

INSPECTION REPORT

HAMILTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique reference number: 120285

Headteacher: Mr E de Middelaer

Reporting inspector: Anthony Shield
3569

Dates of inspection: 16 – 19 September 2002

Inspection number: 250631

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 16 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Keyham Lane West Hamilton Leicester
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Kathy Chimley
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The college's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students' taught?</p> <p>How well is the college led and managed?</p> <p>What should the college do to improve further?</p>
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay Inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the college care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the college work in partnership with parents</p>
23528	Andrew Bird	Team Inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Educational Inclusion</p>	
22958	Terry Bailess	Team Inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team Inspector	Science	
30973	Geoff Hancock	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
32077	Alan Edwards	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology	
31129	Jeff Pickering	Team Inspector	Art	
22590	Bob Castle	Team Inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>Citizenship</p>	

15576	David Nebesnuick	Team Inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
27666	John Dockrell	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	
29510	Nick Mayfield	Team Inspector	Music	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team Inspector	Physical education	
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team Inspector	Religious education	
8360	Fred Peacock	Team Inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Hamilton Community College is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 – 16, situated on the north-eastern edge of Leicester. It draws its students from the immediate locality and more widely. Most students are drawn from areas that have high levels of social and economic disadvantage. At over 26 per cent, the proportion of students eligible for free meals is above average. There are 1067 students on roll, and the college is bigger than most other secondary schools. There are slightly more girls than boys on roll although this varies from year to year. The number of students at the college increased significantly in 1999, when it absorbed over 400 students from a neighbouring school that was closing. Since then numbers have been reasonably consistent. The college also experiences high levels of student mobility with around 20 per cent of the students either leaving or joining the college midway through their school career. The college is a technology college, and is part of a local Excellence in Cities project. Attainment on entry overall is well below average and many students have poor levels of literacy in particular. The percentage of students with special educational needs is well above average, with 389 students (36 per cent) on the register of special educational needs. Most of these are for emotional and behavioural problems, but there are also a significant number of students with specific learning needs and some with speech or hearing difficulties. Sixty-six students have a Statement of Special Educational Needs; this is well above average. The majority of students are of white UK heritage, with a significant minority of students from an Indian heritage and small numbers from other ethnic groups. Ninety-three students have English as an additional language, and ten of these are at an early learning stage.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

This is a rapidly improving school despite working in challenging circumstances. Overall the college offers its students a sound education. Standards are well below average, but given the students' attainment on entry, their achievements are satisfactory. A minority achieve better than this. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, but the pace of learning does not always match this good teaching. The principal brings a clear vision and is giving a determined lead, providing the college with a good sense of purpose. Monitoring procedures are very effective in assuring quality and college improvement. The college offers satisfactory value for money.

What the college does well

- The determined and decisive leadership of the principal, well supported by governors and senior staff, is providing a clear sense of purpose and educational direction.
- Hardworking teachers and support staff show a high level of commitment to college improvement.
- The college's procedures for monitoring and evaluation are very effective and enable senior staff to celebrate success and take action on areas of weakness.
- The college promotes a strong framework of social and moral values.
- The very good quality of pastoral care and assessment procedures enable all students to feel safe and that their academic and personal development are monitored carefully.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is carefully targeted and sensitively implemented.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which extends the opportunities for enrichment and additional learning

What could be improved

- Attainment overall, including English, mathematics and science, which is well below average.
- The attendance of a minority of students is seriously affecting their progress.
- Standards of literacy are preventing good progress in some subjects.
- The achievements of boys, which does not always match their potential.
- The quality of learning in lessons and the progress made during the year is not always as good as the teaching.
- Opportunities for using computers to support learning in all subjects.
- Opportunities for developing spiritual awareness are missed in assemblies, religious education and in subjects across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall improvement since the last inspection in December 1997 has been satisfactory. The college experienced enormous difficulties when it absorbed over 400 students from a neighbouring closing school. As a result, performance in external examinations dipped, and the college faced increasing problems of attendance and behaviour. During the last four terms improvement has been rapid. This improvement, noted first by HMI in July 2001, has been sustained more recently, and the college is now consolidating its work and is poised to move forward strongly and with confidence. Overall improvements in performance in both national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations since 1997 have been barely noticeable, but the dip in Year 2000 has been followed by two years of improving results. The quality of teaching has improved, with fewer unsatisfactory lessons than during the last inspection, and a much higher proportion of good teaching seen. Attendance is improving, but remains obstinately well below average, despite the best efforts of the college. Key issues from the previous inspection have been tackled rigorously. Improvements have been made to the curriculum, including the arts provision, opportunities for vocational work and provision for able and talented students. Provision in French, art, music and boys' physical education is much better. Improvements in relation to preparation for life in a multicultural society have been made, but the college still fails to offer a daily act of collective worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11 remains limited.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E*	E	E	Well below average E Very low and in the bottom five per cent nationally E*

In 2001, the college's results in tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were well below average. When compared with similar schools, results were below average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. Results since the last inspection have been static, lower than the rising national trend. However, there have been marked improvements in the last two years in each subject. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average, and that for similar schools. However, students' progress through Years 10 and 11, based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 9, indicates that these students made satisfactory progress. Although results overall have not been improving as fast as the upwards trend nationally, results in 2001 were markedly better

than those in Year 2000, and unvalidated results in 2002 indicate that this improvement has been sustained. In 2001 students did better in English literature than in other subjects that they took. Girls did better than boys, although both boys' and girls' results were well below the national averages for boys and girls. Results in 2002 indicate a widening of the gap between boys and girls. Students in 2002 met the targets set for them by the college. Targets set for 2003 are challenging and indicate that the college expects a continuing improvement. Inspectors judge the targets to be realistic and achievable.

In work seen during the inspection, standards in most subjects are below or well below average at the end of Years 9 and 11. However, given their attainment on entry to the college, most students' achievements are at least satisfactory throughout all years. In English, mathematics and science, standards of work seen in the inspection are higher than recent examination results would suggest. This is because of rapidly improving provision and because not all students achieve their potential in external examinations. For some this is because of poor attendance; others have difficulty in retaining and applying their knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Some students underachieve; in many cases this is because of poor patterns of attendance, which seriously affects their progress. For those students who attend regularly, progress is better. Low levels of literacy inhibit achievement in most subjects.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Satisfactory. Although most students are enthusiastic about college and are keen to learn, some are less committed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most students behave responsibly and sensibly in lessons and around the college. However, examples of less thoughtful behaviour were observed.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships within the college community are friendly and supportive of each other. Many senior students act responsibly and with maturity.
Attendance	Overall figures are well below average. Students with irregular attendance are underachieving.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
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 time of the previous inspection, and significantly less unsatisfactory teaching was observed during this inspection. Nearly two-thirds of lessons were judged to be good or better, and one lesson in four was judged very good or excellent. Around six per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory, much of this taught by supply or temporary teachers. Much good teaching was observed in all subjects. In mathematics, teaching is good throughout the college; in English, science and art, it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In geography, drama, French, music and religious education it is consistently good. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory, but inconsistent, and not all subjects are making a strong contribution to the development of literacy skills. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory.

Teachers' skilled classroom management and good relationships characterise much of the teaching. Many teachers devise interesting and challenging activities for the students. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and those identified

as able or talented. In most cases, the quality of learning in lessons matches the quality of teaching, helped by the positive attitudes to learning of most students. However, in a significant minority of lessons learning is not as good as the teaching. In some cases this is because some students' approach to the lesson and their behaviour are unsatisfactory. Many students lack confidence in their own abilities and some find working on their own and sustained concentration difficult. Above all, however, many students lack the basic skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to progress at a good rate.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The college offers a wide range of courses designed to be fully inclusive of all students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Its provision for its able and talented students, and very good range of extra-curricular activities are particularly well planned. The college's good links within the community help to make learning relevant and responsive to local needs.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Students' individual needs are well catered for through a programme of withdrawal and effective support in lessons.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Although the number of students at an early stage is small, support is effective and the students' progress is carefully monitored.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory, but provision for spiritual awareness is unsatisfactory. The college's values are clear and there are good opportunities for developing social and moral awareness. The college's moral framework is clear. Cultural development is promoted through an increasingly good range of opportunities in art, drama and music, but opportunities elsewhere, particularly with a multicultural dimension, are more limited. There are missed opportunities for promoting spiritual awareness.
How well the college cares for its students	Very good. The college's caring values support a very good framework for pastoral support and social and educational inclusion. Very good procedures for assessing and monitoring students' academic performance ensure that the college is able to provide effective support and guidance when necessary.

