business may be affected by the international environment, specifically the arguments for and against entry into the Euro. Students responded very well to challenging and difficult questioning about a recent unexpected cut in interest rates, its implications for macro-economic policy, exchange rates and inflation. Using their skills in economic and business analysis they were able to think through the implications for economic policy. This generated a good discussion of arguments for and against entry into the Euro when students articulated their ideas clearly and persuasively. They also showed a real open mindedness and willingness to be persuaded by evidence and argument as the majority shifted from one side of the argument to the other between the beginning and conclusion of the debate. The second Year 12 AVCE lesson concerned marketing strategy research. This was a particularly successful lesson in which students worked on a questionnaire as part of market research to promote a new product. The students were enthusiastic about the project, showed very good understanding of research strategies using primary and secondary sources, using open and closed questions, qualitative and quantitative data and the essential features of a good questionnaire. They worked effectively in groups in the ICT suite to produce good questionnaires. A sample of Year 12 written responses showed a wide range of grades achieved, but in all cases the work was well organised and presented neatly even though the content in a few cases was not yet AS level. The best work showed students developing skills in analysis, evaluation and deduction.
215. Only one Year 13 economics lesson was seen on this inspection, which was about economics in a European context. Bringing together a number of economic theories, it provided challenging opportunities for students to apply their knowledge to a current policy issue about Britain's competitiveness in Europe. Overall attainment in the course is above average. Students showed a good capacity to use analytical concepts to examine and evaluate the impact of the recent interest rate cuts and to articulate their arguments using correct economic logic and terminology. The sample of Year 13 written work contained many examples of high quality output. Work was very well organised, carefully researched using a range of primary and secondary sources with graphic data analysis and well developed argument supported by good illustrative material from the Sainsbury assignment and some excellent evaluation of how well business meets its objective. This evidence showed a high quality of learning opportunities for all students based on a careful match of task to their learning needs.
216. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have an impressive range of knowledge and understanding of subject content, combined with great enthusiasm and commitment. The impact on students' learning is always very positive. These strong elements translate into very stimulating and challenging lessons. Expectations are high, the pace demanding and conceptual analysis and theory are always closely related to current and real business or economic problems, so that students can readily understand theory and practice. The subject becomes alive, interesting and relevant to students' own lives. Questioning is always effective and demanding, pushing students'

understanding of the subject forward, but careful attention is also given to matching activities to students' needs so as to ensure learning opportunities for all students. Lessons are well planned, activities are interesting and involve opportunities for research and practical applications, for example using a number of enterprises for study, Cadbury's, Sainsbury's and South Dartmoor Community College, when the course requires just one. Homework is well marked and moderation is extremely thorough. Teacher and student relationships are very good.

217. Students are well motivated and they achieve well above the course expectations. They develop good skills in research and critical analysis; presentation is of a good standard and contributions are well articulated; ICT skills are well developed. Students' learning was very good and most written work showed real effort and hard work.
218. The subject is managed very effectively and there is a good team spirit. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Course development, curriculum planning, assessment and evaluation are all strong features. Resources are well employed but limited college library facilities are something of a handicap so students tend to rely on Internet searches for information. Accommodation and computer equipment are good, textbooks meet curriculum requirements. There are good community links and the subject aims to increase a number of external contacts.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on the Vocational Certificate of Education qualification in ICT.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- The range of vocational ICT courses, which effectively meets the aspirations of the students.
- Teaching is good; teachers have an extensive knowledge of the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and support their achievement.
- Course planning and schemes of work promote high standards and quality teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Further encouragement of independent learning.
- Access by sixth form students to reliable ICT resources.

219. The most recent results at ICT GCSE full course are broadly in line with the national averages for A*-C grades, with a significant number of students achieving B grades, although no student achieved an A grade in 2002. Students are confident in using their ICT skills and are supported by optional and effective key skills classes.
220. The work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and on the college network shows that standards are improving and that attainment in Years 12 and 13 is above average for the course requirements. They are confident in creating and testing short presentational sequences and writing and talking critically of their own work. Skills, with a range of software from standard word processing to web design and editing tools, are good. Most students can combine a variety of data forms from text, statistical information and video or still digital pictures into integrated publications for specific presentations or audiences. When related to their prior attainment and ICT experience this is overall good achievement.
221. Attitudes to the subject are good. Most of the students showed interest, enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject. When they are working individually on coursework, they help each other and discussion, sometimes with their teacher, is common. These discussions are always relevant to the work and contribute to the quality of learning. Most of the students can continue working on their computers at home when the work involves the use of word processing or spreadsheet

software. Those without this facility have access to the college computer network. All students reported learning resources available to them within the college to be satisfactory, notwithstanding the unreliability of the sixth form computer suite and the current lack of the main college library due to the rebuilding programme.

