

INSPECTION REPORT

Countesthorpe Community College

Countesthorpe, Near Leicester

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120268

Principal: Mr Steve Lewis

Reporting inspector: Bill Stoneham
27407

Dates of inspection: 30th Sept – 4th Oct 2002

Inspection number: 249817

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	14-19
Gender of students:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Linnett
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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INTRODUCTION

The college provides education for students aged 14 to 19, covering the academic years 10, 11, 12 and 13. As there are no Year 9 students, limited references are made to students' attainments in the National Curriculum tests sat during Year 9 in English, mathematics and science. It should also be noted that this inspection was conducted during the early weeks of the autumn term 2002. At this stage national comparative data for 2002 public examinations were not available. Where comparisons to national standards are made the results for 2001 are used.

Though the college has students from minority ethnic heritages on roll, during the inspection there were no students for whom English is an additional language and who were in the early stages of English acquisition. For this reason there are no references to the attainment and achievements of students for whom English is an additional language.

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

This is a mixed college catering for students aged 14 to 19. There are 972 students on roll, with 277 in the sixth form. Approximately half of all Year 11 students progress annually to the sixth form. The numbers of boys and girls are broadly similar. The college is situated in the heart of a rural community, serving the village of Countesthorpe and the surrounding areas of South Leicestershire. Some students travel from the City of Leicester. The college population is predominantly white British and the vast majority of students hail from homes that enjoy good socio-economic circumstances. The college is increasing in popularity and this is reflected in rising numbers. Very few students hail from minority ethnic heritages and none are in the early stages of language acquisition. Attainment on entry is broadly average. There is a below average number of students with special educational needs, but the percentage of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is above average. The number of students entitled to free college meals is well below average and there is little student mobility. There are no refugees or students from a travellers' heritage on roll. In the recent past the college has experienced some problems in recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Overall, the effectiveness of the college is good and improving. Standards, especially by the end of Year 11, are improving. A-level results are below average and have been inconsistent, but most post-16 students are now recording higher standards than predicted by their GCSE results; their achievements are good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but in the sixth form it is good. Though the levels of unsatisfactory teaching reported in the previous report have decreased, there is still an element of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11. The behaviour of students is good and they are offered very good opportunities for personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The quality of leadership and management is good. The senior team led by the principal is relatively new, but they provide good and clear leadership. The college, including its large sixth form, provides satisfactory value for money.

What the college does well

- The very good quality of relationships and the supportive ethos within the college.
- The very good provision for students with special educational needs and the excellent management of this provision.
- The very good community provision, including the contribution this makes to students' learning.
- The excellent and constructive relationships with partner colleges.
- The very good procedures for child protection and for promoting students' welfare.
- The parents' views of the college and the support they offer.
- The quality of financial management.

What could be improved

- Ensure that where teaching in Years 10 and 11 is below standard, it is brought up to the standard offered in the majority of lessons.
- Improve the attainment of boys in Years 10 and 11, especially in subjects such as mathematics, art, design and technology and English literature.
- Improve the strategies for the teaching of literacy skills.
- Raise standards in both art and business studies.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection in February 1997. Most of the issues highlighted for development then have been tackled, though standards in Years 10 and 11 in art have not improved sufficiently. Issues surrounding the teaching of religious education and the provision of a daily act of collective worship have only been partially resolved. Improvement against other key issues has been good. GCSE results have shown a good rate of improvement and the college is meeting its current targets. In English the improvement has been satisfactory, while in mathematics improvements have been recent and the department has not moved as far as it should have done. Improvements in science have been good. The college has set itself the task of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Progress has been made, though there remains an element of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	E
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	N/A	D	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Over the past three years, the proportion of students gaining 5 A* to C grades at GCSE has moved from below average to close to the national average. The results for girls, which are now above average, have improved at a faster rate than those of boys. Indeed, the standards recorded by boys have reached a plateau and the difference in the results gained by girls and boys is now significantly wider than the gap nationally. The results over the last three years are average when compared to all schools nationally, but are well below average when compared to similar schools. This unflattering outcome is because of the underperformance by some boys. GCSE results are improving in line with the targets set by the governors.

At GCSE, students enter the college with standards that are broadly average and at the end of Year 11 they continue to record standards that are broadly average. This indicates satisfactory achievement. This is confirmed by the college's own detailed analysis of its examination data. For current students, standards are average in all subjects except science, drama, geography and Spanish where they are above average and art, business studies and French, where they are below average.

Standards in the sixth form have remained below average for a number of years. Comparisons of performance show that results for boys and girls are below average, but girls do better than boys and the difference in their attainment is greater than the difference recorded nationally. For the majority of subjects pass rates at grades A to E were broadly average, though English and mathematics were below average and French and physical education were well below average. For grades A and B, most subjects were again broadly average, but sociology was above average and results in French, geography, music and media studies were below average and in mathematics they were well below average.

In sixth form work seen during the inspection, there is evidence of improvements in standards in a number of subjects. Students enter the sixth form with below average levels of prior attainment. Their recent results are also below average indicating satisfactory achievement, but the improved standards identified during the inspection suggest that achievement is now good and that most students are doing better than expected.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Good. The majority of students are positive about their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most students behave well in lessons and around the college. Unsatisfactory behaviour is rare and is usually linked to unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The high standard of relationships has a positive impact on standards and achievement.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved since the last inspection primarily because of the monitoring and evaluation undertaken by senior managers. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory and in the sixth form teaching is good. Certain strengths of teaching can be identified, including the knowledge and understanding of teachers and the use of time and support staff. In the sixth form, students are managed very well. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, whilst the teaching of the basic skill of literacy is unsatisfactory. The teaching of numeracy, however, is satisfactory. Learning is satisfactory overall, but good in the sixth form. Most students work hard and are making at least satisfactory progress. Teaching meets the needs of most students, but there is still room for improvement in Years 10 and 11, where the pace of learning in some subjects is pedestrian.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall but very good in the sixth form. The curriculum meets the interests, aspirations and needs of all students, though the statutory provision for religious education is not fully met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Students have equal access to all subjects and activities and the open learning centre is very effective in offering additional support.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The provision for moral and social development is good. It is satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development. More should be done to promote multicultural issues in subjects other than humanities. Assembly arrangements do not meet statutory requirements.

How well the college cares for its students	Very good. Students are valued and there are very good arrangements for ensuring their welfare. Assessment procedures are good and students are offered very good guidance for their personal and academic development.
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There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and the provision for careers education and guidance is good. The community aspect of the college's work is excellent and this contributes to rising standards.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The principal offers good leadership and is well supported by his senior staff. Leadership and management have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The quality of management offered by heads of department is good overall, but variable. It is very good in history, music and drama, but is unsatisfactory in art, business education and religious education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are active in reviewing the work of the college and are very supportive. They realise that they are not meeting statutory requirements for the provision of religious education and a daily act of religious worship.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The evaluation of the work of the college is at least good, but there are inconsistencies in applying remedies designed to overcome identified weaknesses, especially in teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Specific grants are used well, but there are some weaknesses in the adequacy of learning resources in the sixth form. The governors and senior staff have a very good understanding of Best Value and the principles are applied with rigour and consistency.

The provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. Some problems have been encountered in recruiting staff and there are insufficient quiet areas where post-16 students can work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact that their children like the college. The progress students make. The good teaching provided. The approachability of the college. The expectations that students will work hard. The fact that the college encourages students to be mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college's homework arrangements. The extent to which parents feel involved in the work of the college. The quality of information parents receive about their child's progress.

Parents are very supportive of the college and are strongly of the opinion that it is improving at a good pace. The inspection team judged homework arrangements to be satisfactory. They found the quality of reporting arrangements to be good and were surprised to find that a significant minority of parents were dissatisfied with the college's service.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form consists of 277 students and is larger than average. It has increased in size since the last inspection. There are marginally more female than male students on roll. A minority of students have minority ethnic backgrounds and many students have backgrounds of social and economic advantage. A well-above average percentage of Year 11 students continue their education full-time at the end of Year 11, 55 percent of them in the college's sixth form. Students are provided with an increasing range of post-16 advanced courses, including A-level courses, intermediate vocational courses, AVCE courses and key skills. There are opportunities for students to re-take key GCSE subjects. There are recommended entry requirements for embarking on advanced level courses of five C grades at GCSE. In 2002, of 102 leavers, 63 percent went to higher education and 17 percent went to further education. The remaining students obtained employment. The college's commitment to inclusion allows all students who wish to enter the sixth form to do so. These students are offered a range of appropriate options including vocational and bespoke courses, such as the skills training education programme (STEP). Attendance rates are monitored and are satisfactory. Recorded rates of attendance are similar those recorded in Years 10 and 11.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The college provides very effectively for the needs of its sixth formers. Cost-effectiveness is satisfactory. Students become young adults with remarkably mature and responsible attitudes while in the sixth form. Though attainment on advanced courses has been variable and inconsistent, inspection evidence suggests that present students are doing better and are recording standards that are higher than might reasonably be expected from their GCSE results. Value added, therefore, is good. Students extend their knowledge and understanding of their subjects effectively because teaching is good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Retention rates are very good. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The tables below highlight the strengths and what could be improved in the sixth form.

STRENGTHS

- The college's very good inclusion policy, whose implementation gives a very good level of equality of access of opportunity.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities.
- Very good teaching in some areas, for example drama and music.
- Very good relationships, which underpin opportunities for students' personal development.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Insufficient access to ICT to support learning.
- Inadequacy of resources in some curriculum areas.
- Inadequate areas for independent study.
- Encouragement of independent learning skills.

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. The set criteria for choice of subjects are: the inclusion of English, mathematics, a science, and vocational courses; a span of

curriculum areas; the college's provision; strong and weaker subjects; take-up; different levels of courses where applicable; inspection of courses not provided on site; inspection expertise available.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Sound teaching and learning based on good rules and knowledge mean that students are now achieving as well as expected.
Biology	Good A well-planned curriculum and structured teaching enable all students to achieve as well as expected from low GCSE results on entry to the sixth form.
Physics	Satisfactory. Achievement is in line with students' prior attainment. The curriculum is enriched by ideas beyond the syllabus. More rigorous use of data is needed to underpin monitoring and evaluation.
Information Technology, Computer studies and information systems	Good. Good teaching leads to good learning. Courses offered meet students' needs and local circumstances. Greater access to computers is an urgent requirement.
Business studies	Unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment are well below national expectations. The narrow academic syllabus does not fulfil the needs of many students.
Travel and tourism	Satisfactory. Attainment indicates considerable value added and good achievement for students from a low baseline of attainment on entry to the sixth form.
Health and social care	Very good. Teaching is good with an emphasis on independent learning skills. Most students exceed their target grades, but there is insufficient development of study skills, especially in note taking.
Drama and theatre studies	Very good. Very good teaching enables students of a wide range of capability to achieve well.
Music	Very good. Very good teaching with excellent features. A well-planned curriculum that meets the needs of all students enabling them to achieve very well.
Geography	Very good. Teaching and learning are of such quality that students develop high skill levels and great interest in the subject. Very good system to monitor students' progress.
History	Very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and advance students' learning very well. Very good relationships stimulate interest and enhance students' performance.
Art and design (Vocational)	Good. The course is well planned, well resourced and delivered in a method that enables students to exceed their expected levels of attainment and gain above-average results.
Media Studies	Good. Good teaching enables students to achieve well. Greater challenge would stretch students still further.
Sociology	Good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. Students would benefit from more access to ICT for research.
Psychology	Good. Enthusiastic and well-planned teaching succeeds in motivating students who achieve at least as well as expected from their GCSE results.
English	Satisfactory. Students attain expected standards. Relationships are good. There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop independent learning. Target setting could be improved.

Work was sampled in other subjects. Teaching was good overall. Sometimes it was very good and, occasionally, excellent, for example in French and physical education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good guidance when choosing their courses. Induction into the sixth form is very good. Students are very well supported through their courses and their progress is closely monitored. They receive very good guidance concerning the demands of their courses and on how to study effectively.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are very good, ensuring a very good quality of provision for students, who enjoy equal access to all courses. Standards of work and results are closely analysed and findings inform decisions on future provision. Teaching is closely monitored and is good.

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">• Good challenging teaching enables them to learn successfully.• Teachers provide individual help and support when needed.• They are helped to settle into the sixth form well and given helpful information on courses.• They are treated as responsible young adults.• The opportunity to continue to receive very effective provision in the sixth form, whatever their educational needs or personal circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice and guidance on careers and job opportunities by Year 13.• Lack of access to ICT.• Lack of areas for independent study.

The inspection team agrees with students' positive views. Teaching is good but teachers need to guide students to work more independently, thus helping them towards what will be expected of them in higher education. The head of sixth form and his team are very supportive. They ensure that students settle in well and monitor their progress closely. Students are treated as young adults and are expected to act very responsibly. The quality of careers education and guidance is good. Inspectors agree that in order to improve sixth form provision the lack of access to ICT and the lack of designated spaces for independent study are areas for urgent development.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and students' achievements

1. Standards are judged against national standards for 2001. This is the last year for which national comparative information is available. This section should be read in conjunction with the summary of the report where comments on, for example, trends in results are made. Standards in literacy and numeracy are also commented on at the end of the sections on English and mathematics and each subject report includes detailed information about the standards currently being recorded by students.
2. Standards recorded in GCSE examinations by the end of Year 11 have improved since the last inspection and are now close to the national average for all schools in terms of average points scored and the percentage of candidates who gain five or more passes at grades A* to C. When compared to similar schools, on the basis of free school meals entitlements, the college's performance, in terms of average points scored and the percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades, falls to well below average. On other measures, such as five or more A* to G grades, the college's results are above average when compared to all schools nationally, but average when compared to similar schools. On a measure of one A* to G grade the results are average when compared to all schools and when compared to similar schools. What is clear, however, is that attainment is rising and continued to rise in 2002. Results have also risen in line with the targets set by governors.
3. A principal reason for the improving situation is the emphasis that the college has placed on improving standards through self-evaluation, especially of the quality of teaching and learning. Work still needs to be done. Some departments are not as strong as others and there are issues about the attainment of boys, but the college has identified its strengths and weaknesses and development planning indicates a strong desire to seek and secure further improvements.
4. A detailed analysis of results, especially in terms of the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, shows that results have improved since the last inspection at a rate that is far greater than the rate recorded nationally. Most of this increase is because of the significant improvement in the results recorded by girls. Their results have improved from being well below average to above average. Over the same period, the results for boys have tended to fluctuate, often wildly, but have remained below average overall. There is an element of underperformance being recorded by boys that the college has still to tackle. The difference in the results gained by girls and boys has widened in recent years and is now well in excess of the national gap.
5. The achievement of students in their GCSE courses - that is, how much their standards of work improve in Years 10 and 11 - is more difficult to evaluate. As students enter the college at the start of Year 10, the college receives information provided by the high schools about standards reached by the end of Year 9. The results gained in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science suggest above average standards are being recorded in these subjects, but inspection evidence from lessons and work scrutiny across all subjects, especially in Year 10, did not support this view. Standards of work seen were not as high as test results. Thus, on entry, the team judges that the majority of students have prior levels of attainment that are broadly average. During Years 10 and 11 students overall work much as expected and, at GCSE, they record results that are broadly in line with national expectations. This suggests that achievement is satisfactory. The college's own extensive data analysis adds considerable weight to this view but further shows that girls are doing far better than their male counterparts. Indeed, the achievement of girls is good, while the achievement of boys is satisfactory, but when aggregated, achievement overall is satisfactory. Further evidence is offered from some lessons. A minority of lessons in Years 10 and 11 were unsatisfactory. The main reason was that the pace of learning in the lesson suffered because of the conduct of a minority of boys. Progress during the lesson was below average. Thus, for achievement to improve the college must ensure that the quality of teaching and

learning is improved and that the unacceptable conduct, especially by a minority of boys in a minority of lessons, is eliminated.

6. Gifted and talented students achieve as well as their peers. As numbers are so low, no valid judgements can be made about the achievements of students for whom English is an additional language. Students with special educational needs achieve well and make better progress than their peers. In some subjects they make very good progress in particular lessons. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson they successfully researched the social and historical content of a play, *Hobson's Choice*, using the Internet. They grew in confidence as their literacy skills improved. In courses such as *Getting Connected* they use these skills in practical ways. For example, how to complete an application for a job. Students from Birkett House with severe learning difficulties make good progress when they attend lessons in the college. All students with special educational needs receive recognition of their achievements at the end of Year 11 through gaining GCSE certificates and accreditation from the vocational courses they take.
7. In terms of individual subjects, GCSE examination results show standards are average in English, mathematics, science, business studies, design and technology, history, ICT and physical education. Standards are above average in drama and humanities and well above average in Spanish. In English literature, French and music, standards are below average and they are well below average in art. Evidence from lessons, work seen and other sources gained during the inspection largely confirms these outcomes. Standards are well below average in art and there are issues emerging about standards of teaching and learning and leadership and management in business studies. Standards in French are now improving as staffing is now more settled after a period when recruitment was difficult. Standards in drama and the new subject of media studies are at least above average.
8. When results are analysed by gender, girls recorded average standards in 2001 in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT and music. Standards were above average in drama and humanities, below average in English literature and French and well below average in art. Results for boys were average in humanities and ICT and above average in science, communication studies and physical education. They were below average in English, design and technology, and well below average in art and design, English literature, French and mathematics.
9. Standards in literacy are unsatisfactory. Students' skills in reading and writing adversely affect standards in other subjects. The standards of boys' writing are of particular concern and in many subjects the lack of a co-ordinated approach to literacy is constraining standards. Literacy is a whole-college issue and needs to be addressed in a concerted and consistent way in order to improve standards. Satisfactory standards are recorded in numeracy. However, the lack of a policy means that provision is piecemeal at the moment.

Sixth form

10. Standards recorded on advanced level courses in 2001 were below average. Little improvement in A-level results has been made since the previous report. At this time boys did better than girls. This situation has now been reversed, but both boys and girls recorded results that are below average, though the numbers entering for final examinations is higher than at the time of the last report. Over the last three years the pattern of results has been inconsistent and has fluctuated considerably. In part this reflects the college's commitment to inclusion as entry requirements to A-level and other advanced courses are not stringent. A significant number of students entering courses are marginal candidates. It reflects well on the college that its retention rates are very good and that the vast majority of students gain at least a pass grade. Most subjects record pass rates that are above average for the subject, though the attainment of A and B grades is well below average. The difference in performance between boys and girls is greater than the difference recorded nationally.
11. Though student numbers in the sixth form are rising, on average students commence their sixth form courses with levels of attainment that are below average. Though they also record A-level results that are below average, the college's extensive analysis of examination data clearly

indicates that most students gain better A-level grades than predicted, based on their GCSE results. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations and work sampling, suggested that standards are rising and the college's drive on improving the quality of teaching and learning is having an impact. Present students in the sixth form achieve well over time and progress in the vast majority of lessons is at least good, though evidence remains that girls are still doing better than their male counterparts.

12. A-level results in 2002 are similar to those recorded in 2001. Standards in many subjects in 2001 are difficult to substantiate as entry levels to individual subjects were often low. Even where numbers were higher, gender analysis is not valid because the numbers of each gender entering for the examination were low. Where standards can be compared with national figures, no subjects recorded standards that were above average, or better, for grades A and E but standards in sociology were above average for grades A to B. Standards were average overall for grades A to E in biology, English literature, geography and in the vocational options in art and design and leisure and tourism. Standards were below average in art, computer studies, economics, French, music and psychology and were well below average in mathematics and physical education.
13. Standards being recorded by present students are higher. Current attainment is below average in business studies. In English, mathematics, biology, physics and travel and tourism standards are satisfactory, while in many other subjects, such as drama, music, history, geography and the vocational art and design course, standards of work seen were either good, or very good.
14. One reason for the improving standards is the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation procedures that are being implemented by senior staff. This process is not fully embedded into the life of the college, mainly because the senior management team is relatively new. However, a clear start to rising standards has been made. Senior staff know where areas of strength and weakness exist; the next part of the strategy is to tackle areas of underperformance. Levels of progress and achievement are also influenced by the students' proficiency in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Though these are improving and the college provides for key skills, the progress made by a significant proportion of students is constrained by key skills, especially their literacy skills and the limited opportunities they have to study independently using ICT.
15. Gifted and talented students studying advanced level courses have not been fully identified, but inspection evidence suggests that their progress and achievement are similar to those recorded by all other students. The few students with special educational needs in the sixth form achieve well on their advanced level courses.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The attitudes and behaviour displayed by students are good. The vast majority of students have a mature approach to college, settle quickly in lessons and display good levels of commitment to their work. Many are self-motivated and enthusiastic learners. For the most part students display high levels of self-assurance and a willingness to share and discuss their learning with others. Many are able to sustain very good levels of concentration during their lessons and collaborate well with each other in group learning activities.
17. The standard of behaviour is good and reflects the high level of respect that exists between students and between staff and students. A further indicator of good behaviour is that exclusion rates are below average and are falling. Very good standards of behaviour were recorded in the previous inspection report and these can still be found. The very good behaviour observed in a number of lessons is the product of good teaching and enables good progress to be made. However, in lessons where teaching skills are less effective, students' behaviour deteriorates and has a negative impact on whole-class learning and progress. In a small number of lessons seen, the repeated and inappropriate behaviour of a few Year 11 students, especially underachieving boys, disrupted the learning of the rest of the class.
18. The college rules clearly set out the high expectations for student behaviour. Parents are pleased with the standards of behaviour being achieved and students consider the rules to be fair and focus

on ensuring the college remains a safe and happy place. Exclusions are below average and are falling. For the most part students interact well with each other in their learning and social activities and willingly share and treat property and learning resources with care. Students show a sense of pride and ownership in their college. There was no evidence of any graffiti, excessive litter or damage to property seen during the inspection.