The college works hard to involve parents and to work in partnership to ensure that all children achieve their potential.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Very effective and determined leadership by the principal is securing a strong drive for college improvement. Management at other levels is very effective and sharply focused on improving the quality of provision.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are committed and hard working, and bring a good range of experience and expertise to the college's work. Statutory requirements are largely met.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The college's policy for monitoring and evaluation is thorough and comprehensive.
The strategic use of resources	The college applies best value principles well and efficient planning and management of its budget and the effective use of additional funding to support its priorities make a strong contribution to the college's work. Educational priorities are taken into account when the budget is being planned.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are good overall. Subjects are well staffed and the level of support staff is good. The college has made significant recent improvements to the accommodation and learning resources, particularly in computers.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • Staff are approachable. • That their children like going to Hamilton and are making good progress. • The good quality of teaching. • The commitment and hard work of staff. • That the college is improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents is concerned about the amount of homework set. • A small number do not feel well informed about their child's progress. • A small minority does not feel closely involved with the college.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views, but disagree with the negative views expressed by a minority of parents. Inspectors judge that there are good opportunities for parents to be informed about the progress of their children through reports and consultation meetings. The setting of homework is satisfactory and the college works hard to involve parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and students' achievements

1. Overall attainment on entry to the college in Year 7 is well below average and poor literacy levels in particular are a significant limiting factor on achievement. The college admits relatively few students with high prior attainment and a considerable number with very low attainment. In the current Year 7, only around three out of five students had reached the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics in national tests at the end of their primary schools. Only about one in ten reached the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. These poor results are confirmed by the cognitive ability tests that the college administers to its Year 7 students on entry. These indicate high proportions of below average and very low abilities, particularly in verbal tests. Attainment on entry has been improving, and the current Years 7, 8 and 9 had reached higher standards in national tests than the current Years 10 and 11. Over one third of the students have special educational needs, many for emotional and behaviour problems as well as learning difficulties. Sixty-six students have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This figure is well above average.
2. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, the latest year for which comparative results are available, the average points scores of students in national tests in English, mathematics and science were well below average. In English they were also well below the average of schools with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, although in mathematics and science, results were just below the average for these similar schools. Although both boys' and girls' results are well below average, the boys' results are better than the girls' when compared with boys' and girls' results nationally. Since the last inspection, improvements in results at this stage have been barely discernible in each subject, and fell to a low in Year 2000. The trend has been lower than the improving national trend. However, the closure of a neighbouring school and subsequent integration of its students within the college had a significant impact on performance at this time. Since Year 2000, results have been improving.
3. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was well below average in comparison with schools nationally and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to G grades was also well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools. The proportion of students achieving one or more A* to G grades was well below the national average and that for similar schools. The average total points GCSE score per student was 24.9, well below the national average and that for similar schools. Both boys' and girls' results have been well below average. When compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, average and lower attaining students made average progress, in line with their predictions. The relatively few higher attaining students working towards A* to C grades at GCSE made below average progress in 2001.
4. The college undertakes a thorough analysis of its examination performance and uses the analysis to refine its provision. In 2002, the performance of boys at GCSE dipped, and particularly those of a white and Afro-Caribbean heritage. Students from Asian backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, have tended to do better. The college has responded by adopting strategies to raise the achievements of boys, including boys only groups; for example, in English in Year 10. However, raising attainment amongst all groups has not been ignored, and the college has also identified in its college improvement plan the needs of able and talented students, and those with special educational needs.
5. Since the last inspection performance against all measures has barely improved. However, GCSE results dipped badly in Year 2000 for the same reason that performance in tests at the end of Year 9 dipped, and there have been two years of improving results since then. In Year 2000, the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades was only 12 per cent. In 2001 it was 21 per cent and in 2002 it rose further to 26 per cent. The performance of students reaching five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G grades also continued to improve. In 2001 results in all subjects

were significantly below the national average, although students did relatively better in English literature than in other subjects.

6. GCSE targets set for 2002 were exceeded. The college has set itself challenging targets for 2003 that are both realistic and achievable. If met, they will represent a continuation of the college's improving performance at GCSE. The college's procedures for target setting are based on a realistic analysis of assessment data. Inspectors agree with the college that the challenging targets set are achievable given the improvements the college is now making. In addition to the statutory targets, the college also set individual subject targets in mathematics, science, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) for GCSE, as part of its Technology College status. In ICT these were not quite met, but in each of the other subjects, the targets were exceeded.
7. The college admits a large number of students at times other than Year 7. During last year, for example, 22 per cent of students either joined or left the college. This high rate of mobility has a significant impact on the continuity of learning. The college has compared the examination performance of those students who had a five-year experience at Hamilton with those who joined the college at a later stage. The progress made by these stable students over time is much better than those whose education is disrupted. The percentage of students reaching five or more A* to C grades in 2002 who were present throughout Years 7 to 11 was 31 per cent. Only six per cent of those students who joined from the closing school and 24 per cent of other later joining students achieved this level.
8. Low attainment in external tests and GCSE examinations is the consequence of a number of factors. Of these, poor literacy skills are perhaps the most significant. The students' ability to put down their thoughts on paper, organise their notes and use them effectively for revision, and their ability to reason and analyse are all limited. In addition, many have poor recall skills. Knowledge acquired and used in one lesson is often forgotten by the next. Some students do underachieve. In most cases, this is because of poor attendance, which adversely affects their progress. Many students lack confidence in their learning and their ability to achieve. During the inspection, students were often heard to express surprise that they were able to complete tasks successfully. The college has recognised this problem and teachers consistently praise and congratulate students for their achievements in order to improve their self-esteem.
9. In work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards overall are well below average. In some subjects, notably English, mathematics and science, standards seen were higher than recent test and examination results would indicate. This is because of recent improvements in teaching and learning, which have resulted in higher levels of achievement. Most students' achievements, however, are at least satisfactory given their prior attainment on entry. While there is underachievement amongst some students, it is largely because of poor patterns of attendance and the subsequent lack of continuity in their learning. Students observed in lessons and through the scrutiny of their work are making at least satisfactory progress.
10. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Many students enter the college with very low reading ages and this includes a significant number of students who are unable to read at all. These students make good progress because of the intensive support they receive on an individual basis from teaching assistants. The college has a detailed and highly effective system to identify literacy and numeracy needs. Teachers and support staff work well together to ensure that students make progress. Effective strategies are used in all subject areas and learning support teachers and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students achieving success. Many students with special educational needs achieve at least one GCSE grade.
11. Students with English as an additional language make good progress during their time in college and reach good levels of attainment. Some 45 per cent of the wider population of ethnic minority students achieved five or more higher grade passes at GCSE in 2002, which is above average for the college as a whole. Students at an early stage of learning English have all improved in their command of the language since joining the college and make satisfactory progress alongside their peers.