222. In all the lessons observed, teaching was at least good. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, including first hand knowledge gained outside the educational environment. Continuity and progression are both strong qualities in lesson planning and in the shared teaching of different modules within the course. When students are working individually, teachers make good use of their time, discussing coursework with students. The design of the computer rooms used for sixth form ICT teaching is conducive to the use of computer projectors and good use is made of this facility by the teachers.
223. In most respects, the subject is well led and managed and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teachers and students in other sixth form subjects make little use of the college's extensive ICT resources, for example, mathematics, apart from extensive use of word processing and research on the Internet. Students in the sixth form, not following any ICT course, have the opportunity to take a key skills course in ICT.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). No other courses are offered in this area.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve very well in lessons because work is well organised and teachers use assessment effectively to help raise standards.
- Good relationships result in students sharing ideas and learning from each other as well as from the teacher.
- Students are keen and interested because the work is varied in content and relevant to their career aspirations.

Areas for improvement

- Use students' work experience and visits by health and social care professionals more fully to emphasise vocational aspects of the subject.

224. Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) results in 2002 were average; there were no entries in the previous year. Bearing in mind their GCSE results two years earlier students did about as well as expected.
225. Students now in Year 13 reach above average standards; all should achieve at least grade E and one or two, of the seven in the group, may gain A grades. This represents very good progress for these students in relation to their GCSE results. Standards are higher than those suggested by recent results because teachers give detailed individual feedback showing students how to improve their work. They have good independent learning skills, for example collecting information from different sources about the effects of traffic congestion on public health and comparing various ways of tackling the problems identified. However, most have not yet acquired the higher order skills of evaluating evidence and taking full account of conflicting interests in suggesting ways forward.
226. Standards in Year 12 are lower, though still average for the course. Students started with lower GCSE results than would usually be expected for an advanced course, but most are making good

progress. However, the range of ability is greater than in Year 13 and a few may be more suited to an intermediate course. In the Year 12 lesson seen, one or two female students found difficulty with work on children's social and emotional development and lost concentration from time to time.

227. Teaching is very good overall, but better in Year 13 than in Year 12. As a result, students achieve very well in most lessons. In one very good lesson, the teacher constructed an assignment brief that made the unit specification accessible to all students. Learning was very good because students worked individually on issues that interested them and the assignment encouraged them to develop the more difficult skills of analysing and evaluating information collected. Later in the same lesson, students discussed how to carry out original research on their chosen issues. Very good relationships within the group allowed them to share ideas and learn as much from each other as from the teacher, for example about the design of a questionnaire to canvass views on methods of waste disposal. Teaching and learning are not quite as good in Year 12 because a few students are less well motivated and the quality of discussion is lower. Teachers often use lesson time very effectively to discuss progress with individual students and show them how to improve their work. Completed work is thoroughly marked; excellent record keeping allows students to see their progress towards target grades and, in many cases, raises their expectations of what they can achieve. Students' work experience, for example in hospitals and primary schools, and visits by health and social care professionals are insufficiently exploited in emphasising the vocational aspects of the subject.
228. Students enjoy lessons and are very happy with their choice of sixth form course. In particular, they like the variety of work and appreciate its relevance to their future career aspirations.
229. The subject is very well managed and led. As a result, students have a clear understanding of the commitment needed to gain an advanced level pass; this contributes significantly to improving standards.
230. There was no comparable course at the time of the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on music AS and A level courses, art A level and AVCE courses and the new performing arts AS course. Work was also sampled in drama where standards are well above average and physical education where standards in the examination course are well above average and students' achievements in dance are of a very high quality.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Outstanding teaching is tailored to the needs of individual students.
- Attitudes and relationships are very good.
- Students demonstrate a mature and committed approach.
- Teaching and learning in photography are outstanding.

Areas for improvement

- Too much of teachers' time is spent preparing materials for art and photography.
- Display is insufficiently used to promote students' achievements.
- The development of appropriate sixth form studio accommodation in the main college.

231. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The A level pass rate is high. Female students tend to achieve higher grades than the smaller numbers of male students taking the course. Standards in photography are outstanding. There has been a 100 per cent pass rate in the past two years. The newly introduced AVCE course in art and design is popular with students. The first

group to take the examination is currently achieving well in meeting the course requirements and project deadlines.

232. In the work seen students' attainment in Year 12 is above average for the course requirements. Students in Year 12 adapt quickly to sixth form work. Many are knowledgeable about the works of sculptors such as Henry Moore, Brancusi and the local sculptor Peter Randall-Page. Students use a very good range of technical subject vocabulary and many discuss subtle and complex changes in sculptural form, using very good levels of critical, analytical and descriptive language. Students are keen to explore new avenues for achieving practical, visual and tactile communication through a range of three-dimensional materials. They enjoy experimenting and take calculated risks in order to capitalize on accidentally occurring effects when working in plaster. They pay close attention to matters of health and safety by wearing eye protectors and dust masks appropriately. Students adopt a very mature approach to photography. They make very good progress, gaining well above average skills, when handling and using pinhole, single lens reflex and digital cameras. They are well aware of the specific contribution which each makes to the development of photography. Work in portfolios and sketchbooks shows excellent levels of progression in their understanding of the work of their own favourite photographers such as Cartier Bresson. They emulate David Hockney's pioneering work with 'joiners' (series of photographs displayed together to show a fragmented variety of views of the same subject) Students make very good connections between painting and photography. For example, they revisit work done in earlier years, on the Cubist movement in more depth. They do this whilst reflecting on their own photo-montage techniques. This reinforces and informs their knowledge and understanding. Overall the students' achievement is very good.
233. In the work seen, students' attainment in Year 13 is above average for the course requirements. Students in Year 13 compare still life paintings by Caravaggio (16th Century) and Cezanne (20th Century). They describe coherently how artists enable others to see in different and more reflective ways. They contrast paintings made before and after the introduction of photography and make clear observations on the differences between seeing objects with two eyes and seeing through a device containing a single lens such as a camera. Students following the AVCE course show very good understanding of professional practice in the visual arts. One higher achieving student combines excellent photography skills with well-developed painting capability. He does this by exploring his own feelings and making a highly personal response to coastal imagery and seascape as well as to recording the mere appearance of them. This leads him to investigate the turbulent works of Turner and the more abstract approaches taken by many contemporary artists. Students' notebooks reveal their depth of personal research capability, their excellent presentation skills and their understanding of marketing and career opportunities currently available in the visual arts. In the majority of lessons, students' work in self-imposed silence because they have become enthralled in individual projects. They work long hours out of lessons, often outdoors, making first hand observations, in order to obtain the higher examination grades. They use computers well to research new projects. Overall the students' achievement is very good.
234. Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan for a good balance between fostering students' own skills and developing knowledge and understanding of art. They know their students very well and support them personally as well as academically. In return, students trust, appreciate and respect teachers. Teachers regularly hold individual tutorials with students, negotiating future developments, analysing homework, sketchbooks and coursework, in depth, so that students know what they need to do to improve. Teachers regularly attend in-service courses to improve and share capabilities and knowledge.
235. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There are clear ideas for development. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, including more focused planning and more effective procedures and practices for assessment.
236. As in the main college, teachers have to spend too much time preparing practical materials. Display is insufficiently used to promote learning. Studio accommodation sometimes limits the way in which sixth form students can work.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards in examination results and numbers of students following courses are rising.
- Students demonstrate a mature approach and very good levels of self-confidence.
- Teaching is very good and tailored to the needs of the students.
- Attitudes and relationships throughout the department are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is restricted for some lessons and private study.

237. Standards in Year 13 are excellent with all four students gaining grade A in their AS level examination last year. In performing, standards are extremely high with students demonstrating excellent technical control and mature musical understanding in their playing. They can analyse music thoroughly, accurately recognising precise modes used in a Messiaen quartet and the details of rhythmic styles in the modern social dance module. Compositions in their chosen styles demonstrate a very good understanding of the techniques involved. In Year 12 standards are good. Students can recognise details of harmony aurally and incorporate them in their performances. They understand musical techniques used in classical music and recognise variations of them. With small numbers it is difficult to record trends exactly but, overall, both standards and numbers of students involved have risen since the last inspection.