19. Relationships between students, and between students and adults, are very good. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection. This is a college where students are friendly and considerate towards each other, to staff and to the many visitors and community members who regularly uses the college facilities. They show they know right from wrong through their actions and conversations. Most display a natural sensitivity and awareness of the needs of others. These include showing care and concern when mixing with students and adult learners with learning difficulties, holding doors open for each other in college and generally offering help and assistance to others in a courteous and polite manner.
20. Students with special educational needs have very good attitudes to their work and life in the college. For example, in a Year 10 course, Team Enterprise, they worked well together setting up a company to provide a car-cleaning service. They show enthusiasm for college life and participate fully in its provision.
21. Opportunities for students' personal development are mixed. A Year 10 student council that provides good opportunities for elected students to discuss and influence the way the college operates has been established. Plans are in place to extend this concept to provide a Year 11 council. Good opportunities exist within the college community youth provision for students to undertake responsibility - for example, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme - and to develop life skills through the "basics in babysitting" certificate and the Red Cross "emergency first aid" course. Opportunities for Year 10 and Year 11 students to take responsibility for their own personal development during the college day are limited and do not appear as a priority in most teachers' planning objectives.
22. Student attendance is satisfactory, is in line with the national average and has been maintained at this level since the last inspection. The great majority of students enjoy coming to college and there is a low level of recorded late arrival in the morning. The attendance statistics for each year group are above the 90 per cent threshold and the level of unauthorised absence is well below the national average. The delayed start to lessons discussed in the previous inspection report has been addressed and the situation has improved. Punctuality is very good and most lessons started on time.

Sixth form

23. Sixth formers have very good attitudes and commitment to learning and very good standards of behaviour. These strengths were highlighted in the last report. Most post-16 students are able to sustain very good levels of concentration during their lessons and collaborate well in group learning activities. Many are developing very good personal skills and are increasing in maturity as they move through the sixth form. Their social development is further enhanced by the opportunities presented to mix with a range of people apart from students of their own age. The community aspect of the college's work offers opportunities to work with a variety of adults and the college's close and successful partnership with Birkett House offers unique opportunities for students to study and socialise in close proximity with students with severe special needs.
24. Relationships among students and with teachers are very constructive and contribute significantly to the warm and friendly atmosphere in the sixth form and around the school. Students enjoy interacting with each other and younger pupils. They respect each other and have a positive attitude to equal opportunities. Most students have positive attitudes towards involvement with extra-curricular activities. These opportunities enable them to mix with younger pupils and build good relationships across the whole college community.

25. In other respects opportunities for students' personal development are mixed. There is some good practice to encourage initiative and personal responsibility amongst the Post-16 students. These include acting as study support mentors to students in Years 10 and 11 and providing awareness-raising inputs to the PHSE programme on subjects such as drugs and alcohol abuse. Other opportunities for seeking and taking responsibility are limited. There is, for example, no sixth form council and attendance is only satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good. The previous report also graded teaching as satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but commented that a quarter of lessons had 'significant shortcomings'. Matters have improved, though just under one in every 10 lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 remains unsatisfactory and in one lesson the standard of teaching was poor. Approximately six out of ten lessons were good or better, with one in five featuring very good or excellent teaching. The quality of learning mirrors the quality of teaching. Learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and promotes satisfactory attainment. Where the standard of teaching falls away, learning similarly suffers. In such cases, inappropriate behaviour from a significant minority of mainly underachieving male students serves to disrupt the learning of all class members.
27. The college's self evaluation strategies encompass teaching and learning. Though a culture of self-evaluation is being successfully established in the college, it is not deeply embedded at present. This is because the programme needs more time to work through its various stages and because the senior management team is not long established. Consequently, though the senior managers know where weaknesses in teaching and learning are, they have not yet had sufficient time to put remedies in place. This is the main task facing the college if it is to be successful in improving standards further, and deficiencies in teaching and learning in subjects like mathematics and science and, especially, art and business studies must be addressed.
28. Very good and excellent teaching were encountered in a number of subjects, though few with any great degree of consistency. The departments where teaching and learning are strongest are drama, geography, music and modern foreign languages, especially Spanish. In larger departments such as English, mathematics and science, some teachers proved to be extremely capable, but practice is inconsistent and overall teaching and learning in these subjects are satisfactory.
29. Good teaching is offered to students with special educational needs and their learning is good. Data and information on specialist groups in the school are available for all teachers so they can match students' learning. A good handbook outlines students with difficulties, which enables a satisfactory response to all students' needs. Teaching generally focuses on equal opportunities and teaching methods that demand students' purposeful involvement in their learning. Teachers take full account of students' educational needs and learning targets in the best lessons. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson the teacher used large print on overhead projector transparencies and notes for a student with visual impairment. The teacher also used a teaching assistant well in giving the student appropriate support. In a Post-16 chemistry lesson a student with dyslexia understood an experiment on oxidation as well as other students because of the good support by a teaching assistant. Students with special educational needs who attend small classes taken by special needs teachers learn very effectively. They learn to improve spelling and grammar, and how to order their ideas so that the sequence of their writing makes better sense. Students with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, make good progress when they are taught individually by specialist visiting teachers. This helps their learning in other lessons. In a small number of lessons teachers do not provide sufficiently for students with special educational needs in their planning of the level of work and resources. In one mathematics lesson, in Year 10, the very high quality support from an additional teacher and a teaching assistant meant that students' learning was good when the pace was too fast and content too abstract for them. Teaching assistants' support for learning is underused in lessons that have weak planning and unsatisfactory teaching. For example, a teaching assistant was unable to support students with

special educational needs because the teacher gave students no opportunity for independent work in a science lesson in Year 11.

30. In lessons where teaching and learning were particularly strong, the teachers prepared well, were prepared to challenge, there was good pace and quality learning was fostered because of the teacher's enthusiasm and ability to involve all students in the lesson. For example, in an excellent Year 11 Spanish lesson a prompt start was made by the teacher, recapping on prior learning associated with a visit to a restaurant. Skilled questioning successfully reinforced prior learning of relevant vocabulary. The lesson proceeded with appropriate pace and with well-prepared challenges being incorporated. The emphasis of the lesson changed from the students describing, in Spanish, what they might find in a restaurant, to explaining problems that might be encountered during such a visit. This change in emphasis offered excellent challenges, encouraged the students to think and analyse and promoted excellent learning opportunities. The pace of the lesson was maintained and the learning of all students was significant during the lesson.
31. Where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory a common feature was the unco-operative and churlish behaviour encountered from a minority of students, especially boys. This was occasionally allied to staff not preparing sufficiently and thus not offering suitable challenges in their teaching to keep all engaged. In such cases, learning for all suffered and was unsatisfactory. In an unsatisfactory business studies lesson in Year 10 on franchising, there was insufficient challenge to keep the students occupied and to ensure that their learning moved forward. The students were compliant and were offered too few opportunities to become involved in the lesson. The teacher tended to dominate the lesson and there were too few opportunities for students to learn independently. As the lesson progressed, the dominant teaching style encouraged the students to become passive. They were expected to soak up information rather than discover knowledge for themselves through investigative work that would involve research, analysis and synthesis.
32. For students in Years 10 and 11, opportunities to use ICT as an aid to learning are satisfactory but there should be a more consistent approach to this issue. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, but the teaching of literacy is unsatisfactory. There is no clear policy and many students, especially boys, have unsatisfactory literacy skills that are serving to constrain both their attainment and their progress. The teaching of literacy in the majority of the subjects of the curriculum lacks consistency and is not adequately planned. Given the college's desire to secure further improvements in GCSE results the provision for literacy requires considerable attention.

Sixth form

33. Teaching in the sixth form is good and is leading to good learning which, in turn, is contributing to the good progress present students are recording. All lessons seen during the inspection featured at least satisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning in the sixth form have improved since the last inspection. In nearly seven out of ten lessons teaching and learning are good or better and the incidence of very good and excellent teaching was found in a quarter of all lessons observed. In the 15 focus subjects, teaching was good in most. It was very good in drama, geography and history and only mathematics, physics, business education and English featured teaching that was not good; even in these cases, it was satisfactory.
34. Examination evidence points to standards in the sixth form being below average with students achieving satisfactorily. The college staff are committed to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning is, not unnaturally, seen as integral to this process. Evidence based on lessons seen and work sampling suggests that standards of attainment are rising and the good teaching is promoting good learning, and the progress made by students is now good. In short, they achieve well.
35. A variety of strengths of teaching can be identified that lead to good learning by all students, including the small number of sixth formers who have special educational needs. The majority of sixth form teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding and when this is allied to good planning, realistic expectations and good teaching strategies, good learning occurs. Sixth

form students are very well managed and in lessons encouragement is given to students to develop as independent learners. This facet is not so obvious when homework is set. Many homework tasks tended to require students finishing work they had already started. There was less emphasis on setting challenging tasks that would require research, through such media as books and the Internet. Though the setting of homework was satisfactory, for standards to improve further, thought needs to be given to the quality of homework that is set, to ensure that it consistently offers challenge, promotes independent learning and allows students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the topics studied.

36. Though there were no unsatisfactory lessons, in a minority of classes teaching tended to be safe and uninspiring. In such lessons teaching was too teacher-centred and the students were passive. Though learning took place, the pace of learning was pedestrian and students were offered few opportunities to develop skills of research, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and reporting. In short, they were not being encouraged to develop as enthusiastic and independent learners. Where teaching showed more imagination and drive, students were enthusiastic. Passivity was replaced by alertness and vigour and learning was significantly enhanced by the challenges set. In an excellent Year 13 drama lesson, for example, there was a good balance between theory and practice. The first part of the lesson concentrated on theory with prior learning being reinforced. The students displayed a high level of understanding of the theories of Brecht and could more than adequately identify production techniques that Brecht would use in presenting his own works. The students were then presented with a scenario from the play 'A View From The Bridge'. Working in groups they had to enact the scenario. This was done with striking skill and maturity with the students showing a range of acting skills. The challenge presented was exacting. The students responded admirably and excellent teaching fostered excellent learning and significant progress during the course of the lesson. Other examples of highly effective teaching could be quoted, though few lessons were graded as excellent. As part of the self-evaluation of teaching and learning that the college encourages, thought should be given to how satisfactory teaching can be made good and how very good teaching, of which there are many examples, can be made excellent.
37. Some attention is given to improving the students' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The levels of attainment recorded by some students are constrained by their literacy skills and this shortcoming must be addressed. The provision for literacy development is unsatisfactory. The provision for numeracy and ICT in the sixth form is satisfactory. For improvements, teachers should plan to develop both these skills more in their teaching and more opportunities for independent research work, using both written text and sources such as the Internet, should be offered.

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

38. The curriculum is good overall. The college provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in Years 10 and 11, and attaches importance to developing students' values by including a GCSE humanities course for all. However, students for whom GCSE is unsuitable do not have an alternative accreditation at present. In addition to compulsory subjects, students select a further two subjects from a wide choice. These include media studies, drama, business studies, history, geography, German and Spanish, all at GCSE level. A GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course is also provided. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects except religious education, where insufficient time is allocated to cover the agreed syllabus. This adversely affects standards of work in the subject. Since the last report the time allocation for physical education has improved, but does not allow the subject to be taught in sufficient depth. This too, affects standards of work seen. The college arranges weekly assemblies for year groups, but this does not comply with the requirement to have a daily act of collective worship. This was a criticism made at the time of the last inspection.
39. Last year the college experienced difficulty staffing modern foreign languages. It identified students who were not benefiting from these lessons and provided an alternative course - the Junior Sports Leadership Award. This year a smaller group of students identified by their high colleges have

started a new course, the Youth Achievement Award, as an alternative to studying a modern foreign language.

40. The college makes good provision for students' personal, social and health education. Students gain knowledge and skills that will help them as maturing young adults. This is part of the college's 'Education for Life' programme. It includes drug and sex education, citizenship, and a module on 'stress, pressure and survival'. Tutors have a weekly tutorial with their group in addition to registration meetings twice a day. They use a different period in the timetable each week so the allocation is fairly distributed across the curriculum. 'Thought for the Week' provides a theme for assemblies and tutorials. During the inspection 'Mental Health Week' was the topic chosen. This provided many materials that led students to consider the high incidence of mental illness and its causes. Tutors planned these lessons well and managed discussion and activities effectively.
41. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. There is a wide range of sports. Competitive matches take place with other schools and colleges. The college is successful at county, regional and sometimes national levels. Sports activities take place at lunchtimes and after college hours. One in four students participate. These activities provide good opportunities for all and extend those students gifted in sport. Music is also a strong element of extra-curricular provision. A concert band, community choir, a chamber choir and various instrumental ensembles frequently perform. The college theatre is a very good facility for appreciative audiences to listen to their music. Students have opportunities to experience drama and poetry through theatre trips and workshops conducted in the college by a visiting poet and storyteller, though the college's own drama department does not undertake any public performances. The modern foreign languages department has lunchtime classes to support the learning of languages.
42. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is very good. They have equal access to all subjects and activities. Small classes in English and humanities staffed by special needs teachers and teaching assistants support these students. Within the options open to students additional studies offer two courses suited to students with special educational needs. '*Getting Connected*' is a course that prepares students for the world of work. '*Team Enterprise*' is a course that provides students with the experience of running their own company, and learning the advantages of teamwork. Students with special educational needs have access to the open learning centre at breaks, lunchtimes and after college. Here they find support from special needs teachers and assistants and information and communication technology facilities. It is here that students who require the services of external specialists have their lessons; for example, for hearing impairment and dyslexia. Students with special educational needs participate in the extra-curricular activities provided. They also have activities arranged for them by the open learning department; for example, a residential visit to the Derbyshire Peak District.
43. The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. There is a new college policy; however, not all departments have identified where students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education could be extended.
44. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The college has made efforts to resolve the issues brought to its attention through the last report concerning the lack of an act of collective worship and the need to develop a more consistent approach to spiritual matters. There is a new whole-college policy, a 'Thought for the Week' and good examples are to be found in some lessons. Assemblies and PHSE often have linking themes and students are given some opportunity to reflect on, for example, the stigma attached to mental health. A youth worker is attached to the college and all students are invited to be a part of discussion groups and to reflect on matters that are relevant to them as individuals. In one religious education lesson seen, Year 11 students observed over 70 different images and were invited to reflect and express their feelings about, for example, goodness, evil, fear love and sacrifice.
45. Provision for students' moral and social education is good. Students are encouraged to be aware of, and decide for themselves, what is acceptable behaviour or not, in college and in society. In PHSE, for example, students follow units on making moral decisions and the rights and

responsibilities to which citizens are entitled. In one lesson seen, students worked collaboratively with the tutor and showed sensitivity to the learning needs of visiting students who had severe learning difficulties. There are many opportunities for students to work together in most subjects. Charity work is promoted in all years and individuals show initiative in recommending causes to support. The college aims to encourage qualities of self-respect, self-discipline, leadership and responsibility. The team sports and many musical activities that the college provides make a very good contribution to teamwork and balance well the elements of competition and co-operation. Students can also participate in community activities where similar skills are encouraged.

46. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There is a range of opportunities in music, humanities and drama. Students with special educational needs visit a plague village in Derbyshire. There is little evidence to be found in science, art and physical education and in modern foreign languages there are limited opportunities for students to visit and experience other cultures. Humanities makes a very good contribution to cultural development and is successfully developing students' multicultural understanding. Humanities is studied by almost all GCSE students and is viewed as a very good vehicle for promoting both cultural and multicultural understanding.

Sixth form

47. Curricular provision is very good overall. There is an extensive range of courses of good quality, including advanced vocational courses in art and design, leisure and recreation, and travel and tourism. These are augmented by GNVQ intermediate courses in health and social care and art and design. Some students follow a combination of AS and vocational courses, further extending the range of options open to them. Many students study four AS subjects in Year 12 and three A-level subjects in Year 13, although there are opportunities to study more or fewer subjects if appropriate. As part of the inclusive ethos that underpins the sixth form provision, the college offers STEP (skills training and education programme) This is designed for students who wish to improve their employability by gaining key skills qualifications along with some vocational experience. Nevertheless, the sixth form curriculum does not meet the requirement of a daily act of collective worship, nor does it provide for students' entitlement to the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
48. In addition to the academic and vocational aspects of the curriculum, good breadth is provided through the well co-ordinated general enrichment programme. This includes effective personal, social and health education modules, which are supported by a range of community professionals, such as the community police officers and local health care professionals, who run weekly drop-in sessions. Other opportunities and provision include the Community Sports Leader Award and the opportunity to do re-sit examinations in mathematics. There is an extensive extra-curricular programme. This is particularly strong in music, where a range of instrumental and choral opportunities is offered. The community aspect of the college's work also greatly enhances the learning opportunities that are presented to students. The total provision is rich and varied, providing students with many opportunities to develop their skills, understanding and qualifications. Key skills of communication, number and information and communication technology are now successfully integrated into some subjects.
49. The college is responsive in meeting the needs of all sixth formers. In a few cases, where it is not possible to provide a subject to meet an individual student's need, the college encourages the student to seek additional courses in neighbouring institutions. Part of all students' learning involves how to access opportunities in higher education and employment. They have full access to relevant information, in all forms, enabling them to make informed choices for the future. Links with neighbouring universities are generally good but could be improved in physics.
50. Community links are very good. Students are expected to provide service to the community. This may be within the school or outside. In school, younger pupils are assisted very well in lessons and sixth formers give excellent support to teachers in helping pupils with learning difficulties.

51. Provision for students' moral and social development is good overall, and that for spiritual and cultural development is just satisfactory.
52. Students' basic statutory entitlement to religious education is not met. Assemblies provide some opportunities for reflection and are often led by students. Some subjects make a contribution to spiritual development: for example, in music. However, in most subjects, opportunities are missed to enhance this important aspect of students' development.
53. Provision for moral development is good. The school has clear expectations that students will develop a moral sense and recognise right from wrong, which they do very well. Sixth form students are very good role models for the rest of the school. They are involved in community service, where there are many opportunities to develop and exercise moral responsibility. Assemblies focus effectively on moral dilemmas, and several subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. For example, in history, discussion of democracy and citizenship provided a very good opportunity for students to explore and develop moral standpoints. Students have a strongly-developed sense of conscience, reflect on the wider consequences of their choices and actions, and identify and discuss moral and ethical aspects of their personal behaviour.
54. Provision for social development is good. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and extend their social skills. The involvement of many sixth form students with pupils in the main school provides excellent opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and leadership, thus developing a greater awareness of the needs of others and respect for them. Other opportunities come through community service, which enables students to support others, especially those who have particular needs. The use of discussion in most subjects provides further opportunity for students to enhance interpersonal relationships.
55. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. They perceptively recognise racism in their own and others' behaviour and act upon it. Some subjects make a good contribution in enhancing students' awareness of culture, particularly music and French. The humanities course succeeds in promoting multicultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

56. The provision for students' care and welfare and the quality of pastoral support is very good and a strength of the college. This high standard has been maintained since the last inspection. Very good child protection procedures are in place, which are understood and acted on by staff in the best interests of the students. Good and effective procedures are in place to support "looked after children" and those students identified as having special educational needs. Students feel safe and happy in college and have the confidence and independence to raise queries and concerns with staff.
57. Health and safety procedures are very good. Risk assessments are well established, and student access to the college Internet facilities is closely monitored and secure systems are in place to ensure students are not exposed to unsuitable Internet sites. There is good governor involvement in the termly "whole site" health and safety audits, with formal reports and recommendations for governors' decisions. The importance given to the health and safety of students by the college was well demonstrated by the speed and efficiency with which managers responded to rectifying a traffic hazard highlighted during the inspection.
58. Very good procedures are in place for monitoring and improving attendance. Daily absence analysis reports enable effective monitoring of absence by college managers. There is a good system of "first morning" absence phone calls to parents of missing students, with evidence that this is helping reduce incidents of absence and late arrival. The education welfare officer works in close liaison with college managers and the extent of lesson absence by disaffected students is improving. Student registration complies with statutory requirements.