12. The college has identified its able and talented students, although the programmes arranged for them have yet to make a significant impact on their progress. Higher attaining students in general make satisfactory progress, in line with their peers.
13. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were below average in both Years 9 and 11, higher than recent test and GCSE results. This is because of improving standards, but also because students sometimes do not do themselves justice in external examinations. Given their attainment on entry, and often their low reading ages, most students' achievements are satisfactory. Although standards of literacy remain below average overall, speaking skills are satisfactory throughout the college. Students are generally willing participants in oral work, and respond well to teachers in direct question and answer sessions, but, in all years, many students are less confident in putting forward their own ideas and opinions in wider discussion. They often experience difficulty in expressing themselves clearly, and rely too much on colloquial expressions in situations calling for more formal speaking. However, in most lessons, listening skills are good. This makes a significant contribution to students' learning. The great majority of students listen to teachers and one another well, showing good respect for others' views.
14. Standards of attainment in reading are below average. Throughout the college, many middle and lower attaining students are not fully fluent readers and lack confidence when reading aloud. This restricts their understanding and ability to come to terms with more difficult concepts. Standards of writing are also below average. Teachers give students opportunities to write for different purposes, and normally mark written work to a common grading system, but, to some degree, expectations of achievement are low. For many students, written work is brief and lacks sufficient thought and care. Standards are marred by frequent errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Boys often pay less attention to handwriting and presentation.
15. In work seen in mathematics, standards were below average in both Years 9 and 11, higher than recent tests and examination results indicate. Students' achievements throughout the college are satisfactory, given the standards of mathematics they have on entry in Year 7. Standards of numeracy, while remaining below average, are improving as a result of strategies that the college is adopting. However, many students lack confidence in mental calculations.
16. Standards in science are below average in both Years 9 and 11, again higher than recent test and examination results. Practical work is often of a higher standard than written work, although students are learning to record results accurately and draw scientific conclusions. Students are making satisfactory progress throughout, given their attainment on entry.
17. In most other subjects, standards are well below average in both Years 9 and 11. However, in physical education (PE) attainment is broadly in line with the national average in both years, and in French in Year 9 and art in Year 11, attainment is just below average. In most subjects, students achieve at least satisfactorily, and in art in Years 10 and 11 and PE in Years 7 to 9, their achievements are good.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Student's attitudes to the college, their behaviour, values and the manner with which they serve the college are satisfactory overall and have improved since the previous inspection. Most students value the purposeful and effective relationships they have with each other and their teachers and this is conducive to learning and progress. This contributes to the tolerant environment in the college.
19. Students who attend the college regularly and come to learn, have positive attitudes to schooling. They value the opportunities provided by the teaching and they speak constructively of the help they receive inside and outside the classroom. They appreciate the time that teachers give to the organisation and management of extra-curricular activity and the opportunities that extend learning. Most students take an active part in some form of extra-curricular activity, and increasing numbers participate in subject homework clubs. Many students approach their learning constructively and show an active interest in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. In lessons they

pose interesting questions and concentrate for sustained periods. However, a few students show negative attitudes, and in a small minority of lessons, noise levels are sometimes unacceptably high and a few students engage in time wasting and unproductive activity.

20. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most students are friendly, polite and tolerant, but a small minority sometimes engage in disruptive, lively and boisterous antisocial behaviour. The principal has used exclusion to good effect and made clear that such poor behaviour is not tolerated. This policy has been effective in helping to make the college an orderly place to learn. In the last school year the number of fixed period and permanent exclusions was very high. However, the number of exclusions is now falling. The college faced increasing problems of behaviour and attendance following the amalgamation with a neighbouring school. These have now largely been overcome and both students and parents have acknowledged recent improvements in the standards of behaviour.
21. Many students with behavioural difficulties make good progress in improving their behaviour, and in raising their self-esteem and confidence. The reducing number of students excluded from school is a measure both of the college's commitment to inclusion and of the success of many teachers in dealing with very challenging behaviour.
22. Most students observe the college's code of conduct and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Students are aware of their actions, and respond to the system of rewards. Younger students are excited about collecting merits. Some students expressed concern about bullying and racism, although they were all adamant that incidents are dealt with effectively by teachers. During the inspection there were no visible signs of bullying, but a number of incidents of insensitive behaviour were observed. Much of this behaviour is associated with the unsatisfactory arrangements for lunch in the canteen. Large numbers of students waiting to be served in an overcrowded space are sometimes intolerant of others.
23. The quality of relationships between students and with teachers is good and a strength of the college. Personal development is also good, and many senior students act with maturity and good sense of responsibility. Opportunities for students to serve the college and community contribute effectively to the promotion of good relationships. Most students enjoy working together particularly in the classroom. Students were observed working well in pairs and groups in many different lessons, sharing ideas and information and working well together in small groups. This good quality of relationships does much to raise the students' confidence and self-esteem. Most students are prepared to listen and show respect for the views of others.
24. Around the college most students interact effectively and participate actively in social and recreational activities. There are a number of friendships that cross race and gender boundaries. Most students from minority ethnic communities feel accepted as members of the college community. Students value the assistance of student helpers in the playground, which further promotes friendships and reinforces a tolerant learning environment.
25. Attendance is poor and this is having a serious impact on the standards achieved. In Years 2000/01 attendance was 86 per cent, well below the national average of 90.9 per cent. Since the last inspection attendance levels have declined. The levels of authorised absence are very high and there are serious concerns about the high level of unauthorised absences, which are well above the national average.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There is much teaching that is of a very good quality, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Around two out of three lessons were judged to be good or better, and much teaching observed was skilfully delivered. One lesson in four was very good. However, some unsatisfactory teaching remains, much of this taught by temporary or supply teachers who have not yet established secure relationships with the students.

27. The quality of teaching in English and science is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics, the teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 9. Characteristics of the good teaching in English are the effective use of assessment to monitor progress and set student targets for improvement, and the good classroom management, which sets a clear framework for learning in the lessons. The control and management of students are also very good in mathematics. In addition high expectations and levels of ambition for the students ensure that they work hard. In science, the thorough and often excellent planning of lessons is a major contribution to their effectiveness.
28. In other subjects, teaching is at least satisfactory in all years. In French, PE, drama, citizenship and RE it is good throughout the college, while in music in Years 7 to 9 and geography and art, it is good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is often because of poor attitudes from a small minority of students, combined with the teacher's inability to control and interest the students. When teaching is good, the teacher knows the students well, expectations are high and the teacher has planned work appropriately to meet their needs.
29. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory, although more needs to be done to ensure that good practice is shared across all subjects. Some subjects, including design and technology, humanities and science, provide glossaries of specialist words that help to reinforce correct spelling and promote an interest in language. Clear displays of key words and students' written work in most subject rooms serve to create a good literacy environment. Teacher modelling of reading skills during classwork is also emphasised in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Students are given regular opportunities to write for different purposes. Note making and report writing are required in most subjects. The use of a dictionary and thesaurus is encouraged. Most faculties have also created writing and thinking frames to help students to develop and structure written work effectively. More broadly, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having an impact in English lessons in particular, on the range of activities and teaching methods adopted. Successful literacy summer schools have also been held for the past five years, for selected new students. Additional support for the development of literacy skills for students with special educational needs is good.
30. Good examples of effective questioning techniques, when students were challenged to develop their response, were seen in art and science lessons during the inspection. However, opportunities for discussion in mathematics, RE and humanities lessons were more limited. Generally, there could be greater use of paired and small group discussions in a range of subjects, to encourage a fuller contribution of ideas. The college is aware of the need to develop speech further, in particular to encourage students to speak in full sentences. Management of a group talk is a target for all subjects in the literacy action plan. In English lessons, reading logs are kept by students in Years 7 to 9, and there is access to a range of appropriate literature in the college and class libraries, but more could be done to promote interest in wider reading in all subject areas, especially amongst boys. There are good examples of targeted reading schemes in modern foreign languages, which encourage reading for meaning, and a range of supporting texts is used effectively in science lessons to develop broader understanding of topics. In other subjects, including mathematics, RE and humanities, concentration on worksheets and short texts sometimes limits student response. Higher attaining students develop more advanced analytical and close reading skills, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There was limited evidence of the development of research skills through the use of the Internet and CD-ROM, however. In a range of subjects, including English, history, geography, RE and modern foreign languages there are too few opportunities for more extended writing and development of ideas. Students are encouraged to reflect on and re-draft work, however, particularly in preparing coursework at GCSE. This is effective and improved standards were noted in English, mathematics and science as a result of good practice. Correction of spelling and other technical errors could be observed more consistently across all subjects.
31. The teaching of numeracy is also satisfactory. Numeracy is promoted well within the mathematics faculty itself. The detailed scheme of work for the lower attaining students provides opportunity for students to practise taught skills. Numeracy skills are reinforced effectively in a number of other subjects, including science, physical education, design and technology and art and design.