238. Teaching and learning are very good and some lessons were excellent. Teachers are very well aware of their students' needs and teaching styles are adapted to suit these. Teaching is very thorough and varied tasks related to the areas of the syllabus prepare the students well for their examinations. Relationships are excellent and the commitment of the teachers is met by excellent attitudes and hard work from the students. They respond with interest to all styles of music.

239. Management and leadership are very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. As well as AS and A level music the subject leader also runs the Performing Arts course to allow students to maximise their strengths. The areas of study are chosen carefully to help the students to succeed to the best of their ability. The subject offers music scholarships to sixth form students annually. These support the students financially in their studies and the scholars run instrumental ensembles for the younger members of the college. Students are supported with a very wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their musical development and standards are very high. Students are very appreciative of these opportunities. Resources for textbooks have improved since the last inspection but restrictions in accommodation result in some lessons being taught in unsuitable rooms without access to the necessary practical equipment.

PERFORMING ARTS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and motivates students to make very good progress.
- Standards of student's work are very high, with some excellence.
- The high quality and extent of facilities and resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The subject has, however, identified appropriate priorities for development in its management plan.

240. Within each of the current sixth form groups there are a number of students who have elected to pursue this new course in the performing arts. The first cohort are due to complete the course in 2003. The majority of those involved have very high related subject grades from GCSE and some are also studying for AS or A levels in the separate subject strands of music, theatre studies or dance. Standards are well above average with some individual excellence. Students make very good progress, using their prior knowledge to very good effect.
241. Students build effectively on their skills, producing work in theatre and music, which shows imagination and creativity. They use instruments and the voice to good effect in developing musical soundscapes, use language and movement innovatively to create mood and atmosphere in drama and show control and fluency in dance with very good attention to movement quality. Students demonstrate clear understanding of the principles underpinning their work. Musicians work confidently with a range of different technologies, discussing their compositions with consideration of timing, pitch and volume in creating sound effects. Drama students adopt roles as performers or director with equal effect and dancers talk knowledgeably, for example about the impact and purpose of costume in developing motif. Students are keen to talk about their work, using technical vocabulary with ease and accuracy. In a lesson where students were working independently they talked at length about a project they developed leading to a 20 minute performance on a Cromwellian theme. Written work is thorough, particularly the work of the most capable students who use substantial drafting and redrafting of work to improve quality. Key points are identified accurately with detailed evaluations of work in progress enhancing the writing of the most capable students.
242. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and professional experience to provide through thorough questioning, a framework which allows students' creativity to shape improvisation or devised work. In all lessons, there is a sense of purpose, openness and honesty among staff and students, teachers often acting as facilitators, providing a structured environment within which students can collaborate to devise some very innovative responses to tasks. The planning of work is very good, providing direction for further study. Homework is set regularly and is used very effectively to focus student's attention on reviewing their work, identifying strengths and weaknesses and targets for future development. Students are encouraged to use ICT and there are numerous opportunities to develop more advanced skills through accessing extensive sound recording equipment. Many students are very skilful in editing and producing work. When necessary, teachers differentiate tasks very effectively to encourage or support students working at different levels or to compensate for absentees, for example a Year 12 student taking on the role of director in a theatre piece building on previous work on use of space, timing and vocal skills. Oral work, discussions among students or in whole class situations led by the teacher are of consistently good quality. Teachers and students use the technical language of the subject fluently.
243. Leadership of the subject is good. Teachers work as an effective team and are consistent in applying subject and whole college procedures and initiatives. Assessment and the monitoring of student's progress are in place with good opportunities for self-evaluation and review. Staff and resources are managed effectively and there is good use of subject specialists to enhance and extend the curriculum. Opportunities for wider access to industry targeted specifically at the performing arts students' remains an area for further development. Although the course is well structured it relies too heavily on the input of the individual strands, dance, drama and music. There are too few opportunities for the integration of the art forms or for students to develop broader skills; for example, in technical expertise.
244. As this is a new subject, there was no previous report.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on the history, government and politics and psychology AS and A level courses. Work was also sampled in geography where the above average standards achieved are well supported by the improved teaching.

History

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching is very good and has a positive impact upon the students' achievements.
- The development of high levels of subject knowledge and understanding by most students.
- The students' well developed capacity for critical and analytical thinking.

Areas for improvement

- The degree of challenge in their assignments for the most able students in Year 12.