59. The college has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying. The clear and simple behaviour policy is well embedded into college routines and provides each student with a meaningful focus on the college's clear expectations for behaviour. A major part of the behaviour management routine is the introduction of the "referral form" procedure, which is beginning to have a positive impact on improved behaviour patterns amongst students in Years 10 and 11. A feature of the form is the identification of good work and effort in lessons by students and reporting this as praise for the student in letters home to their parents. There are early signs that the "referral form" system is liked by students and proving to be successful in promoting the overall good behaviour to be seen in and around the college.
60. The college promotes a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying and racial harassment and has worked hard to successfully eliminate bullying within the college site. An appropriate policy for promoting racial awareness exists. Students and parents agree that bullying is not a problem. There was no evidence of any oppressive behaviour during the inspection.
61. Overall the educational and personal support and guidance for students is very good. The head of Years 10 and 11 and the Year 10 and Year 11 team co-ordinators work closely with class teachers to identify and support the personal development needs of the students in their care. The good practice of team co-ordinators moving from Year 10 to Year 11 with their students provides continuity and stability in ensuring that the individual development needs of the student are maintained across both years. Parents are pleased with the quality and level of pastoral support given to their children and acknowledge the way they are involved as partners in helping to support their child's learning in the home.
62. The formal consultation meetings between teachers, parents and their children ensure timely discussions about the progress the students are making. Any individual student with personal problems, or concerns, is able to refer to their team co-ordinator or his or her form or year tutor. A number of students interviewed, particularly those in Year 10, stated they received a good level of support and guidance from their teachers and their team co-ordinator and had confidence that any personal concerns raised with them would be sensitively listened to and addressed.
63. The monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good. There are good procedures in place to assess and monitor students' attainment and progress. The college makes good use of the "assessment manager" database to build upon the extensive Year 9 test data received from the feeder high schools. Good use is made of YELLIS to provide teachers with termly baseline assessments and enable them to set targets for individual students. This enables teachers to make judgements about likely GCSE performance and organise work to be closely matched to the ability of the students. The college has established a good practice in the use of computerised cards to monitor students' work effort, homework, their progress against target grade and actual attainment grade on a half-termly basis. Year 10 teachers make good use of this tracking data to discuss progress and any concerns they have at their spring half term consultations with parents. Year 11 teachers make good use of this analysis by encouraging students to focus on their learning targets.
64. There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking of students' work with some good practice in design and technology, geography, music and drama, but less than satisfactory marking practice in art, science, mathematics and English. Where marking is good it is regular, informative and geared to identifying areas of weakness and targets for improvement. Where marking was judged unsatisfactory it was often "tick" based, lacked constructive comment and examples were seen of class work and homework simply not marked at all. In general, the practice of individual student target-setting is good and has a positive impact on the standards being achieved in the college. However, some are too broad-based and constrain the opportunities for short-term learning objectives to be used in challenging and stretching individual students to improve their performance. Student planners are well used to identify individual subject learning targets and areas for improvement, and to record the students' achievements.
65. The use of assessment information by the different subject departments to inform curriculum planning is not yet fully standardised across the college. For example, it is very good in music and

in design and technology, with efficient and informative self-assessments against the GCSE criteria being used to inform target-setting and, where effective strategies are in place, to monitor and identify students in need of extra support. By contrast, it is unsatisfactory in art with few written short-term targets, insufficient self-evaluation and limited value-added assessments being undertaken of college examination data.

66. Teachers, support staff, and information from parents and feeder high schools identify students with special educational needs. The special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) supervises these processes that reflect the new Code of Practice. Teachers receive students' individual education plans that list their targets for improvement. The college views students' needs as a continuum so that if progress is not adequate additional, or different, action will be taken. A very good initiative introduced by the SENCO is the regular monitoring of students' progress by teaching assistants on a lesson-by-lesson basis. This information is shared with the class teacher so that it may contribute to their lesson planning. Students with specific learning problems such as visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, or dyslexia, receive individual assessment of their progress from external specialists.
67. Students with special educational needs receive very good diagnosis of their needs during Year 11 at transitional review meetings. With their parents, the SENCO and specialist advisers they discuss their aspirations. For some, a transfer to further education is a suitable choice; for others the best route is a programme of subjects and courses in the college sixth form. Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs have the requirements of their statements fully met.

Sixth form

Assessment

68. Procedures for assessing students' work are good. Teachers have worked hard to understand the assessment requirements of the new advanced courses; their assessment of students' work is accurate and helpful in most subjects and students understand the meaning of the grades that appear on their work. These are awarded in line with the college marking and assessment policy and teachers' written comments offer students clear indications about how to improve.
69. In all subjects, indicative grades of likely performance in examinations are issued. These assessments are recorded and sent to parents in clear and helpful reports that track each student's progress in each subject over his or her time in the sixth form. The assessment reports form the centrepiece of the academic tutoring sessions, which are one-to-one interviews with tutors held at least once a term to review each student's academic progress and personal development. Academic tutoring interviews also help to give guidance to students at crucial points in the year, such as when they are settling into the sixth form in Year 12, or applying to colleges or for employment in Year 13.
70. Students speak highly of their teachers and the extent to which teachers, tutors and sixth form leaders offer students individual help when required is very good. The comprehensive assessment and tutoring system is reinforced by the very good practice of the head of sixth form meeting with tutors of every group to discuss the progress of individual students and decide on the action to take, where necessary. The head of sixth form is, therefore, particularly well informed about the progress of individual students and, with his deputy and tutorial team, is able to offer advice and guidance of a very high quality. Course selections are tailored carefully to meet the needs of individual students.

Advice, support and guidance

71. The educational and personal support and guidance for students in the sixth form is very good; it includes effective careers education and guidance. Students have good access to information, support and guidance on higher education. Nevertheless, students raised some concerns during the inspection about the quality of careers advice and guidance. However, the college has an

effective system, where the work of the careers tutor is augmented by an external careers adviser to target support at those who need it. Current provision for careers advice and guidance is good.

72. The quality of support and guidance for students' personal development is very good. Throughout their time in the sixth form, students are given responsibilities and are monitored in carrying out those responsibilities. All must do community service. Throughout their time in the sixth form, the importance of participation in this range of activities is stressed to students. Personal development is given a very high priority and is highly successful in producing students who are mature, articulate, cheerful and very positive.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

73. Parents are very supportive of the college, hold the staff in high regard and believe their children receive a good quality of care and education. Discussions with parents show them to consider the college to be very open to their approaches, and staff are always willing to listen and talk with them. The feedback received from parents via the questionnaire and the inspectors' meeting with parents shows them to believe that the college has improved over recent years and is gaining a good reputation as a place of learning. These views are an improvement over those expressed at the last inspection.
74. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is good. Parents are welcomed in college and actively encouraged to become involved in their children's learning. Student planners include a home/college agreement. Parent and student attendance at the teacher and parent consultation meetings is very good and many parents commented favourably on the quality of the transfer arrangements from high school.
75. The effectiveness of the college's partnership with parents is very good and an area of improvement since the last inspection. The high profile community nature of the college means many parents regularly use the college facilities. The college is keen to extend the parents contribution to students' learning and has established a good practice in setting up parent "focus groups" to canvas parents' views and involve them in the review of college policies.
76. The quality and range of information provided to parents is good and has improved since the last inspection. Parents are kept well informed on a regular basis about all aspects of college life. The termly newsletter (Connect) and regular "Dear parent" correspondence ensure parents are kept up to date and well informed on all facets of college life. The governors' annual report to parents complies with statutory requirements and provides a good level of easy-to-read detail on achievements of the previous year. Parents of children with special educational needs are similarly kept fully informed. The SENCO keeps parents of students with special educational needs very well informed. She sends them a very informative newsletter that outlines the provision for special needs in the college, giving the names of all the special needs teachers and teaching assistants. Parents receive invitations to all meetings and information about changes to students' provision. The college recognises the importance of parents' unique perspective on their child's special needs. The governors' annual report to parents contains a very full evaluation of the progress of special educational needs.
77. Overall the "end-of-year" progress reports are good and provide parents with friendly and easy-to-read information on how their child has worked in each subject, what they know and their targets for improvement. Provision is made for each student to include a self-assessment of his or her learning and progress. Each report includes an analysis of the student's target grade attainment, their work ethic, homework assessments and attendance record. Most parents consider that they provide valuable information about the progress being made by their child.
78. Students are very satisfied with their sixth form provision, though a significant minority believe that higher education, careers and vocational guidance could be more effective. Students appreciate the considerable support given to them by the head of sixth form, his deputy, and by their tutors and teachers in lessons and after school. They value the ways in which their progress is monitored and discussed with them. They value the warmth of friendship, both of their peers and staff.

Students value the preparation for life after college given through the programme for personal and social education. The common room is seen as a very good social facility, but one that is not appropriate for quiet study or reflection. There is time for private study, but effective private study is hindered by the lack of a dedicated study area. Moreover, they would appreciate more computers in such a room for independent study.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

79. The leadership and management of the principal and senior staff of the college are good. The senior management team has developed significantly since the last inspection; only one of the present team was in post then and many of the present team are recent appointments. There is a very clear vision of where the college is heading and the detailed development planning offers the route to take the college on the journey that senior staff and governors have identified. Self-evaluation is a key means of seeking improvement but, at this juncture, senior staff have not tackled all areas of weakness. They have identified shortcomings in subjects such as art and business studies and they are aware of where there are deficiencies in the quality of teaching and learning, but they have not applied the medicine. For standards to rise further, these pockets of weakness must be tackled and eliminated.
80. Progress since the last inspection has been at least satisfactory. Standards, especially in Years 10 and 11, have risen and progress against most of the key issues identified in the previous report has been good, though problems remain with the provision of religious education and a daily act of collective worship. As the senior management team settles in and the most recently appointed members of the team acclimatise to the needs of the college, further improvements should be recorded.
81. Many areas of the college already benefit from at least good management. Indeed, the community aspect of the college's work benefits from very good management and this provision is having a beneficial impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The provision for special educational needs, which was criticised last time, has improved considerably. The SENCO provides excellent leadership and management. She has a clear vision of the role of learning support in advancing the progress of students with special educational needs. Her management systems provide for very good communication between staff, and the monitoring of students' progress. The SENCO has introduced strategies to improve further the consistency of classroom practice to meet students' special educational needs. The team of teachers and teaching assistants is of high quality and ably led by the SENCO. This team is well informed, experienced and developing its professional skills through further training. The governors have a high commitment to special educational needs and the chairman includes this area of college provision in his visits.
82. At departmental level the quality of management is good overall, but is variable. It is very good in design and technology, history, music and drama and good in geography, ICT and media. Most other subjects are satisfactorily managed with the exception of art and business studies, where management is unsatisfactory. Some departments, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, have newly-appointed subject leaders, but early indications are that standards in these subjects will rise because of the quality of management that is already being offered.
83. The college benefits from a good, experienced and very committed governing body that is very well led by a strong and determined chairman who has a clear vision of how the college should develop and improve. Though the governors do not fulfil all their statutory duties, there is a shared commitment to improvement and the governors have worked in harmony with senior staff to identify the critical issues that face the college. The quality of development planning is very good and this incorporates very good financial planning and management. The college's finances are managed on a daily basis in an exemplary way by the bursar, who ensures that designated funding is appropriately allocated and accounted for. The governors' financial management is very good. At present, there is a small deficit on the accounts, but financial planning shows a move towards a small surplus as numbers increase. The governors have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including a very good understanding of Best Value. The principles of Best Value are applied with consistency and the governing body benchmarks the college's performance

and the governors are always prepared to consult and challenge senior staff about crucial decisions that have to be taken. The governors fully support the self-evaluation that the principal has led since his appointment and they, too, see this as an important strategy to enable the college to move towards its over-riding objective of higher standards.

84. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities. The college has a diverse population, including students from the special school, on campus. The management team has recently been restructured and some roles have changed. At present the range of good strategies across the school serve inclusion and the needs of all students. These strategies are gaining clarification through a series of focus meetings that are looking at inclusion, equal opportunities and boys' achievement. Monitoring against published targets is planned once the views of all stakeholders in the college have been analysed. The college has also developed an appropriate policy to promote racial equality.
85. Overall, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory; teachers are deployed mainly in their specialist subjects. There are some weaknesses: in modern foreign languages, for instance, a significant minority of Year 10 students are unable to study French, owing to problems in recruiting another language specialist; the development of public performance in drama is restricted, because there is only one subject specialist; and the lack of an adequate specialist in media studies restricts students' use of ICT. The special educational needs department is well provided with staff. Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the work of the college, particularly in design and technology and science. The college is well supported by the work of the administrative and clerical staff. There is an effective performance management system in place, which is contributing to rising standards and is linked to the college's agenda of self-evaluation. Training needs are linked to department reviews and the whole-school development plan. There are very thorough induction procedures, for both newly-qualified teachers and all other new staff.
86. Overall, the standard of accommodation is satisfactory. There has been significant internal building work in recent years to accommodate the considerable rise in student numbers, but room occupancy rates are at full capacity. Specialist provision in music is excellent, because of the quality of practice rooms, soundproofing and the recording studio. In drama, the theatre and studio provide a stimulating learning environment. Accommodation is good in physical education, design, modern foreign languages, English, special educational needs and the humanities subjects. The college provides very good access for wheelchair-bound students and community users. Accommodation in business studies does not provide a business environment and media studies lack specialist teaching space. These shortcomings affect standards of work. Poor ventilation in mathematics classrooms and ICT suites is an issue being addressed by the college. The quality of the environment is enhanced by the displays of students' work in classrooms and around the school.
87. Resources for most subjects are satisfactory, but there are some strong and weak areas. The resources for drama are very good and learning is enhanced by the quality of lighting, audio-visual equipment and staging. The level of resources for media studies, special educational needs, physical education and music, is good. Resources are unsatisfactory in science, particularly information technology equipment; and in business studies, learning lacks the enhancement of specialist business equipment. The library is well managed and resourced and is used extensively by students during lessons and in non-teaching time. It is used as an important resource for developing students' independent learning skills. Resources include a new suite of 14 computers, all linked to the Internet, but many departments have limited access in lessons to ICT resources. This serves to constrain teaching styles.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

88. Leadership of the sixth form is very good. The headteacher and senior staff provide strong direction to ensure that all students receive an education of high quality. The head of sixth form provides very committed and competent day-to-day leadership. Leadership ensures that the monitoring of teaching, learning and planning equal the high quality of those in Years 10 and 11. Thus, students record at least the standards that they should and add value to the qualifications that they gained at GCSE.
89. The head of sixth form ensures that students use their time for private study well. Appropriate oversight of the extensive common room ensures that students use this individual study time productively. Other facilities for independent study are limited. The head of sixth form supports the students' desire to have a dedicated private study area with appropriate computer support for dedicated private study use.
90. Governors provide equally effective leadership to that offered in Years 10 and 11. They do not have a separate committee for sixth form matters, but their committees are alive to the importance of the sixth form to the life of the college as a whole. Governors provide neither religious education for sixth form students nor a daily act of collective worship, though both are legal requirements.
91. Funding is used effectively. The financial arrangements for post-16 education are secure and are managed very well and do not represent a drain on the resources made available elsewhere in the college. An appropriate and broad curriculum is offered that meets the needs of all post-16 students; the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities provide good challenge. Data collected by the college indicates that post-16 students add value during their courses and inspection evidence points to rising standards in the classroom. Students express general satisfaction with the provision that they receive. Satisfactory improvement has been made in post-16 education since the last inspection; the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Resources

92. The match of teachers to the demands of the post-16 curriculum is satisfactory in most subject areas. Overall, the adequacy of accommodation is satisfactory to deliver the curriculum. The provision of resources for independent learning, however, is unsatisfactory. There are no ICT facilities in the Post-16 Centre and computers in other resource areas are frequently booked for lessons. Students have only limited private study facilities. There is a shortage of specialist accommodation in business studies, health and social care and AVCE art and design. The provision of basic resources for post-16 courses is unsatisfactory in science and business studies. The library provides a variety of up-to-date reference texts, including a generous provision of periodicals. Whenever possible, students use the new computer suite to access the Internet for on-line research.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. To raise standards further and to improve the quality of education students receive, the governors should:
- a. Ensure that where teaching in Years 10 and 11 is below standard, it is brought up to the standard offered in the majority of lessons, by:
 - Continuing the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice;
 - Ensuring that good practice is identified and shared(Paragraphs: 26, 27, 31, 64, 99, 100, 104, 106, 111, 112, 113, 116, 117, 118, 136, 140, 156, 157, 158, 171, 172.)
 - b. Improve the attainment of boys in Years 10 and 11, especially in subjects such as art, design and technology, English literature, history and mathematics, by:
 - Vigilant monitoring of standards;
 - Ensuring that staff know what procedures to follow if elements of unsatisfactory behaviour affect the quality of learning for the majority;(Paragraphs: 3, 4, 5, 17, 26, 32, 96, 101, 102, 106, 107, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120, 131)
 - c. Improve the strategies for the teaching of literacy skills, by:
 - Ensuring that a suitable policy is developed and that it is applied with consistency by all departments;
 - Ensuring that established monitoring and evaluation procedures cover the development of literacy skills by all students.
 - Increase uptake
 - Further develop students' composition skills in order to raise standards even higher.(Paragraphs: 9, 32, 97, 101, 113, 120, 125, 131, 145, 157, 169)
 - d. Raise standards in both art and business studies, by:
 - Improving all aspects of provision including teaching and learning, the curriculum offered, assessment techniques and leadership and management, including the learning resources and accommodation.(Paragraphs: 7, 8, 27, 31, 65, 79, 82, 86, 87, 114, 115, 117, 118, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159)

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should consider addressing the following less significant issues in the action plan:

- Ensure that the statutory provision for the teaching of religious education in all years is met.
- Ensure that there is a written policy for the development of numeracy that covers all years and all subjects offered by the college.
- Improve the cultural opportunities offered to students in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages.

Sixth form

- a. Ensure that all students have sufficient access to ICT to support their learning.
(Paragraphs: 14, 37, 78, 92, 175, 177, 181, 184, 189, 190, 194, 199, 201, 225, 229, 232)
- b. Improve the adequacy of resources in some curriculum areas, especially in business studies, health and social care, art and design and science.
(Paragraphs: 92, 181, 184, 194, 203, 208)
- c. Improve the provision of areas for independent study.
(Paragraphs: 14, 78, 92, 199)
- d. Ensure that teaching methods encourage the development of independent learning skills.
(Paragraphs: 35, 36, 37, 176, 177, 180, 192, 193, 219, 244)

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

94. The college has established excellent links with partner institutions and this represents an area of improvement since the last inspection. The high quality relationships that exist with the feeder high schools and the excellent transition arrangements in place have a significant and beneficial impact on the learning and progress made by students. These include curriculum-bridging projects, where Year 9 students are involved with college staff in starting assignments, which will be built on and completed when they have transferred to the college. A number of these projects have been recognised and promoted by the local education authority as examples of good practice to other education establishments. Of note are the excellent relationships established with the Birkett House special college and the significant social and academic benefits this has provided for both the college's students and the students from Birkett House College.

Contribution of community to learning

95. The contribution made by the community college to the work of full-time students and to many other members of the local community is very good. Quality learning opportunities are offered to people of all ages; from toddlers to elderly citizens. This, too, is an area of improvement since the last inspection. The community college is closed only two days each year and provides a wealth of social and educational development opportunities to its own students and community members at large, including: adult learning, youth work, under-five activities and a variety of community-based experiences. For example, students gain social benefits from studying alongside adults involved in developing ICT skills, they enjoy the thrill of performing in musical and drama presentations to mixed audiences and enhance their life skills through working with adults in the successful active arts programme. Such is the enthusiasm and eagerness with which the college resources are actively used by the community that the college has to book the use of its own theatre facility some three years ahead. The community aspect of the college's work has resulted in improvements to facilities, such as tennis courts and other sports facilities. Full-time college students derive benefit from this provision as their lessons use these facilities.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 10 & 11	117
	Sixth form	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		82

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 10 – 11

Number	3	22	50	31	10	1	0
Percentage	2.6	18.8	42.7	26.5	8.5	0.9	0

Sixth form

Number	3	14	29	22	0	0	0
Percentage	4.4	20.6	42.6	32.4	0	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll

	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	766	277
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	42	0

Special educational needs

	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	36	6
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	97	12

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last college year

	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	7.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	160	142	302

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	56	145	154
	Girls	82	136	139
	Total	138	281	293
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	46 [49]	93 [92]	97 [95]
	National	48 [47]	91 [91]	96 [96]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	39.5 [39]
	National	39.0 [38.4]

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	College	0	N/A
	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
College	Number of candidates	42	47	89
	Average point score per candidate	11.2 [12.4]	13.5 [14.3]	12.4 [13.3]
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 [17.1]	18 [18]	17.5 [17.6]

For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All

College	Number of candidates	35	39	74	8	10	18
	Average point score per candidate	11.2	13.1	12.2	9.8	12.3	11.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last college year

Categories used in the Annual College Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	937	42	3
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	14		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	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: Y10 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y10 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	754

Deployment of teachers: Y10 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.5
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Average teaching group size: Y10 – Y13

Key Stage 4	23
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3.08m
Total expenditure	3.17m
Expenditure per pupil	3207
Balance brought forward from previous year	-133734
Balance carried forward to next year	-86207

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	13
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.97
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

1074

Number of questionnaires returned

256

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	29	63	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in college.	30	55	5	0	10
Behaviour in the college is good.	25	54	5	1	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	53	17	3	10
The teaching is good.	21	63	3	0	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	45	20	4	16
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	43	46	6	0	5
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	45	3	1	5
The college works closely with parents.	18	51	18	3	10
The college is well led and managed.	23	57	4	1	15
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	54	6	0	10
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	41	9	2	24

Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by the parents.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The progress made by students with special educational needs because of the support they receive in lessons.
- Good standards of behaviour in lessons based on good relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of boys' writing.
- Clearer learning targets designed to improve the standards students attain.