32. Teachers' skilled classroom management characterises much of the good teaching, and in particular, the sensitive handling of some very challenging behaviour is very good. In one Year 8 design and technology lesson, for example, some disruptive behaviour by a minority of students had the potential to interrupt the learning. However, this was very effectively dealt with and as a consequence the students settled to complete the work quickly. In another Year 8 science lesson on the density of materials, the teacher coped very effectively with a small number of boys who attempted to disrupt the lesson. Very good use of praise to encourage the students and an effective use of questions to involve all the students ensured that they nevertheless made some progress. The calm, authoritative and non-confrontational approach adopted by many teachers is successfully involving all students in their learning. Sometimes it is only after some patient work from the teacher that some students finally settle to work. However, as a consequence the learning is not as good as it might have been.
33. Good relationships between teachers and students ensure generally positive attitudes. Typical of the friendly and respectful relationships observed was during a Year 11 geography revision lesson on the rainforest in which the teacher's own enthusiasm generated high levels of motivation amongst the students. A well-chosen activity ensured that all the students were actively engaged in the learning. Above all, it was the good quality of relationships between the teacher and the students that enabled the learning to proceed in an atmosphere of relaxed goodwill.
34. In other lessons where the learning is not so active, progress is not so rapid. Sometimes the learning is very dependent on the teacher to move it forward. Indeed the teacher sometimes works harder than the students. In one Year 9 English lesson on persuasive techniques in writing with a middle band group, the teacher's well planned lesson and good knowledge and understanding of the different approaches to persuasive writing enabled satisfactory progress to be made. The students were attentive and responsive, and their concentration good. However, the teacher tended to do all the work, failing to involve and promote active learning.
35. Many students lack confidence in their learning. This often shows itself in lessons where the students ask for help when presented with a difficulty rather than persevere to solve the problem themselves. In a number of lessons observed, there was an over-reliance on the teacher to do things for them, and a tendency to shout for help as soon as they were presented with a small difficulty. However, many teachers have developed good strategies for boosting confidence and raising self-esteem. In a very good drama lesson with a Year 10 GCSE group, the teacher's extensive use of praise led to increased confidence. In a Year 11 French lesson, a lower attaining group were preparing for listening and reading on a hotel topic. The lesson was very well prepared to compensate for known weaknesses and especially the students' lack of confidence. Work was broken down into very small chunks and written support and teacher guidance was given at each stage. Every effort was positively acknowledged. As a result, the students made good progress. Sometimes, however, there is a tendency for teachers to give praise for quite modest work while failing to present more challenge.
36. Planning is usually effective in meeting the needs of all students. Setting arrangements are usually effective in enabling work to be planned at an appropriate level of challenge. This is not always the case, however, and in a few lessons observed, all students were moving at the pace of the slowest in the class. In English, higher attaining students are not always given enough opportunity to plan their own work or take the initiative in their learning. In both mathematics and science, homework tasks for higher attaining students are not always challenging enough. In design technology and French, there is more to be done to ensure that levels of challenge for higher attaining students are high enough. Where the learning is over dependent on the teacher and students are unable to work at their own pace, some higher attaining students are allowed to coast.
37. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Individual education plans give teachers a workable profile to use and effective strategies to enable students to reach their targets. Where teaching is well matched to students' needs, progress is often good. In a Year 10 science lesson observed on the heart with a bottom set group, the students quickly grasped the basic elements of blood circulation because of the teacher's excellent planning and step-by-step explanation. In a Year 8 design and technology lesson, the majority of students were on the special

educational needs register. The teacher's very good planning and structured approach ensured that all students were involved. The lesson moved on at a good pace, work set was challenging and support from the teaching assistant was sensitive and effective. As a result, the students made good progress. When planning for individual needs is less effective, less progress is made. Learning support teachers and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution. They have a good input into the classroom, are involved in the planning and teaching of lessons and provide effective and caring support.

38. The marking of some teachers is thorough and comprehensive, and follows the college's policy. Marking in English is particularly effective. Teachers' comments are often supportive and encouraging, without missing opportunities for challenging the students to improve. However, the quality in some other subjects is more variable, and in some cases, marking fails to give the students clear signals as to how to improve. Although it is college policy that not every piece of student's work is marked in detail, some work; for instance, in science, had not been marked since the beginning of term. The college should review its procedures to ensure that the regular assessments of progress made, are based on secure and accurate evidence.
39. Homework is set regularly and often used to consolidate learning. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage students to develop research and enquiry skills independently of the teacher.
40. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT. Improved access to both the computer suites and subject 'pods' – small groups of computers in subject areas - are ensuring that computers are increasingly seen as a natural tool to enhance learning. Some good use of computers was observed in science and English. However, despite the good number of computers in the college, opportunities are sometimes missed to use ICT to support learning.
41. Teaching strategies are strongly inclusive. All students are well known and teaching is usually well matched to their learning requirements. Students with special educational needs are very well supported in their learning by teaching assistants. The progress of students with English as an additional language is often well supported by effective teaching.
42. The quality of learning in lessons and the rate at which the students progress are satisfactory in all years. Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not always reflected in good progress of students. Although the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in almost all cases, a significant number of lessons were observed during the inspection, where the rate of learning was not quite as good. In a small number of some cases this was because of the poor attitudes and behaviour of some students, which got in the way of good progress. However, this was not common and the overwhelming majority of lessons were characterised by positive approaches to learning and good behaviour by the students. In general, students work and try hard, concentrating and listening well.
43. However, for many students, learning needs continual reinforcement through the lesson, and knowledge acquired and used in one lesson is often forgotten by the next. Some students lack confidence in their ability to recall knowledge and in particular to use and apply skills and knowledge in different contexts. While many students answer questions willingly, they are much less confident to ask questions. In addition, many have poor recall skills, which can adversely affect their performance in tests and examinations. Students' knowledge of their own progress is improving and increasingly they know the level at which they are working and the target for which they are aiming. However, sometimes this is not translated into meaningful knowledge of the next step in their learning.
44. The most serious impediment to learning is the poor level of literacy, which prevents students from organising and presenting their work in a coherent and manageable format. This is particularly, although not exclusively, true of the work of the boys. Too much work in science is left unfinished, adversely impacting on the continuity of the learning. In a number of subjects, the low level of basic subject skills slows progress. In art; for example, where poor drawing skills amongst many students slow the rate of learning. As the college improves, this is likely to be less significant, and there are already signs that in some subjects; for instance, French, the strong improvements being made, are leading to increased knowledge and confidence amongst the students.

45. It is the continuity of learning from one lesson to the next that is also having a negative impact on the progress some students are making. This is the result of a number of different factors: the high mobility of students; the poor levels of attendance of some students and in some subjects the lack of staffing continuity.
46. All these factors are a considerable hindrance to effective learning. Teachers are doing very well in most cases to overcome these problems, and the improving quality of teaching is having a major impact on learning. Inspectors share the college's confidence that the quality of learning is improving.

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

47. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the college are good overall, and the curriculum is satisfactorily broad and balanced. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. The college's technology college status and its membership of the Excellence in Cities project help to ensure a wide range of curriculum opportunities for students. Since the last inspection the college has increased the time allocation for art, music and French and has introduced a separate drama lesson into all years. In addition ICT is offered as a separate subject across all years and access to computer hardware is rapidly improving. Other subjects are beginning to develop the ICT element within their areas, although more needs to be developed in mathematics, art and physical education. The quality and range of learning opportunities is now good, although the time allocated to religious education within the humanities curriculum is insufficient for the agreed syllabus to be taught in depth.
48. The college is committed to promoting equality of access and opportunity through its comprehensive and detailed equal opportunity and inclusion policies and, as a result, provision is very good. The college equal opportunity policy is an integral part of the college ethos and philosophy in as much that the curriculum needs of every student are addressed. Lessons planned to meet the needs of all students, access to the National Curriculum, regular assessment through the college 'tracking' system, mentoring and pastoral care, staff development and monitoring and evaluation all reflect the college policy. For example, provision is made for the lowest attaining students to participate in 'catch up' sessions as part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy as well as special educational needs lessons included in the curriculum plan. Progress groups provide similar numeracy opportunities for students entering the college in Year 7. Support for students with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Improved interrogation of assessment data supports students in making guided option choices in Year 9. Procedures for tracking assessment include discussion with tutors to identify students' strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement. Single sex teaching groups in English have been introduced to raise the attainment of boys in Year 10. Vocational education opportunities lead towards GNVQ qualifications, and individual education programmes for disaffected and vulnerable students in Year 11 involving the local college lead towards NVQ qualifications. Latin, Gujarati, statistics and ICT are available for those students wishing to extend their academic base. All students can take advantage of the wealth of extra-curricular activities. However, one weakness is that access to all parts of the college for students with physical disabilities is not possible.
49. The college's teaching week meets the minimum recommended time allocation. Tutorial time is used effectively to support assembly themes and monitor students' welfare and academic progress. This provision is supplemented by an additional period of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This well-planned programme includes careers education, sex education, citizenship, health, drugs education and road craft. The college provides a good balance between meeting the academic needs of the students and their social development in Years 7 to 9.
50. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum has been considerably developed since the last inspection. Students are required to follow a programme defined by the college, based on an extended core of subjects. Option choices are, therefore, reduced and numbers in each subject group are relatively small. However, a wide choice of subjects is offered, including history, geography and music; all additional subjects since the last inspection.