245. Standards attained by students in the AS and A level national examinations in 2001 were broadly in line with the national averages, with an average points score of 5.00 against the national figure of 5.45. No official figures have been published for 2002 but results for that year show an average points score of 6.2. This means that the average points score for A level students has risen steadily from 4.50 in 1998 to 6.2 in 2002. Student performance in 2001 was also broadly in line with expectations based on GCSE scores, showing that students made satisfactory progress between these two marks. Thirty per cent of students gained A or B grades against a national average of 35 per cent. Results in Government and Politics were well above the national average in 2001. The overall trend over the last three years is of rising standards and this is attributable to the quality of teaching, which focuses on the progressive development of students' capacity for critical thinking. The high quality of teaching is also responsible for the recent noticeable rise in recruitment to 29 in 2001 following several years of approximately ten entries.
246. Standards of work seen for both history and government and politics are consistently above average in Year 12 and well above average in Year 13. Both the attainment and progress made by current sixth form students are higher than suggested by either the official 2001 figures or the 'unofficial' 2002 figures. This is due to the fact that current provision, underpinned by meticulous planning, energetic teaching and very careful assessment of students' work, is driving standards upwards and this process is 'running ahead' of external examination results.
247. The most noticeable feature of sixth form lessons is the progress made within them. This is unusually visible because of the ways in which lessons are planned into distinctive learning episodes, each challenging a little more and probing a little further than the last. For example, a Year 13 group examining progress towards a democratic franchise over the 19th Century began by sorting cards according to whether the 'episodes' described (the various reform acts) accelerated or impeded the spread of democracy. They then 'plotted' each episode on a graph according to whether what was achieved was less than, in line with, or above expectations. Analysis of the graph finally allowed them to evaluate the developmental significance of each of the reform acts. All of this was achieved in a single one hour lesson. Similar progress was achieved in a double lesson in Year 13, in which the students were investigating the extent of involvement of ordinary German people in the persecution of the Jews. Moving through various card-sorting activities involving critical interpretation and evaluation of primary sources, they were in a position to debate Goldhagen's thesis of a culpable German population. The debate that followed was well informed and extended, offering students opportunities to display their skills of oral communication. The quality of debate was built against the scaffolding provided by the card-sorting, evidence-handling activities and therein lay the progression in learning.
248. Students in Year 12 demonstrate extensive subject knowledge that they deploy effectively in addressing historical problems. They make similar progress in the course of tightly planned lessons, although the ablest students are not quite as well challenged as those in Year 13. For example, students analysing the causes of the First World War can summarise their thinking in complex 'mind maps', identify short and longer term factors and divide these into 'more important' and 'less important'. However, they are not sure about what short and longer term factors can and

cannot explain and lack a method of demonstrating why certain causal factors were more or less important than others to the explanation.

249. Teaching is very good. It is at times innovative and risk-taking and always rigorous and challenging. Above all, it is tightly planned. In the scheme of work, no distinction is made in the planning of teaching and learning between lessons across the years. Accelerated learning techniques predominate and progress in students' learning is clearly visible in all sixth form lessons. The approach is student centred and consequently elicits from the students widespread engagement with classroom tasks. Questioning is challenging and teachers listen to what students have to say. This in turn motivates students to say more, read more and know more. Students' work is very carefully marked, so that they have precise information about what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their performance.
250. In general, the development of literacy skills has had a more direct impact on the standards achieved by history students than that of transferable skills associated with numeracy or ICT. The quality of students' extended written work is good but not very good. In particular, opportunities are often missed for creating written accounts from the outcomes of card sorting activities. Students speak confidently and fluently and enjoy debate. They also listen intelligently and respect each other's point of view. Several well planned lessons appear in the scheme of work under the heading "History and ICT". However, it is acknowledged that ICT is underdeveloped because of the difficulty of gaining access to ICT facilities.
251. Provision is very well managed and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teachers form a strong team under a subject leader whose management style is inclusive, reflective and energetic. This produces a situation in which good ideas and methods are regularly shared and in which there is no fear of innovation, for example, the introduction of a well organised new course in politics and government. As a result of enlightened management of this sort, the number of students opting to study A level history has risen rapidly over the last two years, in common with standards being achieved by students in the sixth form.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- Good assessment and monitoring support learning.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough variety of teaching strategies used.
- Accommodation problems hinder delivery of the subject.