96. Results in the 2001 GCSE tests were broadly in line with the national average. Girls achieve better than boys, but this reflects their relative standards on entry to the college. Students secured results in English that were better than in most of the other subjects they studied. GCSE results in English Literature were below the national average in 2001; students gained results that were worse than in most of the other subjects that they studied. There is no clear trend over recent years as results fluctuate; English outperforms English literature, which is a reverse of results seen at the time of the last inspection.
97. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average and represent a satisfactory level of achievement. Many students have a secure knowledge and understanding of their English work. Listening skills are good as students pay respectful attention to the speaker. Their oral skills are satisfactory in classroom discussion but falter when speaking in formal situations. Boys' writing is weaker than their reading, speaking and listening. Students' reading is average and they respond to challenging texts. Students understand Shakespeare's plays and relish the love scenes in 'Romeo and Juliet', which is clear from the displays they produced. Lower attainers extract meaning but cannot write convincingly on Shakespeare's verse. Higher attainers can evaluate theme and character at a sophisticated level. Concentrated help from the teacher enables students to make inferences from text but they are less secure when working by themselves. Students understand poems from a range of different cultures, genre and historical context. High attainers analyse complex imagery and compare and contrast poems. Low attainers understand theme and rhythm but lack refined analytical observation. Few examples of students' speaking and listening skills were observed during the inspection week. Students speak confidently about their work in small groups when they are given the opportunity. Year 11 students discussed poetry with enthusiasm and clarity when they compared poems from the examination anthology. High attainers develop argument and analysis to sustain a point of view. Low attainers speak briefly and more superficially in formal assignments. Students can write in a variety of styles: factual, creative and descriptive. The best work was seen in language when students were enthused by their creative writing and cared about the storyline. A Year 11 student wrote about, "the dark and gloomy unknown", and a Year 10 student asserted, "These two simple sentences represent the sense of frailty, yet strength of the snowdrops." Concentrated input has improved the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the special educational needs students but levels of literacy mar the work of middle and low-attaining students, particularly boys.
98. Students with special educational needs make good progress. They receive support from their class teacher and support teachers and assistants, who work together in planning lessons and devising strategies for success. Their literacy levels improved at a greater rate than those of other students because of the tight focus and variety of learning opportunities.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is based on a genuine care for the students and is characterised by good relationships. In a minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons students learnt less because of a lack of successful classroom management techniques and the unsuitability of lesson content. In the good and very good lessons there is a brisk pace; students

are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy working with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a poetry lesson on Seamus Heaney the students thoroughly enjoyed the fast pace of working and the variety of learning activities, which deepened their understanding. They spoke meaningfully about their tasks in groups and presented high quality, reasoned evaluations. The use of literacy to develop the learning of all students is inconsistent. Whilst the majority of lessons are more tightly focused and use a range of teaching and learning styles, a small proportion is characterised by the teacher spending too much time talking, so students become restless. The use of information and communication technology as a means of promoting learning is satisfactory. Indeed, the weaving of information and communication technology, factual writing and literature observed in a good Year 10 lesson improved the standards of all students, but boys in particular.

100. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Marking is positive and thorough yet inconsistencies mean that a minority of students receives bland comments and unclear targets for improvement. A minority of students' work is not marked regularly and students are consequently unclear about their standards or how they might improve. Assessment procedures are clear but are not adopted universally. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and a mutual observation of lessons begun recently is developing teaching styles, classroom management and maximising the learning of students. Library provision is adequate. Teachers and students value the head of department and appreciate his concern and support. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Literacy

101. The college's provision for literacy is unsatisfactory. Students' skills in reading and writing, in subjects across the curriculum, adversely affect standards. The standards of boys' writing are of particular concern. The college is aware of this and takes it seriously. In order to improve standards the college is appointing a literacy co-ordinator in addition to a specialist to concentrate on raising the levels of boys' writing. Good use of resource books in English enable students to improve writing standards by the use of writing frames, glossaries and study tips. In mathematics, students have a reasonable grasp of technical vocabulary and use information and communication technology to aid the presentation of their work. In physical education, students use specialist vocabulary effectively. The demands of the GCSE theory paper, however, cause problems for the students. The majority of students can write extended pieces of prose but this is mainly confined to English lessons. Most students are readers for a purpose and the joint efforts of the English department and the library seek to extend students' involvement. In art and modern foreign languages, lessons are planned to include opportunities to raise the standards of literacy of their students. This is beginning to effect improvement, but in other subjects the lack of a co-ordinated approach to literacy is constraining standards. Literacy is an issue for the whole college and needs to be shared by all curriculum areas in order to improve standards.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department.
- The relationships in the majority of lessons enhance learning.

Areas for improvement

- The standards recorded by many boys at GCSE.
- The recently implemented scheme of work gives insufficient attention to fostering a range of teaching styles.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance learning.
- The marking of work lacks rigour.

102. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the college did significantly worse than the national average in terms of the numbers of students gaining at least grade C. Very few students gained grades A and

B, and none gained the highest grade, A*. More students than average gained grade D. When these results were compared with those the college gained in other subjects, then these are significantly worse than the average. Girls did better than boys overall, although more boys gained grade A. In 2002, there was a modest improvement, although the overall picture was similar to 2001, with too many students still gaining grade D.

103. Inspection evidence, including standards observed in lessons and in students' work, shows that the spread of attainment in Year 11 is now better and, overall, is average. There are two prime reasons for this. Firstly, present Year 11 started the course with better levels of prior attainment; secondly, some of the changes the newly appointed head of department has made are already having an impact on standards. Learning in lessons for all students, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Students arrive at the college with attainment that is in the average range. These judgements, together with the challenge provided for students in lessons, indicate that students achieve satisfactorily in mathematics.
104. This satisfactory achievement stems from satisfactory teaching and learning. Of the twelve lessons seen, teaching and learning were judged to be very good in three, good in five, satisfactory in two, unsatisfactory in one and poor in another. These observations need to be considered in the light of evidence gleaned from the analysis of students' work. When all evidence is taken into account, it is clear that teaching, overall, is satisfactory. However, there are few strategies in use in teaching beyond a basic explanation at the whiteboard followed by textbook examples. In some classes, the three-part structure of lessons from the National Numeracy Strategy has been well implemented, so that students 'warm up' with off beat numerical exercises before moving into the main segment. This practice is, however, inconsistent. A positive feature of most lessons is the high quality of relationships and mutual respect shown between the teacher and students. This engendered an atmosphere of industry and enabled students to work well and make satisfactory progress.
105. The most effective teaching typically demonstrates high expectations of students' behaviour and work rate. Support teachers and assistants work well with lower-attaining groups, sharing the load with the teacher. The most effective lessons have brisk pace and students respond to the teachers' expectations, working solidly and with a will. This happened in a very good lesson for Year 11 students constructing formulae from an investigation. This was a middle ability group and the strongest students made startling progress in their ability to construct and justify formulae. By the end of the lesson, they had begun to see the links between formulae in different special cases and were constructing a general formula. The teacher had high expectations of learning and behaviour and he was well rewarded by the class. The small number who were less interested were effectively dealt with and the whole lesson moved at a cracking pace. In a Year 10 lesson for lower-attaining students, the teacher had very good relationships with students. The pace in this lesson never slowed as the teacher chivvied reluctant students well. As a result, students made large gains compared to their prior understanding.
106. Not all teaching was this effective. When teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, teachers' expectations of behaviour were too low. Students, especially boys, were talking and inattentive during explanatory sections. When teachers moved around the class to offer help, they did not check all equally, so some students were easily able to avoid working and this slowed the lesson's pace; the learning of the majority was not high enough.
107. The head of department is recently appointed, but he is offering good leadership and has already identified areas for improvement. He acknowledges that the new scheme of work needs further development to give guidance about possible teaching strategies, including more use of ICT and more opportunities for practical, collaborative work. The organisation of the sets based on ability has been amended, which should go some way to improving the underachievement of those students, especially some boys, who have been just missing grade C in GCSE examinations. The recently amended assessment and marking policy is of good quality, but was not consistently seen in use in the books analysed. The work of the department is effectively monitored. However, this improving picture is a recent one; many of the areas criticised above were similarly criticised

at the last inspection, over five years ago. Consequently, although improving now, the department has not improved enough overall.

Numeracy

108. The strategies for teaching numeracy in the college are satisfactory. Although no specific policy has yet been written, opportunities are taken to extend students' understanding of the use of these concepts. For example, in science formulae are used extensively and the use of graphs is encouraged. Extensive use is made of numeracy in science, effectively consolidating students' understanding. However, this is not overtly planned for as numeracy consolidation, rather being an aside in the lesson. Similarly, students of media studies make extensive use of a variety of statistical charts in all year groups, including post-16, as do A-level geography students. In lessons, students demonstrate adequate skills to progress. Some mathematics lessons in Year 10 are beginning to use and adapt the methods of the Key Stage 3 strategy, for example, by setting a mental problem as a 'warm-up' exercise, and helping to keep these skills honed. However, the lack of a policy means this is somewhat piecemeal at the moment. The head of mathematics is aware that practice is inconsistent both in the department and the college generally and the departmental development plan includes a commitment to improving provision.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improvement in results since the last inspection.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject.
- Standards in investigative skills.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the schemes of work so that there are planned opportunities to develop the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills of all students.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Use examination and other data more rigorously to improve standards.

109. All students study GCSE double-award science and results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were above the national average on all measures. Boys and girls attained equally good results and a relatively high proportion of both attained the highest grade. The college's value-added data show that these results represent good achievement for students of all prior attainment. The results in 2001 maintained the significant improvement that took place between 1999 and 2000. In 2002 there has been a slight drop in the proportion of students attaining higher grades and, for the first time, girls' results are slightly better than boys' results. In previous years results have been very similar. Results in science are consistently better than in other subjects, including English and mathematics.
110. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, especially in Year 10. By the end of Year 11 the highest-attaining students are secure in their use of symbol equations for chemical reactions and can use formulae with four or five variables to perform calculations. Middle-attaining students are able to use word equations confidently and can use formulae such as Ohm's law. The lowest attainers can describe reactions and the structure and function of the organs of the body but cannot accurately write word equations or calculate speed from distance and time. Standards in investigative work are particularly good with many examples of thorough investigations such as exploring the factors that affect resistance, speed of photosynthesis or rate of chemical reactions and comparing the insects found in different environments. Standards of work are similar for boys and girls. Students enter the college with above average standards in science so achievement is satisfactory for groups of all prior attainment, including those with special educational needs.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although some unsatisfactory teaching was observed, there are also examples of very good teaching. The teaching is very well organised, with lesson outlines and resources to cover the 12 modules of the syllabus. Every lesson has clear objectives and a good structure. Materials and worksheets are available to support the lesson objectives and students are very well prepared for both module tests and coursework assignments. For example, in a Year 10 lesson as part of a sequence on hearts and lungs, the hypothesis that fitness levels are linked to exercise was postulated and students were introduced to the investigation through very well sequenced activities. This led to high levels of motivation and very good learning. Coursework is carefully marked, including feedback on how to improve. Other marking is more inconsistent, so students do not always know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. Provision for students with special educational needs is good, including the use of teaching assistants, so that in most lessons they make good progress. Less attention is paid to planning a variety of strategies to suit different learning styles and to achieve the learning objectives with students of different ability. In lessons with higher-attaining students, expectations are high and students are given opportunities to develop their own thinking. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students who had used ticker timers to demonstrate speed changes were asked to find a method of determining acceleration because of gravity. The teacher gave very little guidance and through group discussion and experimenting with the equipment, students were able to devise a method and explain their ideas.
112. Levels of expectation are not always high enough with middle and lower-attaining students. In a significant minority of lessons the pitch is too low and the pace too slow. For example, a Year 10 group of middle-attaining students were testing the acidity of substances using universal indicator and neutralising an acid with an alkali – work more appropriate for Year 7. Students did not learn anything new. Similar criticisms were made in the previous inspection report. There is particularly good attention to risk assessments so that students learn to work very safely. Students' attitudes and behaviour mirror closely the quality of teaching. Strong classroom management, linked with a variety of activities and good pace, leads to very good learning. When students are given too much latitude, the behaviour of some students has a detrimental effect on the learning of the rest of the class. Even in these lessons the majority of students enjoy the subject and want to learn. There is very little evidence of the use of ICT to enhance learning in science.
113. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory. Teachers are all well qualified and deployed to cover all sections of the syllabus, so that students are taught by staff with good subject knowledge. There are outlines of topics for each module. They lack ideas on strategies to employ with groups of different ability, which was mentioned in the previous inspection report. Resources are well organised to support teaching including a good range of library books; however, the department has no data loggers or sensors and only one laptop computer, so that ICT is underused as both a curriculum and management tool. The very congested corridors leading to the science laboratories contribute to significant lateness to lessons, making completion of practical work difficult. This is further exacerbated by large group sizes and limited service provision around the edge of laboratories so that students have to work in large groups, allowing some students to do little practical work. Teaching and support staff work well as a team and there is informal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. This lacks rigour and there is still some unsatisfactory teaching and learning in science. Some good bridging projects with local high colleges are improving the match of provision to students' prior attainment; however, Year 10 students are not given target grades until some time into their course; they are not always aware of how well they are doing. Students' results in unit tests are used to provide a benchmark for future progress and some tracking of module results is undertaken. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results have improved. A number of other issues raised still need attention, including the pitch and pace of lessons, feedback to students on their strengths and weaknesses and more detailed schemes of work. These still do not contain sufficient information on how science teaching will contribute to rising standards of literacy and numeracy, or how ICT can be used to improve the quality of the students' work.

ART

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

Strengths

- Students are taught useful drawing skills.
- Teachers ensure that students have opportunities to develop vocabulary, writing and numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not make enough progress because teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The challenges set by teachers and their expectations of what students can achieve.
- Opportunities for independent learning.

114. The proportion of students gaining a grade in the A*-C range in the 2001 GCSE examination was well below the national average. The standard of boys' results was very low. Results in 2002 were similar to those gained in 2001, with comparatively few students gaining A* to C grades.

115. Currently, standards are below average at the end of Year 11. Students enter the college with around average skills in drawing and painting but below average understanding of art and artists of other times and cultures. They make unsatisfactory progress. Special skills in observational and geometrical drawing develop well but personal expression and the ability to convey feelings and social issues are very limited. Their work covers only a small range of media. Girls generally do better than boys and are more prepared to spend time in research. Few students develop the necessary skills to evaluate and improve their work effectively. Students undertake the majority of work in their own sketchbooks, which limits its scale and scope.

116. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. Teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve and this is often reflected in tasks, which are trivial or lack challenge. The best lessons engage students by offering good examples or models to aspire to. For instance, in a good Year 11 lesson the teacher provided a good range of examples of 'flat space' abstract art and these were sufficient to explore subtle spatial effects with effective teacher prompting. Unsatisfactory lessons lack stimulus and involvement, which results in students losing interest and making insufficient progress in developing their understanding. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher spent a long time talking about Expressionism in art and the lack of vivid illustrations or examples meant that only low-level concepts were discussed. As a result students gained only a superficial understanding and no real insight into how to research the subject further, or in depth. Sketchbooks of the current and previous Year 11 students reflect this finding, showing a lack of enthusiasm in the way that projects are tackled. Homework is rarely taxing for even the lowest-attaining student. When students are expected to finish work begun in class, this is often not done well. In addition teachers do not mark homework, which is a further disincentive. Work is not provided at different levels for students of differing attainment, although students with special educational needs do often have one-to-one support from a classroom assistant and teachers explain terms to lower-attaining students.

117. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The evaluation of teaching and learning has not led to the improvements that should have taken place. The head of department has changed the GCSE examining board to try to improve boys' achievement. Topics are chosen on the basis of their neutrality so that boys will not be disadvantaged. Some teaching has improved and courses are better planned. The course structure is suitable for the students involved, including those with special educational needs, but the planning assumes that all students enter Year 10 with well below average attainment. Planning does not take into account what students working at different levels might achieve. The scheme of work does not effectively introduce students to independent learning until some way into Year 11. This is too late to begin equipping students with the skills to undertake the personal research and study needed to achieve higher standards in their GCSE examination. Homework is not a sufficiently consistent or rigorous part of the course. For example, at the end of one GCSE lesson, students were asked to, "Look up one cubist artist

and write down their date of birth and the date of one painting". This is too easy! Students are taught to draw ellipses using neat mathematical routines, to shade using different grades of pencils and pastel and to recite movements and artists of the 20th century. However, the curriculum lacks depth and breadth in the study of art of other times and cultures along with the inspiration this could bring and which ought to play such an important part in the spiritual life of the college. Social and moral issues were equally missing in the students' work and too few opportunities are offered for students to use information and communication technology as a means of improving and enlivening their work.

118. At present there is little scope for raising achievement. Expectations of the teachers and the students are not high enough and the curriculum and teaching lack excitement and challenge.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall quality of provision is good

Strengths

- Very good leadership, management, and teamwork focus on raising standards in all areas and at all levels.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good.
- Well-organised accommodation and resources, and high standards of display, provide an inspirational learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop strategies to raise standards, (especially of boys), through attention to detail, matching objectives more closely to individual needs, and providing day-to-day evaluation.
- The development of resources and access to ICT, computer-aided design, and computer-aided manufacture, to further increase learning opportunities.
- The literacy skills of boys.

119. All students have design and technology lessons in Years 10 and 11. Students have the choice of studying the subject through work in resistant materials, food technology, graphics, textiles, or product design. By the end of Year 11 students' standards overall in design and technology are average. The percentage of A* to C grades gained in the 2001 GCSE examinations confirms this judgement. These results represent satisfactory achievement for the majority of students. Examination results in 2002 show similar standards, although results overall were not quite as good as the previous two years, with very high standards in textiles groups being balanced by weaker standards in food technology and male students' results generally reducing the overall A* to C pass rate. Overall, attainment has been rising consistently since the last inspection.

120. Inspection findings concur with these average standards and satisfactory achievement. Work in folders, and in progress, covers a wide range of attainment, as one would expect in a very large year group. Standards vary from well below average to well above, with several gifted and talented students producing high quality design sheets using strikingly individual styles. Female students generally do much better than male students, with the difference being slightly larger than the national average difference. The lower literacy skills of boys reduce the quality of work and impede progress. The department is aware of this and is developing appropriate strategies specific to the subject, to tackle the problem of underachievement, by making tasks more relevant and setting realistic short-term targets.

121. Progress during Years 10 and 11 is good for all students across the attainment range, including those with special educational needs. Students learn well through direct observation and practical problem-solving. For example, they quickly learn how to measure, cut and shape and weld sheet metal to make highly creative sea creatures. Their work shows a clear understanding of the properties of metals and a good awareness of spatial relationships. Similarly, work in textiles shows good achievement and progress across the attainment range. Students print well-designed motifs using stencil, block and screen-printing methods. They understand the advantages and disadvantages of each method and many develop strikingly original ideas. Less good is their

understanding of various drawing methods, especially isometric drawing. In food technology, students' evaluations of products that they have made are often too superficial, lacking detailed analysis of design brief requirements. Overall students' understanding of making, using tools and materials, is better than their knowledge of the principles of good design.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory and, in some lessons, was very good. The design and technology curriculum and examination requirements are presented well, through carefully-planned projects. Lessons start with clearly-stated aims and objectives and good introductions, including many well-presented practical demonstrations. These advance learning at a good pace. Class management and control is good overall, enabling very effective use of lesson time. Resources are carefully prepared for appropriate practical tasks. These promote good learning and evaluative summaries aid continuity and progression. In the best lessons, questions are made inclusive, by being directed to students by name and involving students with special educational needs; in other lessons insufficient use is made of question and answer sessions to gauge understanding and reinforce learning. Generally, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are well integrated with project work, though links with science and art could be developed; for example through colour theory and compositional layout. Learning is best in the very good lessons, where students follow a sequential path of problem solving activity to achieve set objectives and are encouraged to evaluate their work. In some lessons more use could be made of assessment and verbal and written comments from staff on students' work should be related more to examination assessment criteria.
123. Leadership and management of the department are good. The major strength is the very good teamwork of teachers and support staff. Students profit from the wide range of expertise and interests of their teachers. The help and assistance that the technicians provide is beneficial and initial teacher training students bring fresh ideas, and innovative materials to the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and there is considerable capacity to improve further. At the time of the last inspection standards were below average. Now there is a more systematic approach to procedures and standards are rising. Previously the accommodation was not utilised to best effect, but now it has a very positive effect on learning. All resources, including kitchen, studios, and workshops are well organised and health and safety is well addressed. A stimulating working environment has been created through bright informative displays throughout the department and an inspirational exhibition room where students' work and commercial, products can be evaluated and celebrated. Development plans identify how to raise standards in all areas, especially the achievement of boys. To improve further assessment procedures need to be more thorough and students should have more opportunities to use ICT in their work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The above average results.
- The range and effectiveness of teaching strategies used.