51. The college has strengthened its pre-vocational course opportunities with all students studying an applied GCSE in manufacturing. In addition all students have the opportunity to study electronic engineering and health and social care in partnership with Leicester College. Some students are disapplied from studying French in order to study for vocational qualifications in hairdressing and beauty and construction. All students have the opportunity to follow the applied GCSE ICT and in addition can choose to take a full GNVQ ICT from the option choices. The pre-vocational curriculum has been greatly extended since the last inspection and now offers good opportunities for learning.
52. At this stage, the range of strategies for teaching literacy skills is satisfactory. The college is raising standards of literacy through the work of the literacy co-ordinator, staff training and a cross-curricular working group. Staff are supported by faculty action plans, good practice guidelines and a literacy newsletter. Whilst best practice does not yet apply consistently, there is evidence of an improvement in the teaching of literacy skills.
53. The college is also committed to raising the standards of numeracy, and strategies in place are satisfactory. The college has appointed a numeracy co-ordinator who has recently reviewed the college policy on numeracy and completed an audit of the main subjects involved. Representatives from all faculties form the numeracy team, which has been responsible for raising staff awareness. Focus is currently on key words, standard methods, 'Basic Skills' posters and monitoring samples of work in line with the colleges 'tracking programme'. There is very close liaison with feeder primary schools. Analysis of Key Stage 2 data and recent NFER testing has identified those students with special educational needs in terms of numeracy and they form a progress group, the responsibility of which is the specialist learning support assistant attached to the mathematics department. It is planned to introduce individual education plans for the progress group.
54. There is very good provision for students with special educational needs to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in mainstream classes. Extra support is targeted to subject areas; teaching assistants liaise with subject staff so that appropriate work and materials can move learning forward. Students use a computer software package to write their own individual education plans and they receive help and advice from teaching assistants in this work. By doing this students are committing themselves to ownership of their own learning programmes. Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs get good support from the college and there is a close working relationship with the local authority agencies. Those students with disabilities benefit from the college's inclusive policy. This enables them to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in addition to caring for their medical needs. For those students who display challenging behaviour and have sporadic or poor attendance, the learning support team provide counselling and anger management sessions and a facility for red card students to 'drop-in' to the learning support department to 'cool off'. The educational psychologist visits regularly to give a further dimension to the support provided for these students. There is a nurture group and lunchtime club for vulnerable students and an early bird reading club before school every morning, all of which help to encourage students to feel comfortable in the college. Students in Years 10 and 11 on the special educational needs register can opt for vocational courses at college on two afternoons a week.
55. The college makes good provision for its able and talented students following a period of intensive college planning. Each faculty has a named representative who acts as the link with the central college committee to promote developments. Students have the opportunity to take their GCSE examination early in statistics, design and technology, French, art and Gujarati. Some students study for an AS level in ICT. There is a range of initiatives in the curriculum designed to stretch the most able. These include: a history mediaeval village project; additional mathematics sessions after school for Years 8 to 11; involvement in the science 'Tomorrow's World' event; participation in the Leicester 'Book of the Year' event and visits to take part in master classes and the technology challenge at De Montfort and Leicester Universities. The range of activities overall within faculties is impressive.
56. Although around one in ten students speaks English as an additional language (EAL), only ten students are at an early stage of language learning. The college targets additional help and resources on these students. Most have been in college for at least a year, with only two recent

arrivals. The college has a good support system for them, which is well supervised by the EAL co-ordinator. Assessment of progress is made each term, and targets for improvement are set. The two full-time and one part-time learning support assistants are assigned to specific students, and provide effective help both in lessons and in short withdrawal sessions. A good range of resources is available to support the work, including adapted worksheets, word games, and dual language textbooks and posters. Students are included well in lessons and are able to follow the teaching appropriately. Learning support assistants maintain full records of progress made and collect samples of work done. They also run voluntary lunchtime study clubs, where extra help is offered and some social activities are held. Wherever possible, each student also has a nominated 'buddy' in his tutor group, from the same cultural background, who helps them settle into the college.

57. The college offers a very impressive range of extra-curricular activities. These activities encourage active participation beyond the college day and in the wider community, they also help to develop social and wider learning skills. The college has an extensive and highly popular programme of extra-curricular sport, and around one in three students participates in sporting activities. Other activities include reading and writing support, drop in mathematics support, and a wide range of homework and study clubs in most subjects. In addition there is an impressive range of performing arts activities including the theatre technology youth group and the music technology group. Students have opportunities to visit a wide range of places of interest and participate in fieldwork, locally and farther afield, in many subjects. The college works hard to encourage students to participate in all these activities.
58. The college has effective arrangements for careers guidance and work experience. There is an attractive careers library with four computer terminals and a wide range of careers information. This facility is well used by the students. There are e-mail links with all heads of department at Leicester College and students are actively encouraged to contact them. Careers information begins in Year 7 and opportunities are increased in later years to include the Year 9 'industry day', the Aim High roadshow, college visits and work-shadowing experience. Young Enterprise has been introduced recently. All students in Year 10 have two weeks' work experience during the summer term. The college has developed a good working relationship with the careers advisory service. Careers education is well developed within the curriculum and benefits from good leadership and management.
59. There are good links with the primary schools both pastoral and curricular. Most faculties meet regularly with local primary schools to discuss a range of curriculum issues. Links with Leicester College are good and improving. There is a range of shared courses for Years 10 and 11 and a high percentage of students progress to the college at sixteen. Students receive comprehensive advice about further study Post 16.
60. The college has good links with the local community and uses them successfully to enhance students' education. National and local businesses and special government grants provide funding for a wide range of joint school/community initiatives. The recent designation of Technology College status, with its increased funding, is providing the impetus to develop new and support established projects with industry, business, the community and education partners. Primary school teachers and their pupils are involved in developing their technological skills, using the college's specialist resources. Students are involved with the Young Enterprise and Young Engineers initiatives. An independent learning system is being developed to improve the basic skills of both students and community members. Older students with learning and behavioural difficulties, have opportunities at FE colleges to follow more practically based courses. Other students access Leicester College to take GCSE subjects that demand specialist facilities, such as vocational engineering.
61. The college regularly uses professionally trained mentors and counsellors; they make valuable contributions in the vocational, personal, social and emotional development of students. The college works well in conjunction with other agencies, including the police, education welfare officers and education psychologists. The good liaison with the college-based community education manager and youth tutor is successful in developing many joint initiatives. The regular holiday playschemes stimulate students to co-operate well in activities, including sport, music, art and ICT. The new Cyber Café in the Young People's Centre, targets students who have low literacy skills and no

access to computers at home. Students have opportunities to be involved in activities ranging from babysitting courses to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The college collaborates well with local sports groups and receives considerable community support for the building of a much needed sports hall. The Hamilton Trustees have pledged considerable financial backing to the project.