252. Few candidates were entered for A level examinations in the recent past and with such a small sample statistical comparisons are not reliable. In 2002 all A level students achieved grades A-D, with 50 per cent achieving grades A-C. All students achieved or exceeded their predicted grades. At AS level 23 students achieved grades A-C, above the national average, doing as well as or better than in their other subjects.
253. Students' attainment in Years 12 and 13 are above average for the course requirements. Year 12 students are able to use psychological terms with understanding, for instance independent and dependent variables and ecological validity. Coursework indicates a good grasp of methodology in that they were able to set out and evaluate key studies and write up their own psychological investigations in a professional manner. Students in Year 13 are working towards A-C grades. They are able to analyse critically and see further implications in psychological experiments, for example ethical considerations such as confidentiality, or the problems of replication. Final coursework being completed displays more comprehensive writing skills and evaluative answers.

One or two isolated examples of students' work betray a careless approach and a lack of intellectual effort and rigour. Overall the students' achievement is good in both Year 12 and 13.

254. Progress is good. There is growing understanding evident in written work, particularly their grasp of key concepts and in discussion an ability to analyse critically and subject assumptions to close scrutiny. This was evident, for example in a lesson on the nature of trans-sexualism, which challenged students to think beyond assumptions to the radical causes. Higher attaining students are able to grasp concepts more quickly and take the lead in discussion but all benefit from the smaller, paired or group discussions which give the quieter students a chance to express their opinion more easily and grow in confidence. All students achieve well because they are interested and stimulated both by the subject and a desire to succeed.
255. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, together with effective and clear objectives, provide good learning opportunities. Teachers constantly challenge students to analyse and evaluate evidence. Teaching is, however hampered by the lack of a base, so that strategies, which would enhance teaching, such as a designated room with ICT facilities, wall displays and other resources are not fully used. Because of the demands of the syllabus, especially in Year 12 there is a reliance on note taking from the overhead projector to get through the large amount of new material. This leads to a didactic style of teaching, which does not encourage independent learning in the lesson. Coursework is marked regularly and teachers' comments are considered very helpful by the students as they identify key issues, which are always discussed at length with the student. This together with modular target setting and the students' own evaluations, has a very positive impact on learning and progress.
256. Students' respond positively to the subject and it is growing in popularity. They perceive psychology as interesting and useful for their own personal development as well as a first or second choice on a degree course. While students' commitment is generally good, there is a need for academic rigour and better study skills, for example meeting deadlines for coursework and the quality of some pieces of work. Males and females achieve equally well and higher attaining students can extend their learning by attempting more demanding research or taking the lead in discussion. Students use the Internet with ease both for research and for writing up their investigations. There is satisfactory access to computers and there is a resource cupboard with sufficient psychology reference books. The subject has its own website.
257. Leadership is good, with clear plans to improve delivery and monitor students' progress effectively. Good relationships within the subject team and with the students promote good achievement as the students find the teachers approachable and available if they need help. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Teaching takes place in different rooms and different parts of the campus where books and teaching resources have to be carried around. This is unsatisfactory in terms of the use of resources and the time wasted. There are, however, plans to secure a room before the start of the next academic year.
258. Improvements since the last inspection cannot be commented on as the subject was not on the curriculum at that time, but in comparison to its recent history it has made and continues to make, very good progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and modern foreign language courses at AS and A level. Work was also sampled in the AS and A level media studies courses where students achieved well above average standards and are well supported by the 'real' student projects, as with the current Buckfastleigh broadband project.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, with strong subject knowledge and awareness of students' individual learning needs.
- Student attitudes to the courses are excellent; they show high levels of commitment and independence.
- The subject is led and managed very well; there is a good quality action plan prioritising objectives for raising levels of achievement.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of a library means that students have inadequate access to literary critical texts.

259. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A level English literature examinations are good. In the 2001 examinations the proportion of students gaining A and B grades was above that found nationally. Based on provisional figures, the results in the most recent examinations of summer 2002 are broadly in line with the national picture.
260. The observation of teaching and the scrutiny of students' work during the inspection show that students' attainment is above average in Years 12 and 13. Taking account of their qualifications on entry, many students make very good progress and achieve well. In a Year 12 lesson on the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, students made very good progress in learning to articulate personal responses using the language of formal argument, working most productively together in small groups. Students in another Year 12 lesson, reading Wycherley's 'A Country Wife' responded positively to the teacher's questioning and commentary; they took notes and enjoyed the language of the play, appreciating how characters reflected the social and sexual mores of seventeenth century English society. By the time they reach Year 13 students have developed very good literary critical techniques in their writing, shown, for example, in essays on the concept of 'faith' in Sassoon's poetry and Barker's novel 'Regeneration'. Other impressive written work demonstrates how students are able to arrive at individual opinions and independent judgements in their reading of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' or Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'.
261. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers are passionate about the subject and lessons are extremely well planned to enable students to gain the maximum benefit from this. They have high expectations of students' participation through discussion, shown, for example, in the lesson on 'The Country Wife'. This insistence on active involvement was particularly well illustrated in the Year 12 poetry lesson, where the teacher played a tape-recording of himself arguing with a colleague from the English team over the interpretation of a Duffy poem. This provided students with an excellent model. Other examples of models provided by the teacher included the provision of effective introductory paragraphs for coursework essays. The depth of teachers' subject knowledge is also shown in the high quality, detailed marking of students' coursework, indicating clearly the criteria of examination assessment objectives.
262. All students on AS and A level courses are set appropriately challenging targets based on their prior attainment and progress is regularly reviewed. Students in Year 13 are especially positive in praising the quality of individual support they receive from teachers both in and out of lessons and in one-to-one tutorials.
263. The leadership and management of English are very good. There is good collaboration between staff to ensure the sharing of good practice and to develop the range of teaching and learning strategies. Courses are reviewed regularly and there is a clear plan of action to maintain and improve achievement. The sixth form teaching team is strong, sharing a wide range of specialist academic qualifications. Teaching is accommodated largely in the sixth centre, with some lessons based in the specialist main college classrooms. Resource provision is good in terms of access to set texts, video and other equipment, but the absence of a library limits the opportunities for students to use a range of literary critical texts.

Modern foreign language - French

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

Strengths

- There have been high levels of attainment on A level courses over the last four years.
- Year 13 students are reaching above average standards in written work.
- Year 12 students have made good progress since the start of the year.
- The quality of teaching is overall very good.

Areas for improvement

- The take up for languages in the sixth form is relatively low.

264. Over the last four years a total of 25 students have been entered for A level French examinations. Results have been very good, with 60 per cent of candidates obtaining A or B grades, compared with a national average of 40 per cent. The overall pass rate of 96 per cent is also above the national average. Recent AS level results have been more variable but are broadly in line with national averages. Teaching groups in the current Years 12 and 13 continue to be fairly small.
265. Work seen in lessons and in students' files is of a high standard. The quality of written work in Year 13 is very good. There is evidence of thorough research and planning, coupled with a good grasp of topic specific vocabulary. Essays on "Bonjour Tristesse" show that students have a good understanding of the period and the significance of the themes at the time the book was written. Students show a good command of grammar. Sentences are well constructed and students have a good range of structures at their disposal. There is more variation in accuracy at a detailed level, for example in adjectival agreements. The best work is very accurate and includes appropriate use of the subjunctive. Speaking skills are good. Students hear French nearly all the time and are expected to speak the language for almost all purposes. In a reading comprehension activity, Year 13 students discussed and justified their answers with one another, with only occasional recourse to English.
266. Students on the AS level course have made good progress from GCSE and are able to give short oral presentations on the topic of "les SDF" the homeless. They too are building up a good store of topic specific vocabulary but are less secure in their knowledge and application of grammar. Their listening skills are good and they easily make sense of a recording about text messages on mobile phones.
267. The quality of teaching is very good and has a significant impact on the standards of work. Planning is detailed and close attention is paid both to the choice of texts and the activities which students are asked to do. For example, in a Year 13 lesson a carousel of activities was arranged with tight time limits on each activity in order to simulate the time constraints of the A level exam. Teachers speak French almost all the time and use a good range of techniques for paraphrasing new vocabulary. There are good opportunities built into the course for students to make presentations and speak at some length. However, in some lessons, students are not getting enough immediate oral practice of the new language they are meeting. Learning is also very good and students work productively and at a good pace in all lessons. They show interest and enthusiasm for the subject, particularly when making a presentation or speaking at length. Assessment is used very effectively; students receive detailed feedback based on exam board criteria and also specific and helpful advice on areas for improvement.
268. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Recently appointed staff, have a good understanding of the course requirements and assessment criteria and are also teaching very effectively. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with more students attaining higher grades at A level.