Areas for improvement

- To improve standards further, there is a need to develop fieldwork.
- The support offered to lower-attaining students.
- The use of ICT in lessons and for research purposes.

124. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in their GCSE examinations was well above the national average; this represents good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. Results in previous years have been consistently good with an above average percentage of higher grades. Girls obtain significantly better results than boys, although the attainment of boys is above the national average.

125. In work observed in Year 10 and 11 standards are above average and achievement is good in relation to prior attainment. Some students are achieving at the highest levels, with detailed folders and well-developed analytical skills. Year 10 students were able to analyse data on economic activity and construct a choropleth map to show the north/south divide in the United Kingdom. Year 11 students applied their previous knowledge of mapwork and coastal processes to an examination revision question. Detailed summary and support sheets provide a very sound base for learning. Teachers are emphasising reading, the completion of manageable tasks and the use of correct geographical terms with the result that this is having a positive effect on achievement and literacy skills. Some of the low attainers had difficulties with extended writing and completion of tasks that often restrict their progress. They would benefit from additional support in classes. Most students' numeracy skills are satisfactory in order to cope with statistics, graphs, and tables that are used in the subject. However, little use is made of computers so the scope for the use of ICT as a learning tool is limited.
126. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. The majority of students work hard and want to do well. Students have positive attitudes towards their work and this enhances learning and progress. Students are able to work independently and collaboratively as required in the class. In most lessons learning was good because of high levels of concentration as students responded well to the teachers' expectations and good quality teaching.
127. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and this enables students to acquire new information and skills. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives, thus helping the students to work productively and at a good pace. Learning is, therefore, good for all students, including those with special educational needs. The confidence and enthusiasm of the teachers motivate the students and engage them in their work. Teachers challenge the students and this leads to high levels of interest, sustained concentration, good learning and considerable progress in lessons. Year 10 students developed their understanding of the main reasons for condensation and precipitation. The teacher gave a clear explanation of the processes and was able to involve the class in the discussion in order to clarify the major concepts. The management of the students was generally good with high expectations of good behaviour. An impressive range of successful teaching strategies encouraged students to learn effectively.
128. Each unit of work is supported with high quality resource material and extension tasks. Year 11 students made good progress by reinforcing their knowledge of industrial location and then analysing in detail the push/pull factors of decentralisation of economic activity from urban areas. The use of examination questions at the end of each module of work led to good revision exercises, development in skills of analysis and consolidation of students' understanding. Students make progress when they clearly understand the tasks and there is a balance between support from the teacher and independent work. Teachers put emphasis on developing literacy skills by using a range of written work and encouraging students to answer questions in class. As a result students are confident in the use of geographical words and this helps their learning and achievement. Homework is set regularly and students are able to build on the learning in the classroom. Marking is thorough and supportive throughout the department and indicates how students can improve their work. Opportunities for sharing and observing good teaching and learning could be further developed in the department in order to raise the achievement of pupils of all attainment levels.
129. The leadership and management of geography are good. The teachers work well as a team and departmental meetings are held on a regular basis, providing opportunities for discussion on strategies for raising attainment. Accommodation is good and imaginative display work has a positive effect on the students' learning. The resources in the subject area and library help teaching and learning. All students have access to textbooks and support material, and this has a positive impact on learning especially in the completion of homework. Statistical information on students' prior attainment is well used by the department to track student progress and identify underachievement. Fieldwork to the Peak District in Year 11 provides a firm base for the coursework assessment on the effects of quarrying on the local environment. However, there is scope to develop further fieldwork in Year 10. There has been good progress since the last

inspection with standards rising to the present high level. High-attaining students are making good progress and there are now considerable opportunities for independent study and extension work. The subject is well placed to build on its success and make further progress in the future.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good relationships that ensure class control and good progress by most students.
- The progress made by students with special educational needs.
- Very good assessment procedures.
- The very good management of the department.

Areas for development

- Improve attainment by the end of Year 11.
- Improve literacy skills, especially for male students.
- Reintroduce fieldwork into the curriculum.
- Develop further the role of ICT in teaching and learning.

130. Results in GCSE history for 2001 were below average, though most students gained their target grades. Though no national comparisons are available, the results in 2002 were not as good as those recorded in 2001.

131. Attainment on entry in history is average. The number of students opting for history is low, mainly because of the way the college's curriculum is structured. Standards observed in Years 10 and 11 are average. Problems with poor English expression and spelling detract from the overall performance of many students, especially boys. For many, their oral competence exceeds the quality of their written work. Weaknesses in literacy skills constrain the advances made by students, with the majority recording satisfactory achievement during the course.

132. The quality of the teaching and learning is good and, because of that, present students' learning is good; they achieve well and make good progress. A minority of students makes very good progress. This is in part because of the good relationships established by teachers with their students, in which humour is used well to defuse potential conflict or to lighten proceedings. The impact of those good relationships is secure class control and the co-operative attention of the students. As a result, they concentrate on their work, and mostly are engaged by it. A Year 10 class watched, with considerable interest and in absolute silence, a video on the influence of the early twentieth century cinema on people's lives and by the strength and relevance of their answers clearly understood what they had seen. Although the use of ICT in history teaching is underdeveloped, the Internet is used for research and students in a Year 11 class were preparing to undertake individual research into the personalities involved in the fight for voting rights for women at the start of the twentieth century. In the same lesson the teacher used the opportunity presented by the topic to introduce an element of citizenship by comparing the qualifications for the right to vote then with the present day and the moral issues that emerge in that comparison. Students respond positively to questions, work co-operatively with each other and consequently make good progress. They sustain a reasonably high level of concentration. They work well independently, for which they are well prepared. Behaviour is generally good, even though teachers often have to work hard to keep students focused, as some individuals, particularly in Year 11, present quite challenging behaviour, do not work well and consequently underachieve. Lessons are planned well with the wide range of abilities in each class in mind and students with special educational needs benefit from the collaborative work of the teachers with the support assistant. Strong individual support is given to students identified with difficulties during written activities and teachers involve all students equally in the lesson activities. To help a visually impaired student, resources documents are provided in an enlarged font. As a result of this inclusive approach, progress by students with special educational needs is also good. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined and because of the teachers' very high level of subject expertise explanations are clear and phrased in appropriate language as teachers take account of the literacy problems that affect

their students' work. They use a wide range of teaching methods supported by a range of very good and varied resources to stimulate thinking, to which the majority of students responds very well. The pace of lessons is brisk because teachers have high expectations and drive students to make progress by the use of focused questions, some of which are quite demanding.

133. The leadership and management of the history department are very good. Documentation is clear and programmes of study are up to date, albeit rather concise. Assessment procedures are very good and the student record sheets, which indicate grades awarded for assignments and their strengths and weaknesses, keep students informed of their level of work and how it might be improved. The work of teachers in the department is monitored by mutual lesson observation and both formal and informal discussion. For too long the department has borne the burden of unassisted part-time teaching and management. The overdue appointment of a second specialist teacher will go some way to alleviate some of the day-to-day management and teaching burdens and eliminate the need for teaching by non-specialists. The college library has a good stock of books that supports the history syllabus well, complementing very effectively the resources produced by the teachers in the department. There are also 14 computers that students may use to access Internet web sites for the purposes of independent research. There has been good improvement in many aspects of the department's work since the last report.

ICT

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

Strengths

- All students have lessons in ICT.
- Students are made aware of the use and applications of ICT in society.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure a more consistent use of ICT across all departments.
- Improve the quality of homework.
- Assessment procedures need to be better understood by students.

134. The proportion of students gaining a grade in the A*-C range in the 2001 GCSE examination was average. The standard of boys' results was below that of the girls but relatively better than their performance in the other subjects they took. In 2002, the percentage of students gaining grades A* to C was similar to that recorded in 2001.
135. Standards of work of present students in Years 10 and 11 are average. Students enter the college with the ability to make sound use of information and communication technology and are familiar with common operations such as filing, creating word-processed documents and searching the Internet. They are generally less secure in refining and developing their work. They show satisfactory achievement overall. By the end of Year 11 they can use a range of software tools to solve particular financial problems, to handle some leaflet advertising for a small company, or to make a multimedia presentation in Spanish. Higher-attaining students combine information well from different sources and can say why a particular piece of software is more effective than others. GCSE students can provide searches and reports from databases they have created, with higher-attaining students providing a convincing development and a critical analysis of the system they have devised. The college was unable to provide evidence of competence in control technology, or of making measurements using a computer. Only in design and technology do some students have an opportunity to develop these skills; for example, in using a computer-controlled sewing machine. The use and application of information and communication technology in other subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, though practice between departments is variable. Many departments plan to use information and communication technology, but access to facilities is not always easy and this reduces opportunities, thereby affecting standards.
136. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and in some lessons are good. Progress is satisfactory in both the GCSE lessons and the non-examination lessons that all students take for half a term each year. Lessons are consistently well planned so that students are aware of what

they will be learning from week to week. Students are well motivated because teachers choose projects that appeal to both boys and girls, so they work hard and achieve good results. In a good Year 10 lesson, learning was further enhanced by very well prepared resources, which the students had to locate and insert into their document. In addition the teacher had insisted that students plan out their designs in rough before they touched the computer and use a paint program to prepare a logo, rather than using 'clip-art'. This helped students feel more in control of their own learning. In less successful lessons, the teacher does not provide enough visual or written instruction so that students have to proceed by trial and error. In a Year 10 lesson, which was otherwise satisfactory, the students' development of some vital desktop publishing skills was inconsistent, because they had had insufficient instruction. This slowed their progress and they missed some useful 'short-cuts' to enhance formatting. Although students do preliminary exercises when they join the college in Year 10, to determine their knowledge and understanding of ICT, teachers do not prepare work, or set different levels of challenge for the different ranges of ability. This would be particularly helpful in the case of higher-attaining or talented students and those who have difficulties. There is no consistent pattern to the setting of homework. Teachers' expectations vary and this leads to variations in what the students learn and what they bring to the next lesson. Language support is good, though, and students with identified special educational needs generally work with a classroom assistant or have extra help so that their achievement is usually similar to the others. The students' personal and social development is good because of the opportunities for working independently, or together, and for students to help each other. Teachers are also at pains to explore the wider implications of information and communication technology for society as a whole.

137. The leadership and management of the department are good. Since the last inspection, provision has improved satisfactorily. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained and has kept pace with the increasing demands of the new National Curriculum. The safe use of the Internet for research and investigation is now a feature of most subject areas, for example in drama where students were given good guidance in finding information on the social, historical and cultural aspects of the play, "Hobson's Choice". Access to computers has been improved, with the number of computers for a college of this size about average. There is increasing demand so that some departments, such as mathematics, science and art find it difficult to book time; the use of information technology in these areas is unsatisfactory. In science, the lack of equipment means students are not able to sense and monitor experiments by computer. Overall, there has been insufficient progress in this area. The college has satisfactory systems for the assessment and recording of progress in GCSE and in the modular lessons but is unsuccessful in assessing ICT achievement in other subject areas. Student involvement needs to be strengthened and linked to more frequent marking of work so that students have a greater understanding of how well they are doing.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in Spanish.
- The achievements of students who study German and Spanish.
- The quality of teaching in German and Spanish.
- Students' behaviour.
- The quality of leadership offered by the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching in some French lessons.
- The quality of resources in the library.
- Opportunities for cultural activities.

138. In 2001, the percentage of students entered for GCSE French was higher than the national average, but the results for grades A* to C were well below the national average, with girls gaining better grades than boys. Although students performed significantly less well in their French GCSE than in their other subjects, their grades were in line with their targets. The percentage of A*-G

results was also lower than the national average. The 2002 results dipped considerably with only one in four students gaining a grade in the A*-C range. In 2001, only nine students were entered for the GCSE German examination, with four securing a grade in the A*- C range. In 2002, a similar number of students sat the German GCSE and the results improved; five students gained an A*- C grade. Three students gained an A* or A grade whereas no student had achieved this in 2001. Overall, students did much better in their German GCSE examination than in other subjects. In 2001, the Spanish GCSE results were well above the national average. The percentage of high grades was also well above the national average and many students exceeded their target grades. The 2002 results confirmed the dramatic improvement of the past two years with all but one student gaining a grade in the A* - C range.

139. Standards in work seen during the inspection in Year 11 were average in Spanish, average in German and below average in French. Students in the Year 11 Spanish group speak confidently with good pronunciation and intonation. They cope with unpredictable elements during conversations with their teachers. They are able to recognise points of views in spoken and written texts containing unfamiliar and complex language. Their writing shows their ability to narrate events factually, using a range of vocabulary, structure and tenses in increasingly complex sentences. Although some higher attainers in the GCSE French groups are producing accurate sentences that are complex and use interesting and varied vocabulary, they need the support of model texts and writing frames to narrate events. They can convey spoken messages with occasional development but they find it more difficult to respond consistently beyond the minimal requirements and they rarely take the initiative. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs can extract some details from simple language spoken at normal speed but they still need the support of visual and other clues. They show some ability to substitute words and phrases but their pronunciation is not always very accurate and the main points are not always communicated. The achievement of students who study German and Spanish, many of them in only two years, is very good. The frequent staff turnover that some current Year 11 French groups experienced during the last academic year has had an adverse impact on their progress. However, most students in the Year 10 French groups show satisfactory achievement. Overall, the contributions made by the department to the development of literacy and ICT skills are satisfactory and improving. The development of literacy skills is a departmental priority. All display boards in the modern language classrooms include key words, including those specific to the topic being studied. A teacher used these key words very effectively in a German Year 11 lesson to encourage students to construct their answers to questions about a past holiday. The development of ICT skills through modern languages is planned for in detail in the new schemes of work and some good practice is already in evidence. The Year 10 Spanish students produced a multimedia presentation to describe their house and a Year 11 French group entered details obtained during a paired work activity directly onto a spreadsheet.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but, in German and Spanish, it is very good. Some unsatisfactory teaching was observed in French but the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in two thirds of the French lessons observed and it was good or better in over half the lessons observed. The quality of students' learning in lesson matches that of the teaching. All teachers are very good linguists who have a good understanding of the GCSE requirements. They have high expectations of behaviour. Consequently, the behaviour of students was hardly ever unsatisfactory and was very good in over half the lessons observed. In the best lessons, the teachers plan a rigorous sequence of activities that consolidate as well as extend their students' skills, knowledge and understanding. By the end of a Year 11 German lesson, the students were able to integrate answers and questions about leisure activities in a previously practised dialogue about a past holiday. In those best lessons, teachers select activities that will engage the students' interest. In a Year 10 French class, a blockbuster game on household chores motivated boys and girls equally and they were very keen to take part. Consequently, students became increasingly confident in their use of a new grammatical structure. The best lessons are characterised by high challenge. In a Year 10 Spanish lesson, the teacher had selected a challenging reading task, requiring students to sort out on an individual basis a series of statements into two lists: the good and bad points of living in a village. The students applied great effort and only used their dictionaries when other reading strategies, which they were able to explain, failed. A group of Year 10 students, many studying German as a new language,

responded positively to a challenging homework that would prepare them well for the demands of their GCSE speaking examination. They were asked to prepare a description of their college, which they would have to present to their teacher without support. When teachers plan lessons that require students to work in pairs or individually, they make good use of the time available to work with students on a one-to-one basis. In a Year 11 Spanish class, whilst the students were carrying out a reading activity, the teacher practised GCSE dialogues with a few students. This ensured that they had many opportunities to cope with unpredictable elements, a requirement of the Grade C criteria for speaking. In those very good lessons, teachers plan activities that meet their students' differing needs. Some students in a Year 10 Spanish group were asked to answer factual questions about a text. A different worksheet required the higher attainers in the group to answer the factual questions without support as well as to understand opinions and infer meaning. The quality of teaching was judged unsatisfactory in a very small number of lessons. Those lessons were characterised by lack of involvement of a significant number of students and a lack of pace.

141. The head of department took up her post in September 2002 and it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the impact of her leadership and management. However, the systems that have already been put in place indicate that she is providing enthusiastic and purposeful leadership. The recruitment and retention of qualified teachers has been an issue over the last two years. The comparative analysis of the 2002 results clearly shows that this unsatisfactory staffing situation had an adverse impact on the standards achieved by the groups most affected. The department is well resourced but the provision in the library is in need of much improvement, as it is currently not contributing to the development of linguistic skills. Although the overall provision for student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, the provision for their cultural development is unsatisfactory as the students experience a very limited range of cultural activities. Overall, the improvement made by the department since the last inspection is satisfactory, with significant improvement made in the quality of teaching. In order to raise standards further, especially in French, the department needs to: continue to share ideas of good practice, thus maximising the impact of the very good teaching that already exists; develop the use of library as resource to develop linguistic skills; continue to promote the development of literacy and ICT skills and implement the plans to develop opportunities for students to have cultural experiences. The department is now fully staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers who have the capacity to bring about the required improvements.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities, especially activities involving male students.
- The quality of accommodation.
- The extent to which individual needs are met.

Areas for improvement

- Results gained at GCSE.
- Assessment systems and the use of target grades.
- The use of ICT as a tool to improve teaching and learning.

142. GCSE results have shown an upward trend since the previous inspection. Results in 2001 did not follow that trend; however, all students gained grades expected of them. The GCSE A* - C results of students were below the national average. The proportion gaining A* – G grades was close to average. The proportion gaining A* grades was above average. The results in 2002 show an improvement on those gained in 2001.
143. Teacher assessments for students entering the college are not available. Many enter the course with very little knowledge of the elements of music. For the majority, there appear to have been limited opportunities to improve playing and performing skills on a regular basis. A small minority

of students enter the college with above average skills in playing and performing. These students have been supported in their learning by instrumental or vocal lessons. Overall, however, present students in Years 10 and 11 are recording good achievement and most exceed the expectations of the department.

144. Standards in lessons and work seen were average. Most pupils receive instrumental tuition and this is helping to raise standards. These students reach average standards in playing and performing and this represents good achievement. Composition skills are weak on entry and the department recognises the need to assess and set targets for individuals as soon as possible after entry to Year 10.
145. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and classroom management are excellent features of teaching. Students move quickly when changing activity and no time is wasted. Excellent demonstration of singing, playing and directing contributes to very good progress. In one Year 11 lesson seen, all students made very good progress in developing aural awareness by singing melodies from sight with confidence. Question and answer sessions and individual help ensure that all understand what is being taught and how they are to work through planned tasks. Planning for those students with special educational needs is very good and these students achieve very well. Students are given regular rhythm and melodic dictation exercises. In one Year 10 lesson seen, all students made good progress considering they are at the beginning of the course and that many have started from a low base. Activities to develop literacy skills, as well as those designed to give beneficial musical experiences, feature regularly in lessons; for example all students keep a glossary of subject vocabulary. The department makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. In lessons they are using imagination in creating and performing music they look at songs, which have been written dealing with a variety of social and moral issues for example blues and folk. They work well in groups and listen to music from a wide variety of cultures.
146. The management of the department is good. This is characterised by planning that meets the needs of all students. However, planning for the needs of the new Year 10 students proves difficult because of the lack of information on prior attainment in music. Assessment systems are thorough but students spoken to were not clear about their progress and did not have detailed targets for improvement. Twelve peripatetic teachers support the department, preparing students for external examinations and helping to raise standards in playing and performing. All music students support the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Teachers act as good role models and the standards of singing, playing and performing were high in all rehearsals seen. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory. The department does not yet monitor the progress of those students having instrumental tuition. Excellent accommodation enables students to work in groups, or independently, in all lessons. They are able to refine their compositions without interference. ICT resources are now barely adequate because of the increase in uptake in Years 10 and 11. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Improvements include: the quality of teaching, the increased provision for extra-curricular activities, especially those involving boys, and the refurbishment of the accommodation to a standard of excellence.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of students to learn well.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and is enhanced by excellent community links.
- Relationships are good.
- Participation in lessons is good.
- The contribution of learning support assistants.

Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time to the subject in Year 10 and Year 11 does not allow the curriculum to be delivered in sufficient depth.
- Provision of a second, full-time female specialist.
- Provision of more independent learning opportunities.
- There is no department teaching base for examination classes.
- Students have few opportunities to develop their ICT skills.

147. In 2001, the GCSE results for sports studies were average in terms of average points scored, though they were above the national average for the higher grades (A*-C), and all 46 students achieved a pass grade. Provisional figures for the 2002 examination show similar results. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. High-attaining students, including the talented, achieve well in a range of sports, at inter-college, county and sometimes national levels. The girls' under-16 football team were runners-up in the National Colleges' Cup Final.