62. The college is successfully developing good links with business, industry, the community and education partners. It continues to explore initiatives to increase parents' participation in their children's learning.
63. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory overall, because of the less than satisfactory provision for spiritual development. In spite of a detailed handbook on ideas for assemblies and a regular 'Thought for the Week', assemblies do not always go beyond moral instruction, and the legal requirement for an act of daily collective worship is not met. Time was not given for reflection in the assemblies seen during the inspection week or in any of the form registration times for students not in assembly that day. Few opportunities for spiritual development are taken in lessons across the curriculum. Although such opportunities arise in texts used in English, such as 'Macbeth', and in mathematics, where something of the beauty and poetry of the subject comes across in wall displays, there is little evidence of teachers of other subjects drawing attention to the non-material. Indeed, opportunities were missed in some lessons seen; in work done on religious conflict in the Tudor period, in history, and on the vastness of space, in science.
64. Provision for moral development, however, is good. The novels used in English explore moral themes such as homelessness, or manipulative relationships, such as that between Miss Havisham and Pip in Dicken's 'Great Expectations'. Explorations of authority, and lying and truth occur in drama. Ethical issues arise in science, such as genetic engineering; Third World and environmental issues are explored both in science and humanities. In humanities, topics such as 'conflict' are studied in detail. The ethics of world trade are powerfully explored in religious education. In many lessons, there is a strong work ethic, and expectations of good behaviour. Teachers are good moral role models.
65. Social development is also well provided for. Social issues arise in various subject areas, but notably in humanities; for instance, in studies of the effects of the Industrial Revolution. In most subjects, there are opportunities for students to develop socially by working in pairs or small groups. Older students help younger ones with their reading. Good relationships are fostered both inside and outside the classroom. There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities, including plenty of sport, music and drama, and many school visits. Students here have many good opportunities to learn how to relate to their peers and adults.
66. There is satisfactory provision for cultural development. The heritage of English literature is well served by English lessons, and there are extensive opportunities for workshops and theatre visits through drama. There are some good examples of multicultural awareness. Novels and poems by non-British writers feature in English, and the music of India, China and Brazil is studied in music lessons at least up to Year 9. A study of native Americans features in the humanities GCSE course and world art is now considered in art lessons. Each major religion is featured during 'Thought for the week'. There are strong links with France; day trips and longer visits are made, students participate in an exchange programme, and a French theatre company has visited the college. A French week is held. Opportunities are missed in; for example, mathematics, science and design and technology, to draw on the contributions that the wider world has made to the subject.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

67. The overall provision for student's care, support and guidance and welfare is very good. The arrangements for child protection are effective and ensure that students learn in a safe and secure environment.
68. Health and safety is given a high priority. There are sound procedures for offering students first aid in case of accidents. Students clearly understand the importance of safety. During the inspection students were asked to leave the building due to a fire. Students followed the instructions and the

building was evacuated quickly and efficiently. There were no concerns about health and safety during the inspection.

69. The pastoral team is led by an extremely dedicated, committed and sensitive management team. They ensure that staff provide very good levels of individual support and guidance. Form tutors and heads of year work effectively and meet regularly with students to share information, address their concerns, celebrate their achievements and ensure that they learn in an environment that is constructive, purposeful and caring. New students are also provided with sensitive care and guidance, ensuring a smooth transition from primary to secondary education. Good use is made of their academic and pastoral information, which is used effectively to enable them to settle and integrate quickly. The personal, social and health education programme further supports students' welfare and their individual and social development. Most students appreciate and value the efforts of staff and the system of rewards, which encourages constructive relationships.
70. The pastoral provision is further enhanced by the support of learning mentors, who work with individual students to improve their motivation, behaviour and attendance. The scheme is very well managed and involves six learning mentors who take referrals from heads of year. This is a major strategy in the college's attempts to reduce high levels of exclusion, improve attendance and further raise academic standards.
71. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. Attendance data is rigorously evaluated and the information is used to investigate, record and discourage further absences. The college works hard and is making significant improvements with targeted, persistent poor attenders. A number of strategies have been introduced to further improve attendance. These include rewards for good attendance, target setting, support for poor attenders and their families, regular meetings between staff and students and more effective use of the educational welfare service. Registers are taken at prescribed times and form tutors encourage regular attendance. Information is effectively shared with the college's assistant educational welfare officer, who ensures quick and efficient investigation of all absences, including text messages to parents to identify the reasons for absences. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact. Procedures will improve, however, if tutors more rigorously scrutinise students' reasons for absence and clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence.
72. Good arrangements are in place for promoting high standards of behaviour. A consistent approach by staff has contributed to a fall in the number of exclusions and to the low level of physical bullying. Strong and effective emphasis is placed on supporting disaffected students. There are good procedures to reduce incidents of bullying and racism. Staff work very effectively to discourage and manage antisocial behaviour. Students are adamant that all types of bullying and aggressive behaviour are managed in a sensitive and proactive way. This ensures that the college community learns in a tolerant and safe environment. Since the last visit by HMI the college continues to build on its earlier progress.
73. The overall quality of the monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good. Comprehensive records of each student's progress are maintained as they move through the college. This data, which includes primary school results, is increasingly used to monitor the achievements of individual students.
74. The assessment procedures established by the college for monitoring students' academic achievements are very good. They have recently been reviewed, and the amended policy has been accepted for implementation. Assessments are now regular, thorough and designed to provide an impetus to each student's approach to learning, and a pride in achievement. Every six weeks, students are now provided with a grade in each subject for both their level of attainment, and of the effort they are making to improve their standards. These assessments are based on National Curriculum Levels in Years 7 to 9, and compared with GCSE target grades in Years 10 and 11. A summary sheet with grades for each of their subjects is posted to their parents/carers and a copy is also given to their form tutor. This tracking system, therefore, involves subject teachers, form tutors, parents, and students themselves in a regular review of each student's performance, with an estimate of how far the student is meeting national standards. Good use is subsequently made by

subject teachers to inform their teaching and planning in order to help students to overcome their weaknesses.

75. One of the benefits to emerge from the new policy is the use of the six-weekly assessments by form tutors to discuss individual targets for students in each of their subjects, and the additional involvement of students in self-assessment of their work and progress. As a result, students become more knowledgeable about what they have to do in order to improve their grades. The role of the form tutor is, therefore, increasingly important in the regular monitoring of academic standards. Students are allocated time in which to discuss their assessments and targets with their tutors, and they understand the value of the priority given to the regular tracking of their work. Furthermore, the use of 'merits' by teachers is providing the majority of students throughout the college with additional incentive to produce their best work. As a result of the priority given to the monitoring of work, and the celebration of high achievement, students are developing a more positive attitude towards the pursuit of high standards.
76. Students with special educational needs are very well known by teachers and teaching assistants who are fully aware of their physical, emotional and academic needs. They observe students and follow-up any concerns that might arise. The college has effective strategies in place to identify how well students on the special educational needs register are making progress. Good records are kept and students' individual education plans are reviewed regularly with new targets set and planned strategies for improvement. Those students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs have an annual review to see how their needs have changed over time and what new strategies need to be put in place. Review meetings are attended by the student, the parent or carer, the local authority support services and the college's special educational needs co-ordinator and all are able to make a contribution to the next step in the procedure. Students with physical and medical needs are catered for and there is close liaison with the local health and welfare services.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

77. Parents are very supportive of the college and most are pleased with nearly all aspects of the college. Although relatively few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors, those present were extremely loyal to the work of the college and valued what it is doing for their own children. A minority were concerned about the provision for homework, the information they receive about their child's progress and their relationship with the college. The college works very hard to promote a positive partnership with parents, and is increasingly gaining the support and confidence of the community it serves.
78. Links and communication between parents and the college are good. Good quality information celebrating students' achievements, events in the college and the community are regularly reported through the college's newsletter. This is expressed in an accessible and purposeful style and language. The prospectus provides parents with good information. The college continues to improve its marketing strategies and is beginning to improve its image in the local community. Communication between parents and the college is further enhanced by parental opportunities to participate in the Parents' Forum. This meets regularly to discuss aspects of the college's provision and to listen to parental views and concerns.
79. Parents of students with special educational needs are invited to regular reviews to enable them to understand the progress that their child is making. Parents are informed when the college's screening processes reveal that a student has special educational needs. Occasionally the referral comes from a parent and there is also the opportunity for student self-referral. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains close contact with parents and keeps them informed of all support programmes that are available. Parents' views along with those of the student are taken into account during the process of identification and assessment.
80. Parents receive interim progress reports and an end-of-year report. These are well written for the most part, and parents have an opportunity to respond. Parents' evenings are generally well attended and parents appreciate the opportunity to discuss concerns with teachers as well as celebrate their child's achievements. Homework planners are provided to ensure that parents can

monitor their child's short-term progress. These are a useful means of communication between home and the college, although not all students and parents are conscientious about their use.

81. Parents actively support sports events and drama and music performances. Parents, students and staff reported that parents are involved in making costumes and stage management. These arrangements have a positive and constructive impact on the sense of Hamilton as a community. In addition to supporting college activities, many parents also support learning in the home. However, a significant number of parents are not consistently supporting efforts by the college to improve attendance and punctuality.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

82. Leadership and management are very good. The principal is meeting the college's challenging circumstances with determined and decisive leadership. He has the committed support of his governors, senior management and staff. The college's values are clearly defined and provide a strong focus for its work. There is a strong commitment to motivating all students to achieve their potential, to valuing all students and raising their self-esteem in a caring and secure environment. The college seeks to develop partnerships within the community to encourage lifelong learning. All those connected with the college, from governors, through the staff and parents to the students, share the commitment to good relationships, college improvement and to improving the college's image within the community.
83. Following the absorption of around 400 students in 1999, from a local school that was closing, the college went through a difficult period of adjustment. Management systems for a relatively small school were found inadequate to cope with a new college with over 1000 students and based on two sites. During this time, college improvement stalled. The college has now come through that period and is moving forward with much more confidence and belief. Improvements over the last four terms have been rapid and the college is now poised to move forward even more strongly. The college's capacity for further improvement is very good.
84. One of the main reasons for the college's recent success is the clear-sighted and very effective leadership provided by the principal. He is giving a firm steer to the college's development and his authority is widely respected. He adopts a 'hands on' approach that is appreciated by staff and students alike. He expects much of his staff in terms of their commitment to the students and their often complex needs. The college has put in place comprehensive and thorough monitoring and evaluation procedures that have enabled governors and the senior management team to identify accurately both strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, the college plan for improvement is both challenging and realistic. Much remains to be done, but there is now a coherent strategy that has the full support of governors and staff. The principal is well supported by an experienced team, including three vice principals and two assistant principals, all of whom make important contributions within their areas of responsibility.
85. The senior management team meets weekly and is an effective forum for strategic planning. The team works well together and individuals have complementary skills. Initiatives such as the Technology College and Excellence in Cities have been managed coherently to ensure a successful implementation. Although the impact of these initiatives has yet to be fully realised, inspectors share the senior management's confidence that management at all levels has improved and is beginning to make a difference to the students' performance in the classroom.
86. College management systems and procedures are effectively in place, and the framework for monitoring and evaluating the work of the college is particularly comprehensive. Analysis of assessment data, scrutiny of students' work, lesson observations, and student and staff interviews are all undertaken on a regular basis. These enable senior staff to have a good understanding of standards and the quality of provision. Subject leaders are fully involved and the process for reporting back on outcomes and taking subsequent action are clearly defined. Monitoring of all aspects of the college's work, not just standards in subjects, is undertaken and governors are kept informed through regular reports. These comprehensive procedures provide a very good basis for improving standards and teaching. Performance management has been successfully implemented and is now

playing an important part in identifying priorities for college improvement and professional development.

87. Management at other levels is mostly good and with some examples of very good practice. Heads of school and heads of year have established very good procedures for the care of their students and monitoring their personal and academic development. Most subject leaders are providing effective leadership of their subject, working hard to secure improvements in teaching and learning, and giving a clear lead based on a careful evaluation of standards and provision.
88. There is very good leadership and management of the learning support department. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and her team of learning support teachers and teaching assistants work closely together. Their work is characterised by teamwork, sharing of good practice and effective monitoring and evaluation of progress. There is a good induction programme for teaching assistants. The special educational needs policy document is well written and sets out all elements of special educational needs as they affect students at the college. The SENCO meets termly with the designated college governor for special needs and weekly with senior staff to discuss the progress of students. Good links exist with partner institutions.
89. The co-ordinator for students with English as an additional language gives a good lead to the support for these students. In particular, he has shown initiative in researching ethnic minority issues and producing good practice guidelines for all staff, which were introduced at a training day at the beginning of the term. These have been posted on the college's Intranet, alongside broader advice on racism, the local community and links to outside agencies. Students have access to this website, which advertises a range of local events; for example, study sessions organised by the Afro-Caribbean Society in Leicester.
90. Governors are committed and hard working. Through their regular visits and responsibilities as named governors for aspects of the college's work, they are increasingly well informed and have a realistic view of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Discussions in committees and full governors' meetings are now based on a good knowledge and understanding of the issues. The committee structure has been recently realigned and governors now work in one of three committees: strategic development; college improvement and premises. Terms of reference are clear and there is purpose and focus to the meetings. Governors have recently been allocated to link with a particular subject. This initiative has been widely welcomed and is helping to promote a better understanding between staff and governors. Governors are now well placed to make a stronger contribution to the strategic vision for the college as well as having in place effective procedures for monitoring its work. Statutory requirements are met, apart from some minor reporting requirements in the governors' annual report to parents and those in relation to collective worship.
91. The college is becoming increasingly effective as a self-evaluating institution. Its improvement plan provides a very good framework for development. Individual subject plans are closely related to the college's main priorities across the full range of different aspects. The plan is soundly based on an audit of current standards and provision, and priorities identified are realistic and achievable.
92. The principal has a firm grasp of the issues relating to educational inclusion. He promotes an exceptionally strong commitment to ensuring the inclusion of all students. This commitment underpins and permeates the philosophy of the whole college. It is fully aware of both the social and learning needs of its students and responds effectively. The college has a comprehensive racial equality policy in place. An inclusion register outlines every category of student; for example, by ethnicity, dual heritage, 'looked after' students, refugees, those suffering physical, emotional or sexual abuse, home-life trauma or family separation. A weekly staff inclusion bulletin provides an immediate overview of these students and alerts staff to problems and issues in good time. An inclusion team meets regularly and monitors individual students, often with the support of external agencies such as the educational psychologist. Staff training on inclusion has taken place and faculty policy embraces college policy. The college curriculum plan reflects the college policies and student teaching groups meet the needs of both able and talented students as well as lower attaining students. The inclusion team also monitors attendance and exclusions through its behaviour management policy. Social inclusion is part of the college citizenship education

programme for Years 10 and 11 students. At classroom level, the lesson plan format is intended to identify the different categories of student and promote learning that matches individual needs. Specialist learning support assistants are employed from different ethnic backgrounds and attached permanently to faculties.

93. Very good financial management is an outstanding feature that makes an important contribution to the work of the college. Governors set the budget to reflect the priorities in the college improvement plan. Expenditure per student is higher than in most colleges. This is mainly because of its success in securing grants from the standards fund, funding in relation to its technology college status and the Excellence in Cities initiative. Good use is made of such special grants; for example, to enhance provision for able and talented students or to support individual students with learning mentors. Financial systems are operated efficiently and this was commended in the most recent audit report. The current surplus estimated at around £380,000, is very high. However, this is being prudently managed by the governors over a four-year perspective to ensure that when transitional funding is withdrawn, the college is able to plan for achievable reductions in its income, whilst maintaining its staffing and provision.
94. The college manages the bureaucratic demands placed on it very well. There are very good computer systems in place to support the college's administrative work. These cover key areas of work such as finance, personnel, student data, attendance and assessment. Very good arrangements are made for ensuring that principles of best value are applied. The finance manager and governors review the college's spending compared to that of other Leicester colleges. Extensive consultation takes place in drawing up the improvement plan, and governors invite staff to report on the educational impact of spending decisions. Governors receive regular statements on the latest budget position.
95. The college operates in a difficult social environment. Costs per pupil are higher than in most schools. However, improvements have been made in many areas since the last inspection and determined efforts are being made to raise students' achievement levels and enhance their social skills. The college, therefore, provides satisfactory value for money.
96. Over the last four years the college has experienced problems in recruiting staff. This has adversely affected stability and continuity of teaching and learning. Difficulty in filling vacancies in some key areas has had a negative impact on standards. However, recently, the successful recruitment of staff alongside improved retention has begun to make a positive impact on standards. The college now benefits from a good level of teaching and support staff.
97. Overall, the match of qualifications and experience of teachers to the subjects they teach is good. While the flexible use of history and geography teachers within the humanities faculty does lead to greater coherence in the teaching of these subjects, it does mean that on occasions, subject skills and understanding are not fully developed amongst the students. There are no specialists to teach RE, and the use of non-specialist teachers in both history and geography is adversely impacting on standards. There are adequate numbers of trained learning support assistants for students with special educational needs who provide good support for both students and teachers. Overall, the level of technical, administrative and premises staffing is good. However, there are an insufficient number of laboratory technicians to support work in science.
98. The procedures for the induction and support of staff new to the college, including newly qualified teachers are good. An induction programme for new staff includes a variety of meetings and other support strategies designed to ensure rapid and effective support.
99. Arrangements for continuing professional development are good and well managed. In all cases professional development is linked, via the performance management process, directly to priorities in the college and faculty improvement plans. Support staff are now included in appropriate professional development arrangements.
100. The accommodation is good. Considerable recent investment in building and refurbishment has provided much improved teaching and administration areas. Science has been rehoused in eight purpose-built, very good laboratories and a temporary classroom. The original science area has been refurbished with new furniture, computer controlled whiteboards and secure storage space,