148. Standards of work by Year 11 students are average. They achieve satisfactorily, given their average attainment on entry in Year 10. In non-examination lessons, students learn well because of good teaching and the effective support of learning assistants. Their achievement, however, is only satisfactory; many curricular aspects cannot be covered in sufficient depth, because of the poor time allocation for non-GCSE physical education. Higher-attaining students use their refined skills and understanding of attacking and defensive strategies, to outmanoeuvre opponents. When given the opportunity, they can accurately analyse performance. Most students show sound levels of spatial awareness, skill and tactical knowledge; they use these effectively in match situations. They understand the principles of a healthy lifestyle. The standards of a significant minority are below average. They understand basic rules and tactics, but experience problems in racket sports, because of poor footwork, use of space and sometimes, lack of hand-eye co-ordination. GCSE students in Year 11 are on course to achieve results broadly in line with national expectations. They make good progress in the practical aspects, analysis of performance and research tasks. Their knowledge of theoretical aspects is variable and written assignments lack the enhancement of ICT. Most students' numeracy skills are sound. They are confident in the use of scoring systems and the measurement and analysis of fitness data. Most students use appropriate technical vocabulary, show good listening skills and are confident in oral work. ICT skills are unsatisfactory, because of a lack of emphasis and provision in lessons. No significant differences were observed in the standards recorded by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make progress in line with others. Those who are talented make good progress, because of the extension of extra-curricular activities.

149. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both years. Good management of students creates a purposeful and safe learning environment. Challenging teaching and schemes of work that build on previous learning promote good progress across the age range. Work planned is appropriate for students at all levels of attainment. In a Year 11 badminton lesson, lowerattaining students made progress beyond expectations, because of modified tasks, simplified instructions and good demonstrations. Learning support assistants make a considerable contribution to the good progress made by students with special educational needs. The learning of higher attaining students, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular

activities. Opportunities for students to learn independently are variable. In a Year 11 theory lesson students analysed, planned and evaluated their own fitness-training programmes. Their progress in such tasks was good. Learning was less effective in lessons when teaching was more prescriptive and students were given fewer opportunities to either explore their own ideas, or evaluate performance. Students co-operate well with each other and maintain good relationships with their teachers; Students improve their numerical skills through opportunities to measure, record and analyse performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These strategies improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of students across the attainment levels. The subject provides little opportunity for students to improve their ICT skills. Students' learning is enhanced by the department's very good community partnerships. Benefits include funding for the floodlit tennis courts and access to specialist coaches.

150. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Two specialist staff ably support the head of department. Satisfactory procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are satisfactory and the use of data to monitor students' progress and set targets is improving. The department liaises well with the library; students have good access to up-to-date reference material. The subject makes a good contribution to students' moral and social development.
151. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The good standards of teaching and GCSE results have been maintained. Schemes of work are improved and assessment procedures in place. There are still problems relating to inadequate curriculum time. In order to improve further, the department must develop students' use of ICT, extend opportunities for independent learning, increase curriculum time, and develop a subject base for GCSE theory work. The department needs a second female specialist, to improve the teacher-to-student ratio in some classes, redress the gender imbalance in teaching hours and further develop girls' extra-curricular activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in Year 11

Areas for improvement

- The college needs to provide religious education for all students and allow sufficient curriculum time to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

152. The college does not provide religious education in a systematic way as required by the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. This remains an issue since the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11 students cover a religious education module for approximately six weeks in each year.
153. Two religious education lessons were observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning in the Year 11 lesson seen was excellent. Strengths lay in the teacher's planning and preparation, relationships between staff and students and the response from students to the subject material. In one Year 10 lesson seen, where the teaching and learning was good, planning was good and students were given the opportunity to consider 'What is a miracle?' This led to overall good work done by boys and girls in folders, using a writing frame, but there was too little time allowed for students to discuss their personal feelings.
154. Student's course work shows detailed work on symbolism, beliefs and values. However, as stated in the previous report, the work covered is not enough to provide a full religious education curriculum.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision for business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- There are no significant strengths.

Areas for improvement

- The management of the department.
- The range of teaching strategies used.
- The quality of marking and assessment.
- The range and quality of business partnerships.
- The accommodation and range of learning resources that are available.

155. Standards of attainment in GCSE are below average for students gaining grades A*-C. The average point score was broadly average in 2001, but only 17 students entered the examination and this makes statistical comparisons insecure. Although individual students gained high grades, including four A*, the college's analysis of performance indicates that several students underachieved by up to three grades less than might be expected from their standards when they entered the college. Students achieved less well in business education than in their other subjects in 2001 and 2002.
156. From work seen in lessons and in students' books, standards of attainment are below average. Although students make sound gains in their learning in individual lessons, they do not consolidate this over time by gains in knowledge and understanding and in developing critical skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Students of average and below average attainment have difficulty in presenting their knowledge and identifying cause and effect in business practice. Students do not make the progress they are capable of and their achievements are unsatisfactory. Students are not always willing learners in lessons and weaknesses in teaching and in the curriculum mean that their learning needs are not met effectively. Students' attitudes to work and behaviour were unsatisfactory in some of the lessons seen.
157. Teaching is unsatisfactory. Although individual lessons have some good points, teachers do not use the full range of teaching strategies effectively to motivate, challenge and inspire students. Teachers do not engage students to develop their thinking skills and there is an over-reliance on information sheets and worksheets. Teachers do not regularly provide different tasks for students who are able or those with learning difficulties. In a Year 10 lesson the teacher spent a considerable time providing individual support and explanation to students instead of spending time collectively engaging and challenging them at the start of the lesson and ensuring that they had all understood the key facts. Teachers do emphasise the key skills of literacy and numeracy in their lessons but do not insist on high standards of literacy and numeracy in student work; marking is not regular or detailed enough and does not pick up basic spelling mistakes, weak presentation or incomplete work. Students have the capacity to be good learners. Students in Year 11 worked diligently on business calculations, even though they found the task difficult. They persevered and asked for help to make sure they were using the correct methodology.
158. The management of business studies in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Development targets from 2000-2001 have not been tackled effectively so that teaching and learning improve. Weaknesses in teaching are compounded by weaknesses in the scheme of work. The examination syllabus was changed in 2001 to move away from a focus on economics and business theory, but the department does not have a scheme of work that provides clear guidance on teaching students who are able as well as those with learning difficulties. The scheme of work does not identify each student's entitlement in the use of computers, nor does it identify how the subject contributes to students' personal development and citizenship. The department does not have links with the local business community, through planned projects or mentorship schemes. Current guidance is limited to suggested activities and resources for each section of the syllabus; this is unsatisfactory because it does not provide the structure needed to ensure that students are given a well-balanced and inclusive curriculum that meets their needs and enables them to make good progress in their learning.

159. The department has suffered from a lack of investment in resources. The annual budget for the department is well below average and has not enabled the department to build up the resources needed for a new syllabus. Business studies is taught in a general classroom that is too small for some class sizes. It does not provide a business environment and there are very limited opportunities for flexible styles of teaching and learning. There are limited numbers of books, videos and other resources. There are no computers in the teaching room; teachers do have access to computers in specialist computer rooms elsewhere in the college but student work shows that these facilities are not used regularly.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Relationships with students are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Offer public performances.
- Attract more male students to the subject.

160. Drama is a popular option at GCSE. In 2001 attainment at GCSE at grades A*-C was significantly above the national average. Moreover, all the female students (37 candidates) passed at A*-C grades, with half attaining either A or A* grades. Fewer male students studied this subject, but their attainment at grades A*-C was also well above the national average. Results over the period 1998-2001 show that, although overall attainment has fluctuated, it has remained above the national average representing considerable improvement since the previous report. Value added analysis indicates good achievement. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2002 indicate that three out of four students attained grades A*-C; this represents good achievement bearing in mind that the number of candidates rose sharply from 54 in 2001 to 86 in 2002.
161. The work observed during the inspection confirms that standards are above average. At the time of this inspection students in Year 10 were in the early stages of their course. They are already gaining a clear understanding of basic requirements for acting; they understand alternative methods of staging, for example theatre in the round, thrust stage and traverse stage. Students keep log books of their progress. In Year 11 high and middle-attaining students write perceptively about portraying character in plays and coursework projects contain accurate analyses of staging and acting. Lower-attainers and students with individual or special educational needs are given writing frames and worksheets to help them organise their ideas. Students in Year 11 have acquired a secure knowledge of dramatic conventions and theatrical disciplines.
162. All the teaching that was observed was either very good or excellent; as was learning. Lessons proceed with a lively rhythm and purpose; expectations are high; activities are interesting and varied. Very good learning results from the worthwhile nature of the tasks set. Assessment of work and monitoring of progress are good; teachers mark work by pointing out areas of weakness; students are taught by careful questioning how to make improvements. Male students often do well in relation to their achievement in other subjects. One very good Year 10 lesson took place in the college library; the drama teacher and librarian, acting in tandem, taught students to research the historical context to a play by selecting appropriate ICT resources and books on the topic. As a result interest in the play increased and students learnt to work independently. In one successful Year 11 lesson students taking the role of actors learned how to portray feeling through exaggerated movement in preparation for performing in melodrama. Students have been taught to work with controlled enthusiasm; they behave with the self-discipline essential for work in theatrical activity. Students with individual and special educational needs, including students from Birkett House Centre, achieve well. In one lesson a student with individual needs from the Birkett House Centre played his part in a lesson by photographing the movements of students on stage;

the pictures will be used to help students evaluate their work. Students learn that acting consists of more than mere gestures and artificial attitudes adopted for the moment to impress an audience.

163. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has concentrated on, and succeeded in, raising attainment in Years 10 and 11; significant improvement in the subject has been made since the previous inspection. The subject has attracted growing numbers of students; although more females than males are involved. The head of department also plays a wider role in attracting younger students in the community to drama by taking classes for primary children as part of the local 'family of colleges' programme for gifted and talented students. Recently funding was awarded by the district council for workshops conducted by a performance poet; interesting display-work is testimony to the success of this event. Drama makes a significant contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development. The department makes a positive contribution to the spirit of the college. The head of department is eager to build a tradition of public performances in the college when the number of qualified staff in the department is increased.

Media Studies

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department.
- Relations with students are good.
- The popularity of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The levels of challenge, especially for talented students.
- The availability of resources for use in classes outside the media suite.
- The quality of marking and the written guidance given on students' work.

164. Media studies was first offered as a GCSE subject in 2001 and attainment for grades A* - C was above the national average; however, the percentage of girls attaining grades A*-C was below the national average for female students, whilst the percentage of males attaining grades A*-C, as well as grades A*/A, was above the national average for males. These results represent good achievement for the students concerned. Unvalidated results for 2002 indicate that attainment at grades A*-C was not as high as in 2001; however, the number of candidates increased sharply, from 76 in 2001 to 110 in 2002.
165. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work in Years 10 and 11 confirm that standards are average. At the time of the inspection students in Year 10 were at the early stages of the course. In their coursework students already show understanding of genre in film and television; they create pie charts analysing television audiences and analyse methods of persuasion used by advertisers. Although students with individual learning needs and lower-attaining students show understanding of these topics, they experience difficulty explaining ideas in writing. Students in Year 11 understand appropriate terminology, for example the difference between "connotation" and "denotation". They explain the purpose of design on packaging, how images from various camera-shots influence trains of thought and they use ICT resources with confidence. High attainers evaluate their work accurately and middle attainers understand key concepts. Students with individual and special educational needs receive support in organising and explaining their ideas. The majority of students on this course are developing their knowledge and understanding and their achievement over time is good.
166. Teaching and learning in all the lessons observed were good. Teachers are secure in their knowledge, explain ideas carefully and form harmonious relations with students. Students' attitudes are positive, behaviour is good and teaching takes place in orderly classrooms. Learning is helped because questioning is pitched at the appropriate level, drawing out what students know, although the level of challenge could be raised for higher-attaining students. In one successful lesson on audience participation students analysed audiences' different reactions to television

game shows; they contrasted audiences who laugh with competitors with those who laugh at the competitors. They understood audiences "love to hate" a presenter such as the presenter of "The Weakest Link". In another good Year 11 lesson on the historical background of the pop record industry, students analysed the effects of imagery that embellishes filmed recordings. The most engaging discussions occurred when students were formed in a semi-circle facing one another and when apt video extracts were played to illustrate key areas of the lesson. Classes that do not take place in the media suite do not benefit from easy access to similar ICT resources and this constrains opportunities for learning.

167. Leadership of this new department is good. The department's scheme of work gives clear direction to the development of learning. The head of department monitors the teaching and, as numbers of students have increased, has provided "in-house" training for staff unfamiliar with aspects of the syllabus. Management of the department is also efficient; its policy of inclusion and careful monitoring of achievement ensures that students with individual and special educational needs receive appropriate support. This is a developing department where students, the majority of whom are boys, show a willingness to succeed.

Humanities

Overall the quality of provision in humanities is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- The number of high grades that are awarded.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- The variety of teaching strategies used.
- The opportunities for collaborative work and independent study.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need to raise the level of attainment of the average and below average students.
- The poor behaviour of some students.
- The quality of marking and use of assessment data.
- The departmental handbook, schemes of work and development plan require further development.
- The use of computers as a learning tool and resource.

168. Humanities is a core subject for all students in Years 10 and 11. Overall, standards in humanities are broadly similar to national averages and this represents achievement that is average in relation to students' prior attainment. In 2001 nearly half of the students gained A*-C grades. This is similar to results in previous years. There was an increase in the number of A*-A grades and three students were amongst the top five candidates in the country. Girls obtain significantly better results than boys, though the attainment of boys is in line with the national average.
169. In work observed in Year 10 and 11, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Year 10 students were able to understand the effects of socialisation on the organisation of society. Year 11 students could confidently discuss the reasons for tourism and the social and economic impact of leisure development on the environment. However, a significant number of average attainers did not make sufficient progress when tasks lacked structure or required higher levels of skills of analysis and response. Some of the low attainers had difficulties with extended writing, organisation their work and completing tasks. This all served to restrict progress. Teachers are emphasising discussion and the use of the correct terminology and this is having a positive effect on literacy skills. Most students' numeracy skills are adequate to cope with the statistics, graphs and tables that are used in the subject, though some tasks need to be broken down for many students, especially those with special educational needs. At present there is little use made of computers so the scope to use ICT as a learning tool is limited.
170. Student's attitude and behaviour are satisfactory. The majority of students have positive attitudes towards their work and this aids their learning and progress. Students show respect for each other and are able to work collaboratively. Discussion work encourages students to show initiative and

reflect on a variety of cultural and social issues. However, poor behaviour by a small number of students in some classes limits the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

171. Teaching is satisfactory, as is learning. There were examples of both good and unsatisfactory teaching in the department. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects and this helps students to understand the issues raised in discussion. Cultural, social and moral issues are introduced and analysed through carefully-selected case studies. Many teachers are able to engage and challenge the students and this leads to high levels of interest and progress in learning. A number of imaginative teaching strategies are used. These encourage the students to become more conversant with issues and key concepts. Year 10 students worked in groups in order to organise a hypothetical society on an island after an air crash. This lesson provided good opportunities for pupil participation, collaborative working, creative thinking and greater understanding of social organisation. Learning in this lesson was good. Teachers generally manage students well and ensure that they remain on task and retain concentration. Support staff are well used and this aids the learning of students with special educational needs. Students were placed in mixed gender groups in a Year 10 lesson and made good progress on the analysis of the differences in the socialisation of boys and girls. Coursework assignments provide excellent opportunities for independent work and students produce some projects of a high standard on other cultures and a recent world conflict.
172. However, lessons are not always well planned with clear objectives and subsequently the pace is slow and students are not always on task. There is sometimes an over-reliance on discussion work and this slows learning. Homework is set but it lacks structure and support material. Written tasks are sometimes inappropriate and either lack challenge, or are too demanding for the average, or below average, student. Progress is sometimes limited because the task requires greater teacher guidance and more differentiated support material. Marking of books is unsatisfactory and provides little guidance for improvement of written work. There is a need to develop a more systematic and consistent approach to marking of students' work. There are opportunities to develop literacy skills in the assignment work but teachers could pay greater attention to the development of writing skills and response to examination questions. Numeracy skills are emphasised and students gain experience in the use of tables, graphs and diagrams. Year 11 students analysed a number of graphs relating to world resource consumption and were able to identify a number of environmental issues. The development of information and communication technology skills is satisfactory, but the subject makes an important contribution to the students' cultural and multi-cultural development. The humanities curriculum studies life in a range of other cultures and, because most students in Years 10 and 11 study this subject, the contribution made to enhancing cultural awareness is very good.
173. An experienced head of department satisfactorily leads the department. There is a committed team of teachers who are specialists within the humanities subjects. Lesson observations have been introduced as part of performance management, but there is a need to evaluate and monitor with greater rigour the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There is a considerable amount of statistical information available on students' prior attainment but this is not, as yet, well used by the department to track student progress and identify underachievement. There is also a need to develop the departmental handbook, schemes of work and development plan so that teachers can work collaboratively towards improving teaching and learning in the subject. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Biology	6	67	52	0	2	0.8	0.8
French	1	100	78	0	13	1.0	1.7
Other Social Science	1	100	74	0	11	1.0	1.5

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	13	69	87	8	43	2.9	5.8
Biology	7	86	88	29	34	4.6	5.3
Chemistry	4	100	90	25	43	5.5	5.9
Physics	4	100	88	25	40	4.5	5.7
Economics	7	86	89	14	36	4.3	5.5
Computer Studies	12	83	86	8	23	3.8	4.6
Sports/PE Studies	7	43	92	14	25	1.7	5.1
Art & Design	16	100	96	25	46	5.9	6.6
Music	7	100	93	0	35	4.3	5.7
Geography	13	92	92	8	38	3.54	5.74
History	2	100	88	50	35	5.0	5.5
Sociology	8	75	86	50	35	5.8	5.3
Other Social Studies	29	83	87	24	34	4.2	5.3
English	14	86	95	29	37	5.6	5.9
Communication Studies	28	100	93	25	31	5.6	5.5
French	9	78	89	22	38	4.0	5.6
German	1	100	91	100	40	10.0	5.81

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good leadership that has already identified areas for improvement.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

- The schemes of work do not give enough advice on teaching strategies.
- Students are too passive in lessons.
- The use of ICT in lessons.
- The consistency of marking.

174. The A-level results achieved by the department in 2001 were well below those achieved nationally. The average points scored was 2.9 compared to a national average of 5.8. Far too many students failed to attain even the lowest A-level pass grade. Of those who did pass, none achieved grade A; most achieved the lower grades. Over recent years, there has been no consistent trend to results, nor has there been a consistent picture of the relative performance of male and female students. However, in 2002, there was a significant improvement in standards. Though no national comparative data is available, the average points scored rose to six, which is line with the national average for 2001, and the proportion of students gaining A and B grades now compares favourably with the national average for 2001. Retention rates for the subject are good.
175. For present students standards are average; standards in the sixth form have improved, reflecting an improvement in attainment on entry to the course. Lessons observed and an analysis of students' work show them to be operating at the expected level for this time of the year. Students are successful in their application of their knowledge to textbook and examination questions. However, they have few opportunities to work collaboratively, carry out experiments or use ICT to support their learning. When given the opportunity, for example, in a lesson seen using a computerised graph plotter to explore how different graphs are related to one another, students work enthusiastically and learn well. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. Overall, these students entered the sixth form with similar prior attainment to that nationally; these standards show they are achieving satisfactorily.
176. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory. The analysis of work showed that students follow the examination syllabuses closely and are mastering the techniques as expected. Five lessons were also observed. In these, teaching and learning were satisfactory in four and good in one. Teachers have a solid grasp of the syllabus and its requirements and present the material confidently. This typically takes the form of a mini-lecture at the beginning of the lesson in which learning is passive. Although teachers do question students during these sessions, questions are sometimes rhetorical and they do not consistently challenge students to think more deeply. Nevertheless, students are usually able to complete the textbook exercises they are given to the appropriate standard, working solidly and with a will. However, this narrow range of teaching styles prevents students from learning more actively and does not promote independence in learning. For example, Year 13 students were seen in a lesson solving problems about projectiles in a completely theoretical way. The teacher exhorted them to visualise the path of the objects, but this was difficult as the class had not completed any of the textbook's suggested practical work in which they would have seen, in a very concrete way, exactly how a projectile behaves under gravity. Although the work set for students is appropriate, marking is irregular and does not help students improve. Nevertheless, when students are working independently on problems in class, teachers are able to advise them on their work, ensuring students experience success and improve their standards. Whilst students are learning the content of mathematics satisfactorily,

because they learn passively, they are not experiencing collaborative working or discussion, which has the potential to deepen and extend their understanding further.

177. The head of department, though only in post for a few months, is offering good leadership. He is aware of the areas for development noted above. Whilst he has not been able to directly monitor the teaching of advanced level mathematics as yet, he understands the need for a wider range of teaching styles to be used. The schemes of work include advice on what is to be taught with time scales, but do not give advice on how the content should be taught, or resources that might be suitable, including ICT. This has led to teachers adopting a narrow range of teaching styles that tend to constrain learning.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good achievement in relation to prior attainment at GCSE.
- Good, well-structured teaching.
- Positive relationships.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Using data to monitor student progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision.
- Providing more opportunities for the development of independent learning, especially for higher-attaining students

178. Results in 2001 examinations were average. Results have been consistently in line with national averages over the last three years and the 2002 results continue this trend. Given the relatively large numbers of students who start the course with lower than expected GCSE grades these results represent good achievement. Retention rates are good.
179. Standards of work seen are average. There is a wide spread of attainment, with the highest attaining students confident in using complex chemical formulae: for example, for peptides and phospholipids. They can remember terminology and definitions and use these in problems involving numerical calculations. They show high levels of skill and can investigate and evaluate, for example in a project on germination. Lower-attaining students have difficulty remembering distinctions, such as between eukaryotic and prokaryotic cells and with using simple formulae such as calculating respiratory quotients. Given that on entry to the course students have modest levels of prior attainment, their achievement is good.
180. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The work is very well structured against examination board requirements and there is a very good variety of activities, especially those designed to help students compile useful notes, so that they learn important terminology and definitions and consolidate their understanding. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students were given a small written scenario to turn into an inheritance diagram of a type demonstrated earlier. The students ended up with clear notes without copying anything. The development of practical skills is well integrated with theory work and students practise the discrete skills right from the start of the course, so that they establish a secure skills base. Difficult concepts are treated in small stages, as when the biochemical stages of respiration were outlined to a Year 13 group before the first part was developed in detail. This helps students, especially weaker ones, to understand these concepts. In some lessons, there is too much exposition and this leads to a degree of student passivity. Year 13 students know their target grades and are supported to improve through regular one-to-one interviews following each module test. This, combined with the highly structured approach, develops students' confidence so that they enjoy the subject, relate positively to their teachers and achieve well. Nevertheless, it can limit the opportunities for independent learning. In one lesson on inheritance, a student identified by the teacher as gifted had finished the work well before others but did not look to extend her learning, and was not provided with further stimulus. Year 12 students are less clear about their targets at this early stage in their course and their

levels of concentration are lower. Nevertheless, they enjoy the subject and relate well to their teachers.

181. Leadership and management in the department are good. The teachers are knowledgeable, well qualified and appropriately deployed so that students can rely on subject expertise. There is no formal monitoring, evaluation and development of the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. However, staff informally share expertise acquired from practice and professional development and collectively develop learning strategies and organise resources to cover the syllabus. This leads to variety of activities, which helps all students to learn. The cramped accommodation, which is shared with chemistry, limits the scope for setting up and leaving experiments over a period of time. Although students sometimes use the Internet for research, there is comparatively little use of ICT to enhance students' learning. There was very little reference to biology in the 1997 report. Standards of attainment have remained at the national average, indicating satisfactory progress.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Students' very positive views of the subject.
- Relationships between staff and students.
- Students' exploration of the wider aspects of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Making more rigorous use of data to monitor students' progress.
- Monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improving the co-ordination between different teachers of the subject.

182. Numbers sitting Physics at advanced level in 2001 were too small to make valid national comparisons or to identify trends. Taking the past three years together, the percentage of students passing and the percentage attaining higher grades have been close to those seen nationally. Evidence provided by the college shows that the attainment on entry to the course varies from year to year and that students' results are in line with those expected from their prior attainment at GCSE; levels of achievement are satisfactory. The very few girls who take the subject similarly achieve satisfactorily. Though numbers are sometimes small, course retention rates are good.
183. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above those seen nationally, with a high proportion of students producing work typical of higher grades. For example, most Year 13 students can correctly answer examination questions on motive power, stopping forces and crumple zones. Though the quantity of their written work is not high, their work demonstrates very good understanding of the topics they have covered. In discussion, they can describe theories such as the big bang theory, giving the available evidence that supports and conflicts with it. They explore the wider aspects of the subject by reading journals such as New Scientist and Physics Review, which are in the college library, and by using the Internet to explore ideas raised in class discussions such as quantum flux. Year 12 students, at a very early stage of their course, exhibit standards in line with their prior attainment at GCSE. Higher-attaining students can successfully calculate random errors systematically, while those of lower prior attainment need structured help to do this. Retention rates on courses in physics are typically over 90 per cent.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Two experienced and well-qualified teachers share the teaching and they have very good subject knowledge that is used well to encourage students to explore beyond the syllabus. In Year 12, work is carefully structured to build students' confidence. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the treatment of random uncertainties in experiments in physics was thoroughly explained by the teacher in short steps, enabling the students to successfully use the method shown, though there was little opportunity for student participation in the lecture-style lesson. In Year 13, students are encouraged to be more independent. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students were asked to find a method of

determining angles of diffraction using hydrogen and neon lamps. The teacher's intervention was sparing and the students successfully solved the problem for themselves. The equipment available was rather outdated, limiting students' possible accuracy, and they did not speculate on how accuracy could be improved. Throughout the sixth form, students enjoy the subject and receive very good support on an individual basis to help them understand the work. They value the relationship with their teachers and the small group sizes lead to a relaxed, pleasant and informal atmosphere. A number of speakers from industry enhance learning; for example, recent visitors include representatives from Powergen and Severn Trent Water. There are limited opportunities to visit universities, or to use more up-to-date equipment than that available in the college. Students also make very little use of ICT as a tool to enhance their learning in physics.

185. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Co-ordination is carried out informally and the quality of teaching is not formally monitored. Owing to the small numbers, tracking of student progress is left to the individual teacher who is teaching the group. The data available in the college are not used to systematically track student progress or monitor the effectiveness of the teaching of sections of work. No judgement can be made on progress since the last inspection, as there was little reference to physics in the previous report and numbers entering for examinations have been too small to make valid year-on-year comparisons.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Art and Design

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

Design and technology, engineering and manufacturing courses are not provided, though elements of work in these courses are covered in the AVCE art and design course.

Strengths

- High standards of work.
- Students achieve well.
- Students have mature attitudes and their independent learning skills are good.
- Retention rates are very high, and many students go on to university degree courses.

Areas for improvement

- The range of courses that are available.
- Better ICT facilities are needed.

186. The design and technology department offers an ACVE double or single award in Art and Design, and a one-year GNVQ Intermediate course in art and design. Students taking the latter course may transfer to the ACVE course at the end of the year, if they so wish. This report concentrates on the AVCE option; a popular course that is followed by between 12 and 18 students each year. Course retention rates are very good, with the vast majority of students completing their course of study.
187. Results in the AVCE course in 2001 were average. Such results indicate good achievement, with the majority of students gaining grades higher than those predicted, based on their GCSE grades.
188. The work of current students is above average. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE grades and their predicted results. This is because of the good teaching they receive. Standards are also rising because staff have very good knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements. Students have a good understanding of form and composition. Ideas for projects show initiative, and are highly creative. For example, an innovative idea for a fairground point-of-sale display uses an automaton model of fairground attractions. Students use a wide range of media; they understand the properties of materials, and how to use them. Layout in design sheets shows a clear understanding of compositional balance. Initial ideas are carefully annotated, with self-evaluative detail. Designs are strongly individual yet draw on students' knowledge of the work and styles of past and present art and craft movements. The best

work shows strong influence and understanding of style, such as that of the Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Bauhaus movements. Students speak knowledgeably about their work; for example, they understand the influence of time and technological change on design and the use of new materials. When questioned, they are able to give cogent definitions for 'taste', 'fashion', and 'style', and explain how these concepts are relevant to evaluations of their work and the work of others.

189. Teaching and learning are good overall and, in some lessons, they are very good. Carefully prepared resources, clearly stated aims and objectives and well-communicated subject knowledge result in effective learning. Expectations are high. Target-setting, regular review and moderation of work and progress help to engage students closely in the improvement of their work. Student logbooks are directly related to examination assessment criteria, and are referred to daily. A high level of individual support is given at all times and challenging questions are asked in and out of lessons. Teaching is rigorous in setting high standards of conduct. A major strength is the reliable, mature attitude of the students. Most are confident, independent learners. They have good study skills and many are dedicated to the subject. Good use is made of ICT for research and for developing designs, though the available ICT facilities need to be improved. Course assignments involve links to other educational establishments, such as infant schools and universities. The department's status as an approved centre for initial teacher training students is of great value.
190. The department and subject area is very well led and managed. Teamwork is strong and students benefit from the wide range of expertise and interests of teachers. Development plans identify the main areas for improvement. These include extending the experiences and opportunities available to students by the further development of resources, particularly computer resources, and exploring the viability of offering more course choice.

BUSINESS

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Admissions policy echoes the college's ethos of inclusion.

Areas for improvement

- Encourage a wider range of teaching strategies.
- Encourage more independent learning skills.
- Apply marking and assessment schemes more rigorously.
- Encourage wider reading and methods to foster independent learning.
- Improve the curriculum so that vocational options are also offered.

191. The college offers an advanced level course in the combined Economics/Business (Nuffield) paper. No other provision is offered in this subject area. 2001 A-level results were below average. Indeed, they have been below average for the last two years. In 2001, only 14 per cent of students attained A or B grades, compared to 26 per cent nationally. However, there are some encouraging trends in examination figures since 29 per cent of candidates recorded a grade C, compared to only 18 per cent nationally.
192. The standards reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are below average. The strength of the students' class work in both years is the steady accumulation of knowledge and their basic understanding of the subject matter. Relative weaknesses are the interpretation and analysis of data and students' failure to retain their knowledge and understanding over time. In Years 12 and 13, students' achievement is no more than satisfactory overall. This is because of their lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject. This lack of independent learning leads to lesser performances in examinations. Though standards are below average, achievement is satisfactory with students working at levels expected, given their GCSE results.

193. Overall, the quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed and, in the better lessons, students are encouraged to engage in independent thought and learning. However, lessons are too often delivered as teacher-centred activities and the tendency to over-provide for the students is at the expense of ensuring that they have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become independent learners. Moreover, marking is inconsistent, and assessment of students' work is not pursued with sufficient rigour. Thus, though there is no doubt that students make progress in understanding the central ideas of the subject, their overall learning is not always verified accurately.
194. Several factors impinge on the attainment of students. The subject suffers particularly from the lack of a specialist room and access to ICT. The department's liberal philosophy about entrance to the sixth form echoes the philosophy of the college and students are encouraged to start the subject in the sixth form without the accepted entry requirements. Despite this, retention rates are good. Moreover, the curriculum offered does not include vocational courses, which would better suit many students' abilities. Thus, while most students gain better grades than forecast, based on their GCSE results, students do not have the opportunities to maximise their progress as they would within a range of courses.
195. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The head of department has not established a rigorous assessment regime that impacts on learning. Her vision for the future includes growth of the advanced provision, but it does not yet encompass a clear view of departmental provision to meet the wide and differing needs and aspirations of future groups of students.

ICT

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

Strengths

- The development of courses that meet the needs of students.
- Teaching is good and enables students to achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- Access to computers outside lessons and for students studying other subjects is very limited.

196. Standards in A-level computing in 2001 were below average in terms of points scored and in the attainment of grades A and B, though for grades A to E, results were close to the national average. Results in 2002 were similar to those recorded in 2001 and students' attainment was similar to their attainment in other subjects.
197. Current standards are average and entry to the courses is not restricted to students with high grades in their GCSE examinations; nevertheless, retention rates are good. Year 13 students are achieving well and overall standards are average. Higher-attaining computing students are developing a good level of skill in programming and use their understanding of computer systems to solve complex 'real life' problems, such as a stock control system for a greengrocer. Year 12 information studies students are also achieving well. They are able to use the knowledge and understanding of HTML, which they gained earlier in the college, to make eye-catching Web pages. Very few female students study information and communication technology but those who do record achievement that is similar to that of the male students.
198. Teaching and learning are good, with teachers' expectations in line with A-level requirements in both computing and information studies. Teachers are knowledgeable and committed and provide work that is lively and challenging so that students are motivated to work hard. In a good Year 12 lesson the teacher effectively demonstrated the use of conditional statements in spreadsheet formulae. By the end of the lesson students were able to combine this knowledge with their knowledge of look-up tables to develop a student grading system from a teacher's mark sheet. Higher-attaining students employed their understanding of the difference between relative and absolute addressing to speed the process. Students are well supported through assessment and feedback so that they have a good idea of what to do to improve their grades and can talk

confidently about their achievements. Relationships are good and enable the students to develop independence in their learning.

199. The management of the subject and the development of courses are good. The two A-level courses have proved useful for students wishing to enter higher education or employment in computing or information technology. ICT is part of the sixth form key skills programme and students are increasingly using their skills to enhance their work in other areas, such as vocational art and design or health and social care. Students are also finding that their skills are useful in many areas of life after college. However, access to computer terminals for sixth formers is unsatisfactory. There are too few available in quiet study areas and the specialist rooms are often fully booked. Much has changed since the last inspection, including the nature and content of courses, so that comparisons are not valid. However, satisfactory progress has been made in the intervening years and, providing that access to resources can be improved, there is good potential to improve further.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Travel and Tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' achievement is good in relation to prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching.
- Methods of assessment are supportive and diagnostic.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work and resources for the course should be further developed.
- ICT could be more fully used as a tool for learning.
- Student review sheets require further development.
- Work experience placements.

200. Travel and Tourism provides students with an introduction to the travel and tourism industry. It is a two-year option taught to a mixed class of Year 12 and Year 13 students. As the course is new no judgements can be made about attainment in public examinations. For present students, standards are average and they achieve well given their starting points. Course retention rates are good.
201. Students enter the course with below average previous attainment. Most students possess GCSE results in the C-F grade range. The nature of the course has enabled the steady accumulation of knowledge and basic understanding of the subject matter. Key skill descriptors are provided for each of the units of work and this allows students to make progress at their own pace. Students are encouraged to resubmit portfolios of evidence after initial moderation in order to improve their grades. Students appreciate the supportive style of teaching and feel that the varied opportunities for collaborative work, role-play and discussion help develop their understanding and evaluation skills. They require considerable teacher support in the preparation for assignments and in the interpretation and analysis of data. Students are increasingly using computers for word processing and Internet research, but there is scope to develop further the use of ICT as a learning tool and resource.
202. Teaching is good, mainly because the teachers have good subject knowledge and adapt appropriate teaching methods. This contributes to good learning. The theoretical and practical elements of the course are linked well, giving students a realistic insight into the demands of travel and tourism. The enthusiasm of the teachers creates a positive atmosphere for learning and students are interested and engaged in the work. An impressive range of teaching strategies was used to introduce a topic on a leisure park development. Students were involved in role-play, brainstorming and lively discussion as they analysed the wider implication of the proposed development. Learning was enhanced by the opportunities to share ideas and work collaboratively

in groups. In another lesson, good progress was made when students reported back after group work on the employment opportunities provided by the new Wembley Stadium. Students also undertook an assignment on customer care based on work experience in Leicester, and another organising a leisure visit to Nottingham. These involved independent research, teamwork and opportunities to use their own initiative. These all contributed to the good quality of learning. Teachers recognise the individual needs of students by asking targeted questions, selecting particular groups and making sure that tasks are achievable. Marking is supportive and clearly indicates what students have to do to improve their standards.

203. Leadership and management are good. A new vocational co-ordinator and course co-ordinator have been appointed and they are developing a more structured approach to the course. Teachers are well qualified and work well as a team although recruitment and retention have been problems in the past. The pace of lessons is good and now meets the needs of all the students. There were no instances of students behaving badly or not working. The course is still in an early stage of development and there are areas for improvement in order for the course to become more established. There is a need to develop schemes of work and resource material to support student progression. The use of student review sheets needs improving so that they are aware of their targets and areas for improvement. Students take part in limited work placements and there is scope to increase this experience. The department is also making efforts to attract a wider range of students to the course. The subject is in a good position to move forward and build on its success.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning.
- Use of the community.
- Course success.

Areas for improvement.

- Accommodation and resources.

204. Both GNVQ intermediate and AVCE courses in health and social care were inspected. The number of students has doubled in the three years the course has operated. In 2001 AVCE results showed a 100 per cent pass rate with awards spread across the range including 33 per cent distinction; 2002 results indicate a further 100 per cent pass rate. Intermediate results in 2001 showed the full range of awards including 12 per cent distinctions and 63 per cent merits but because of the low numbers comparisons to national averages cannot be made. In 2002 although there were no distinctions, merits had increased to 75 per cent..
205. Overall standards in AVCE are average. The majority of students improve on their predicted grades. The retention rate in 2001 was only 79 per cent, but is now very good on all courses. The high proportion of boys in the intermediate course in 2002 –2003 is well above the national take up rate for boys, underpinning the college's equal opportunity policy.
206. Students enter the course with below average previous attainment with GCSE results in the C to G grade range. From this low base the style of teaching and learning consolidates students' strengths and achievement is good. Their standards judged from work seen are average and improving. The intense work by teachers on good rigorous and constructive assessment against criteria helps identify where students need to improve; the motto is aim high and students' progress is good. The issue of pace raised in the previous inspection has been effectively addressed in the teaching and learning strategies used. Collaboration between students and teachers is very productive. Students gain confidence in their research and recall, through the many very good approaches to teaching and learning. Group numbers are small. Group dynamics, plus absence, often have an impact on teaching. Intermediate students expressed enjoyment and inspiration; their numbers are greater, which enables more flexible teaching styles to be used that

improve standards. The effective management of the subject teaching is challenging their learning because they take an active part in role-plays and are regularly involved in discussion to improve their knowledge, understanding and critical evaluation skills.

207. Teaching and learning are good. One third of the teaching was excellent and demonstrated a wide range of challenging teaching and learning. Teachers' relevant and topical experience adds depth to the learning. Teachers facilitate learning through teamwork, while still encouraging students' personal responsibility for their learning. The theory and practice of health and social care are well related because of the very good use of a wide range of care services in the community, including work with the special school based on the college campus. The library has well chosen, up-to-date resources that enable very good learning but students lack effective note-taking skills, which reduces their efficient recording of information. Lessons are active and lively. For example, the intermediate group worked on the preparation of a care plan. The information needed was clarified by a role-play where students' rigorous, yet sensitive, questioning of the 'patient' identified ways to complete a well-balanced care plan. Students have a very positive attitude to their sessions and are also given freedom to pursue their learning independently, as seen in the computer-based session where students worked in pairs on the difficult concept of equality of opportunity legislation.
208. Leadership and management are very good. The new vocational co-ordinator also has a lead role in health and social care. The teachers work together constructively. Professional development is very good and staff regularly standardise their work to maintain the improving standards. There is a good development plan that is targeting the Healthy Schools Award and strong links are developing with the nursing cadet scheme, social services and the police and fire service. Resources and accommodation are problem areas. Much of the teaching is in a variety of classrooms and there is no dedicated area for the GNVQ courses. This misses the opportunity to raise the image and the efficiency of this course. Improvement from the previous inspection is good because teaching now promotes good independent learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music

The provision for music is **very good**.

Strengths

- The very good overall quality of teaching.
- Improving standards.
- The high quality and range of enrichment activities.
- The recently refurbished accommodation.

Areas for improvement.

- Increase uptake.
- Further develop students' compositional skills in order to raise standards even higher.

209. A-level results in 2001 were below average, though results did improve in 2002 and all 11 students who were entered for AS-level in 2001 gained at least pass grades, though no national comparisons are available for these results.
210. The observation of lessons and of other work during the inspection confirmed that standards in music are above average. The college has maintained its level of success noted at the time of the last inspection, and it has helped students to build on the below average GCSE results with which the majority started the course. This represents very good achievement by the students. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music and demonstrate good musicianship when playing and discussing their music. They perform to a high standard, both individually and in ensembles. During the inspection week, three students from Years 12 and 13 performed to a high standard in a lunch-time concert. This weekly event was well

supported by students from all years. All the students, including those not following the music technology course, use ICT effectively in their work. Female and male students do equally well.

211. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Students respond enthusiastically to the good level of expectation. Excellent specialist knowledge and very good guidance to individuals about how to improve, are strong features that contribute to the very good progress made by students. Other strengths of teaching that have a positive effect on learning are its pace, challenge and creativity. In an analysis lesson Year 12 students, for example, understood and were able to identify the entry of the motif in various parts of the harmony. They went on to sing the entries, in parts. Enthusiasm from the excellent teaching was infectious and this enabled students to stay on task longer than expected for this type of lesson. All students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the music they play and study. They use the department daily, organising ensemble groups and practising their skills.
212. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Progress since the previous report has been good. Enrichment activities are excellent and well supported by students in Years 12 and 13. Provision for key skills is very good. ICT provision is good and used in all lessons. Students' skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate to enable them to use the subject vocabulary and analyse complex compositions. All music students in Years 12 and 13 support the enrichment activities that the department provides. Standards of teaching in activities result in high standards of performance and this makes a valuable contribution towards the improvement of students' skills in playing, performing, sight-reading and aural awareness. Students receive very good guidance and support from staff, who are available from early morning until early evening. The spacious accommodation enables students to use the facilities in their free time. This too helps to advance standards.

Drama and theatre studies

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

Strengths

- The subject is led and managed very well.
- Teaching is very good with a very good understanding of how students learn.
- Excellent working relationships.
- The enthusiasm of the students.

Areas for improvement

- The continued professional development of staffing.
- The provision for public performances.

213. Students' attainment at A-level in theatre studies in 2001 was average. All eight candidates gained at least a pass grade, with four gaining either A or B grades. Unvalidated A-level results for 2002 indicate that standards have been maintained with all candidates gaining at least an E grade. Unvalidated AS-level results for 2002 were also encouraging. There were 16 students, nine of whom gained A or B grades with all other students gaining pass grades.
214. Present students in Year 13 are recording standards that are above average; they are successfully building on their AS-level successes. They can identify different genres, understand the influence of practitioners such as Stanislavski, and refer intelligently to Sartre, to the Theatre of the Absurd, to Molière and to modern playwrights such as Caryl Churchill. Imaginative work, sometimes startling, is revealed in well-crafted models for stage and property design including a design for the chair "that will not let you go". Colours and materials are chosen to suggest atmosphere. Students improvising on stage discovered how, under the guidance of their teacher, they could manipulate an audience's emotional response. This achievement was a revelation, which now discovered, could be developed further. Year 12 students, though in the early stages of their course, are already recording standards that are above national expectations. The group comprises students with a wide range of aptitudes and their achievement is very good in relation to their previous qualifications at GCSE. Their notebooks show a good understanding of character, use of dialogue

to reveal emotion, movement and body language and historical references in drama. In one particularly successful lesson students, who had recently undertaken practical work in drama, analysed their own performances. Their evaluations were concise and perceptive, revealing new options to pursue and alternative ways of producing ideas in performance.

215. The quality of teaching is very good and this leads to very good learning. All lessons observed were either very good or excellent. The drama teacher is sure of her subject. Her interest is infectious, with elements of surprise and variety being features of her teaching. Her students enjoy her lessons; they look forward to them and are stimulated to give of their best. They learn to appreciate, value and enjoy the varied world of theatre. Lessons have a steady rhythm and balance; they have a destination in view for the students and, by taking account of their various needs, guide them there. Students are able to try out new ideas. They learn co-operation and self-discipline and support one another's efforts, showing maturity and resourcefulness in putting theory into practice.
216. The subject is very well led and managed. It is an increasingly popular course and this is reflected in the very good course retention rates. The head of department has developed interesting sixth form courses together with successful ways of teaching them. She is very thorough in all she does. However, the head of department undertakes all the teaching. This limits the scope of the department's work. For example, at the present time no public performances are presented by the college's theatre studies students.

Media Studies

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

Strengths

- The subject is led and managed well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.

Areas for improvement

- The level of challenge, especially to higher-attaining students.
- Opportunities for students to make their own presentations.
- The quality and accuracy of marking.

217. Attainment in GCE A-level media studies in 2001 was average. This was the first year that the college entered students for this examination. All candidates gained at least a pass grade, but very few gained the highest grades of A or B; attainment of the highest grades was below average. There was no significant difference between the results of male and female students and the course retention rate was very good. Unvalidated A-level results for 2002 indicated a rise in attainment at grades A and B, with a third of the entry attaining these grades. Unvalidated AS-level results for 2002 are also encouraging. In a large group of 34, almost a quarter gained A or B grades, though six students did not reach a pass standard. Students studying this course had a wide range of prior attainment and information offered by the college suggests that achievement was good.
218. The standards of work seen from present Year 13 students are above average. Standards are higher than in previous years because, on balance, as the course increases in popularity, higher-attaining GCSE students are attracted. The department reflects the college's focus on inclusion. Consequently Year 13 classes represent a wide range of capability. Achievement and progress are good. Higher attainers show above average capability in both theoretical and practical work. They write perceptive reviews of films, analyse sound effects in a variety of media and examine the effects of television on children's minds. Although some middle attainers and borderline grade E students do not always present coursework in a clear, precise style, they make effective use of ICT resources; producing, for example, well-designed images for magazines and interesting work on video. Students' classwork, for example on the persuasive powers of advertisers and on the development of the British cinema, confirms that achievement continues to rise. Students in Year

12 are recording standards of work that are in line with expectations. Their coursework indicates that they have a firm understanding of the main concepts relating to the media. Students show effective use of video and ICT and they can analyse advertisers' methods of persuasion. Higher-attaining students present perceptive work on the concepts governing mass media. Most students make shrewd judgements in class, for example on aspects of representation in advertising and on its sometimes hidden ways of appealing to consumers.

219. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are secure in their subject and pitch and pace are appropriate to students' learning requirements. Teachers work in close partnership with their students and helpful questioning leads students along logical lines of thought. A successful Year 13 lesson on Britain's film industry displayed variety and rhythm. Intelligent opinions were shared and appropriate clips from films drove home the points discussed. In another good lesson on textual analysis of advertisements apt video material was used to illustrate the lesson's message. However, teachers sometimes inadvertently lead students to rely too much on them as main sources of information rather than provide them with opportunities to give presentations of their own work. This style constrains the opportunities students have to develop independent learning skills. Teachers could further raise levels of challenge, especially for talented students. Although assessment of coursework near the completion dates is thorough, the marking of the earlier stages of composition is not always sufficiently specific. Better advice on curing main areas of weakness would direct students to an earlier improvement.
220. Leadership of this new area of study is good. The head of department has drafted a new programme of study, which ensures careful progression from GCSE to advanced level. In-house training has been provided to update the knowledge of teachers new to the subject at A-level. The range of resources in the department has been broadened. Monitoring of students' progress is effective. Management, too, is effective. The department provides students with a handbook explaining the media courses and a glossary of terminology ensures that students can lend a professional accuracy to their work. The department creates an atmosphere conducive to learning; students' interest in the course has already led to a number of them seeking further qualifications in media after A-level.

HUMANITIES

History

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

Strengths

- The very good teaching that drives students' high achievement.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good relationships that stimulate interest and performance.
- Very good assessment procedures that help students to improve.

Areas for improvement.

- To re-establish the use of fieldwork to add interest and stimulus to teaching.
- To develop further the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of students.
- To engage students more in reviewing critically the work of their peers.

221. Only two students sat A-level history in 2001 and with such a small sample, national comparisons are not fruitful. Both students passed, with one gaining a higher grade in the A to B range. All candidates also passed the examination in 2002, though, again, numbers were too small to be significant. At AS-level in 2001 all candidates passed, with female students doing significantly better than males, albeit in numbers too small to be statistically significant. In 2002 the overall performance was slightly lower. More female students than males take history at these levels and generally they tend to do better and gain the higher grades. Though numbers are small, retention rates are very good.

222. Standards observed in lessons are above average, although the numbers involved are small and include some students who were admitted without having studied history at GCSE. For a minority of students, standards are well above average. The progress being made by all students across the ability range is very good and their level of achievement is high.
223. That high level of achievement is the outcome of very good teaching. There is a very good, informal relationship between teacher and students and this fosters a co-operative attitude in the students. Students are positive and respond well to the teacher's high expectations. The teacher's very high level of subject expertise is used very effectively to explain and interpret and to relate students' learning to the requirements of their ultimate examination. Lessons are planned very well to develop students' historical enquiry skills through a seminar approach. To prepare for them, students are required to research each topic by using the class resources, many of which have been devised by the teacher. Subsequently they will be expected to develop and extend their basic knowledge and understanding by reading more widely using library resources and Internet sites from which final written assignments and presentations are derived. In Year 12 students, having examined the influence of the French Revolution on British life and politics, are starting to prepare an assignment on the growth of radicalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. As part of that preparation students have researched a variety of associated and linked topics and prepared effective class presentations on them. This research is very thorough and students exploring the events associated with Chartism locally in Leicester have determined well the differing attitudes within the movement as represented by the three main personalities. Those studying the 'Irish Problem' have discerned the differences in approach of the various personalities involved and also the consequences of the 'potato blight' in Ireland then and in the United States in more recent times. They are enthusiastic about their work and participate well in all the activities. Whilst developing very competent independent learning skills, they work well with each other. When making presentations they use overhead projector transparencies reasonably well and present their opinions and evidence competently and with conviction. Some students are less sure of their abilities and are reluctant to participate too readily. The teacher constantly gives them additional support that encourages their involvement in the general activities and stimulates their progress.
224. A quietly confident minority of students, some of whom have been identified as either gifted or talented, write fluently and articulate well. They tend to complete assignments more quickly and are then engaged purposefully in extension tasks that are designed to add a more perceptive dimension to their work. The excellent level of the teacher's historical knowledge stimulates discussion and very demanding focused questions that drive a high level of documentary analysis by students. In a Year 13 lesson students investigating the views of historians on the part played by Lenin in the 1917 Russian Revolution analysed documents that interpreted their conflicting views concisely. The students analysed the evidence well, picking out accurately and line by line a wealth of detail on which to make a secure judgement. The more perceptive minority of students identified implicit evidence, which made their analysis more discerning and pertinent. Following that they designed very good overhead projector transparencies of an essay plan on the topic that were used as the basis of very thorough presentations to the class. The response of their peers was rather muted. They would have benefited from a more active engagement in debate with each other in addition to discussion with the teacher. The teacher effectively concluded the lesson by presenting her own plan to reinforce the main features required and specifically to assist the less assured students. Expectations of students are high and work is challenging and briskly organised. Consequently progress is very good. A few students have weak literacy skills. The use of inappropriate expressions, spelling and grammatical errors detracts from the historical content of their work. Teachers are already addressing this problem in a variety of helpful ways, but there needs to be a more coherent approach to the problem that goes beyond the confines of history.
225. The leadership and management of the history department are very good as outlined in the report on history in Years 10 and 11. Library resources are very good and used well by the students to support and complement the resources of the history department, although apart from using the Internet for research purposes, the use of ICT is underdeveloped. Students' learning would also benefit from opportunities to undertake fieldwork. The marking of students' work is done very thoroughly and students appreciate the level of comment and individual support received.

Geography

The quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- The very good system for monitoring students' progress.
- The use made of fieldwork to support teaching and learning.
- The quality of the teaching.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The development of literacy skills, especially those of male students.

226. Results at A-level in geography in 2001 were well below average. Though the proportion of students passing at grades A-E was similar to the national average, the proportion passing at the higher A/B grades was particularly low and the average points score was well below that national average. In 2002 the pass rate at grades A-E was 100 per cent and the proportion passing at the higher grades improved.

227. The standards recorded by present students are average, reflecting the improvements recorded in 2002. Students concentrate well on their work and in discussion they are lively and animated. They are interested in their work and approach assignments with a reasonable degree of enthusiasm, sparked in no little degree by the teachers' high level of subject and examination expertise, enthusiasm and communication skills. Many students take the Geographical Journal to support their studies and articles are quoted in their written work. A Year 13 student used an article on the 1997 floods in Poland to exemplify the work on the causes of flooding and why it now affects areas that it formerly did not. Despite this very good learning, a number of students, particularly boys, have weak literacy skills and this adversely affects attainment and the pace of progress made. In addition to the use of poor or inappropriate expressions, spelling and grammatical errors detract from the overall quality of their work. These shortcomings affect the students' progress in lessons and their achievement over time. Both are satisfactory. Teachers are addressing this problem in a variety of ways but this is an issue that goes beyond the confines of geography. Numeracy skills appear to be higher for in the process of writing on global urbanisation; students in Year 12 use statistical data competently, drawing information from graphs, charts and tables.

228. The quality of the geography teaching is very good. Teachers plan their lessons effectively to match the varied level of the prior geographical knowledge of the students. There is also a good range of resources to support learning. As a result of this quality of teaching, the quality of students' factual learning is very good, but this is not always reflected in assessed work because standards are constrained by the below average literacy skills of the students, especially their writing skills. Students respond well to the relationships established by their teachers, which whilst informal and amicable are, nonetheless, business-like and directed towards improving the students' work. There is a strong drive to independent learning and students draw their supportive material from a variety of sources including the Internet and their own formal and informal local studies for research purposes. Year 12 students have analysed the nearby city of Leicester in terms of its functional zones and relate this well to their theoretical concept of a central business district in an economically developed country such as the United Kingdom. From this they are able to make comparisons with cities in less economically developed countries such as Cairo and Mexico City. There is strong support provided for students who find the work difficult, especially those who did not do GCSE geography and, therefore, lack the basic subject skills and background knowledge. In Year 12 these students are supported collectively and individually at each stage of the lesson. In Year 13, a student lacking that prior experience received individual tuition to help develop the knowledge and understanding of how certain meteorological conditions arise and their relationship with world climatic zones.

229. The geography department is led and managed very well. Documentation is thorough and the procedure for assessing students' work is of high quality. Individual student record sheets, which indicate grades awarded for assignments and their strengths and weaknesses, keep students informed of their level of work and their targets for improvement. The use of ICT in the teaching and learning processes is not fully developed, apart from students using the Internet for research, and that could be improved. Fieldwork study is arranged to give a more dynamic understanding to students' theoretical knowledge. The work of teaching in the department is monitored both formally and informally. Course retention rates are good and there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Sociology

The quality of provision in sociology is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching promotes successful understanding of subject methods and terms so that students' independent learning skills develop well.
- Attainment by higher-attaining students is above average because they are taught very well and they learn very effectively.
- Very knowledgeable and experienced teachers give clear direction to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the gender balance.
- Collation of subject documentation so that it is readily accessible.
- Better access to ICT to improve the opportunities for independent learning.

230. A-level examination results in 2001 show that attainment in sociology is above average. The average points score was above the national average, as was the attainment of grades A and B. The overall attainment of grades A to E was below average. Attainment at AS-level at the end of Year 12 in 2001 was similarly encouraging with over half the candidates gaining B grades and all nine students gaining at least a pass grade. Many more female students take sociology than males, and they attain higher grades. Based on their prior levels of attainment, students achieved broadly as expected in 2001 and course retention rates are good.
231. Work seen in the inspection was of a high standard and students' progress is good. Higher-attaining students have a good grasp of sociological theories and they apply them to new topics confidently. They understand the merits and weaknesses of different perspectives and use them evaluatively. Less confident students produce answers that do not develop the application of different theories in enough depth. They occasionally confuse subject terms, for example when referring to a theory of family life. Students construct questionnaires carefully to gather information such as the roles of different family members. They analyse and interpret data from national surveys to assess the value of various sociological perspectives. Students have good study techniques. They organise their notes efficiently to aid learning and revision. A few weak students do not organise their folders of work to the same high standard. Students have very good attitudes to the subject. They express pleasure in the insights the subject gives on how society operates using micro and macro scales.
232. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A very strong feature of lessons is their clear structure. Teachers share learning objectives with students at the start of lessons. They provide appropriately challenging tasks and methods that develop students' independent learning skills. Year 12 worked collaboratively in groups to prepare and present one theoretical perspective on the family. By listening to each presentation the students gained an overview of how three theories differed. Students consolidate their learning of definitions of subject theories and terminology by recording these in their own 'concept notebook'. Year 12 students show commendable understanding and ability in applying their knowledge of theory and terminology so early in the AS course. Teachers produce very helpful summaries of topics and copies of relevant articles from newspapers and journals. They use these resources effectively so students use their theoretical perspectives to give meaning to societal trends. For example, Year 13 students found evidence of

secularisation from national and local newspapers. They recalled work on religion from Year 12, and the importance of an empirical base on which to draw conclusions. A few students use word processing for essays, but the use of ICT is not well developed to access data, or for other forms of research. This problem is related to accessibility. While teachers ask very searching questions that cause able students to think deeply, those students who lack confidence tend not to answer. Teachers are aware of this and could devise ways to involve them more often. Discussion in small groups can be successful. However, without guidance weaker students group together and are slower to start the task.

233. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Two very knowledgeable and experienced teachers provide clear direction for the subject. Their professional development is well maintained, and they discuss how to develop courses and teaching frequently, but informally. They would benefit from occasional formal meetings and the collation of relevant documents, policies, examination results and schemes of work in a single folder.

PSYCHOLOGY

Overall, provision in psychology is **good**.

Strengths

- The overall good quality of teaching
- The enthusiasm of students for the subject.
- Students appreciate the support teachers provide; relationships are very good.
- Excellent assessment procedures are used effectively to keep students well informed of the progress they are making.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies, to engage students more actively in some Year 12 lessons.
- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 12.

234. The 2001 A-level results in psychology were below the national averages, both for the proportion of students obtaining a pass grade and for the proportion of students obtaining the higher A or B grades. These results were broadly in line with predictions based on students' GCSE grades on starting the sixth form. A-level results have been at, or just above, national averages in most years since the last inspection. In 2000, results were adversely affected by staffing difficulties that contributed to students not achieving as well as they should. These difficulties have now been resolved and the 2002 results were significantly above those obtained in 2001 and close to the 2001 national average. Although the AS-level results were also above those obtained in 2001, almost 25 per cent of students taking the examination failed to obtain a pass grade. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by male and female students.
235. Inspection evidence shows current standards to be better than indicated by the 2001 examination results. The work of Year 13 students is at a level that meets the standards expected, with the work of some students exceeding them. Contributory factors to improving standards in Year 13 are very good support and guidance and excellent assessment procedures that are used effectively to provide students with clear information on the progress they are making. Raising standards at the end of Year 12 is identified as a priority in the subject improvement plan and strategies are being implemented to achieve this goal. As a result, Year 12 students are attaining standards that are slightly above expectations at this very early stage of the course, indicating good achievement.
236. Year 13 students are achieving well and their coursework shows a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Their work shows, for example, an understanding of the principles of qualitative and quantitative research and the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies. They are able to describe and evaluate theories of child development and to compare and contrast the views of different developmental psychologists. They have a good understanding of the obedience studies of Milgram and Hoffling, and of the earlier conformity studies of Asch and Sherif. However, while in discussion students display a very good understanding of the strengths and limitations of these studies, they are less secure in their

understanding of the relevance of these studies to everyday life. Year 12 students are making good progress and beginning to establish a sound knowledge base for the study of the subject. They demonstrate an increasing understanding of some of the ethical issues related to research investigations and are building an appropriate technical vocabulary.

237. The majority of students show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and this is evidenced in the very good retention rates. They are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts. Students are keen to express their views and show respect for the opinions of others. In discussion they express their points of view thoughtfully and without rancour. However, in one Year 12 lesson, frequent interventions and calling out by a small number of, mainly male, students inhibited constructive whole-class discussion. The subject makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Students' work is neat and well presented, reflecting diligence and good application.
238. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of psychological terms and concepts, and the pace at which most lessons is conducted helps to ensure that students maintain concentration throughout. As a result they make clear gains in understanding. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, the way in which the teacher skilfully probed beyond the initial response encouraged students to extend and reformulate their answers. As a consequence, students' confidence grew and their contributions increased, as did their knowledge and understanding of the topic. Lesson planning is good and helps to ensure that students are presented with increasing demands in lessons. This makes a significant contribution to students' learning. In most lessons a good range of teaching methods is used to ensure that students are actively engaged. However, in one Year 12 lesson, too much direct teaching and weaknesses in class management led to learning being slowed by the inappropriate behaviour of a small number of students.
239. Subject leadership is good and provides a clear direction for work in the department. Students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored and additional support is provided when necessary. Very good teamwork and relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge and understanding.
- Good relationships that inspire trust and respect.

Areas for improvement

- Improved target-setting to enhance the students' standards.
- Increased challenge to motivate and excite the students both in lessons and to encourage independent learning.

240. Results in the 2001 GCE level English Literature examinations indicate standards that were broadly in line with the national average and represent satisfactory achievement because of the prior attainment of the students. Trends over time are inconsistent but, generally, standards have been maintained. Girls perform better than boys but not significantly. The retention rate is high.
241. In the work seen during the inspection students' attainment in the sixth form is average, which reflects the results of the national tests. Their ability on entry was average and this represents satisfactory achievement. Most students have a secure knowledge and understanding of their work. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion but falter when speaking in formal situations. Students make valid and cogent observation and use technical vocabulary in their writing. Concise and succinct writing is a problem for some students, largely because their independent research skills are undeveloped. Some students, particularly in Year 12, cannot make sophisticated inferences from texts or sustain detailed textual analysis. Recent initiatives are beginning to redress writing problems by careful selection of reading texts and more variety in writing assignments.
242. The study of a wide range of texts deepen students' understanding of literature but not all lesson planning allows for students to have the opportunity to air their views and develop their independent learning. When lessons are planned to include well-prepared student contributions, their comments are sharp and sensitive. Students respond positively to their teachers and each other.
243. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and some is good. All staff are specialists and knowledgeable in their field. In the good lessons there is a brisk pace, students are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Students enjoy their work with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. In a Year 13 lesson on American literature the students thoroughly enjoyed comparing and contrasting the texts and discussed issues enthusiastically. Students appreciated the opportunity to receive one-to-one attention and help from their teacher, especially the lower-attaining students who have not made the leap from summarising to intellectual analysis. When the teacher tried to extend and deepen the discussion these students floundered and relied on the teacher for illumination. The teacher's insistence on the use of analysis and explanation is beginning to improve standards. In a good Year 12 lesson on Chaucer the teacher took advantage of the trust and good humour of relationships to engage the students in a lively, amusing study of the knight. In the less good, but still satisfactory, lessons students learnt marginally less because of a more pedestrian pace and too much talk by the teacher. Students' work is marked regularly and consistently to a high standard although some comments are bland and do not target improvement, especially for lower-attaining students.
244. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work, which encourages equality for the students and the development of staff. Assessment procedures are clear, which results in marking and specific targeting to secure individual student improvement and to inform curriculum planning. This is not consistent, as some students' targets are not clear enough for them to know exactly what they have to do in order to improve. The head of department is respected and valued by English teachers for his care

for both staff and students, his expertise and contribution to their professional development. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Results in national tests are in line with the national trend and current initiatives suggest improvement. There is insufficient opportunity for students to develop their independent learning.