providing excellent accommodation for mathematics. English, design and technology and special educational needs all enjoy good, spacious teaching areas while music has also benefited from new building. A new, multi-purpose sports hall and improved accommodation for teaching ICT are to be constructed in the coming months. The buildings and playing fields are maintained in good decorative order, litter free, with very little graffiti, by the site manager and a committed team of cleaners. Measures to ensure the security of the college and its community are good.

101. The provision of resources is good. The college has capitalised on the funding from various initiatives and its designation as a Technology College to make extensive provision for ICT. There are five computer suites and at the time of the inspection two further suites were awaiting completion. This should resolve the problem of access for whole teaching groups for humanities subjects and modern foreign languages where National Curriculum requirements are not currently being met. In English there is the provision of four computers, a 'pod'. Further provision is planned in English and similar 'pods' are proposed for art and modern foreign languages. This will allow tasks to be set for independent learning and in small groups. Since the last inspection the unsatisfactory equipment provision for physical education has been remedied, and a generous computer allocation has remedied the underuse of information and communication technology in music. Science has good quality equipment to match its new laboratories. In design and technology there is ample software to match the computer provision. Most teachers have laptops and these are being used to add variety to classroom presentation. The college supports teachers with generous reprographics support, but in several subject areas including design and technology, modern foreign languages, history and science, there are insufficient textbooks for them to be issued to individual students to support homework tasks. The library has a satisfactory range of non-fiction and fiction books. The English faculty uses the library on a regular basis with their classes. At the time of the inspection a replacement full-time librarian was not in post and access to the library was restricted.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to continue and consolidate the improvements already being made, the principal, staff and governors should:

improve attainment, including in English, mathematics and science by:*

- continuing to focus on improving standards as outlined in the college improvement plan and this report.

(Paragraphs: 2,3,5,9,13,14,15,16)

improve the attendance of some students by:*

- continuing to work closely with parents and external agencies;
- ensuring that attendance in individual lessons is monitored rigorously;
- ensuring that form tutors thoroughly investigate the reasons for absence.

(Paragraphs: 25,45,71)

improve standards of literacy by:

- ensuring that objectives in the literacy action plan are implemented fully and consistently by all teachers;
- encouraging all students to speak clearly, using full sentences;
- promoting an interest in wider reading, particularly for boys;
- creating more opportunities for extended writing in all subjects.

(Paragraphs: 8,29,30,44,52)

improve the achievements of boys by:*

- addressing the causes of their underachievement;
- ensuring that activities are planned to involve all pupils in relevant and applicable learning;
- ensuring that all teachers have effective strategies to overcome disaffection and unsatisfactory attitudes amongst some boys.

(Paragraph: 4)

improve the students' quality of learning and their ability to achieve their potential in test and examinations by:

- providing more opportunities for students to engage actively in their learning;
- ensuring that students take more responsibility for their own learning and are taught to plan and organise their notes;
- reviewing schemes of work and lesson planning to ensure opportunities for the consolidation of learning;
- ensuring that basic skills are reinforced through their application in different contexts;
- ensuring that students know what they need to do to achieve their next target;
- improving the attitudes, attendance and behaviour of a minority of students.

(Paragraphs: 8,34,35,42,43,45)

improve the opportunities for using computers to support learning by:*

- ensuring that all subjects use ICT to support and enhance the learning.

(Paragraphs: 40,47)

improve the opportunities for developing spiritual awareness by:

- reviewing the contribution that all subjects can make;
- ensuring that assemblies and tutor time provide opportunities for reflection.

(Paragraph: 63)

** These issues are already identified by the college as issues for improvement in its improvement plan.*

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	143
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	32	59	42	8	1	0
Percentage	0.7	22.4	41.3	29.4	5.6	0.7	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 - 11
Number of students on the college's roll	1067
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	285

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	66
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	389

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	93

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	106
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	102

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
College data	11.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	2.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	106	112	218

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	51	49
	Girls	44	50	43
	Total	74	101	92
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	34 (35)	46 (41)	42 (34)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (5)	22 (17)	17 (12)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	56	44
	Girls	37	63	42
	Total	63	119	86
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	29 (32)	55 (42)	39 (34)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (13)	22 (11)	15 (9)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	112	90	202

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	21	87	100
	Girls	21	73	80
	Total	42	160	180
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	21 (12)	79 (81)	89 (91)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per student	School	24.9 (22.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	947	102	13
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	58	2	3
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	1	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	40	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 - 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	14.5

Financial year	2001/2
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Education support staff: Y7 – 11

Total number of education support staff	35.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	927

	£
Total income	3,747,185
Total expenditure	3,716,254
Expenditure per student	3,482
Balance brought forward from previous year	356,971

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – 11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	60.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – 11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	23.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance carried forward to next year	387,902
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Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	37.6
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	49.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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

1067

Number of questionnaires returned

223

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	51	6	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	45	48	1	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	45	6	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	11	3	9
The teaching is good.	35	57	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	46	11	0	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	40	5	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	47	12	2	9
The school is well led and managed.	39	49	1	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	50	5	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	45	6	0	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Much of the teaching is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good practice in assessment and target setting.
- Students have good attitudes to the subject. They show interest in lessons and most take care to present their work well.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of all students.
- Literacy skills, in particular higher expectations for extended writing.
- Students' learning skills and particularly the encouragement for students to take responsibility for their own learning, especially in higher attaining groups.

102. Standards of English when students enter the college are well below the national average. In 2001, the results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 remained well below the national average for students reaching Level 5 and above, the expected level. They were also well below average for similar schools. At the higher levels, Level 6 and above, results were again well below the national average and below average for students in similar schools. Nevertheless, results have improved in each of the last three years, with a further significant rise at Level 5 and above in the 2002 results. Within the college, students generally do better in mathematics and science at this stage. Girls outperform boys, but the difference is broadly in line with that seen nationally.

103. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of higher grade passes in GCSE English was well below the national average, but in line with the average for similar schools. Passes at A* to G grades were also below average. The results at higher grades in English literature were similarly well below the national average; although they were closer to the national average for A* to G grades than in English, despite the fact that most students are entered for both examinations. Within the college, students do better in GCSE English than in most other subjects. Standards have remained relatively stable over time, although there was a marked improvement in the proportion of students gaining higher grade passes in English in 2002. Literature results were slightly lower, however. Girls do significantly better than boys at this level. The latter are over-represented at the lowest grades, and amongst those who do not gain any qualification in the subject.

104. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in both Years 9 and 11 is below average. This is higher than recent test and examination results would suggest, but the consequence of rapidly improving standards. Given that standards in English on entry to the college are well below average, achievement by individual students is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. In 2001, comparison with national value-added analyses of Key Stage 3 test results show that higher attaining students match rates of progress seen in similar schools. There is some under-achievement in middle attaining bands, however, which becomes still more marked amongst lower attaining students. Achievement is also satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. National statistics show that many students make better progress than others who start their GCSE course at broadly the same level of attainment. This is particularly the case for higher attaining students, where the proportion gaining A and B grades is higher than that seen in comparable schools, but once more, there is significant underachievement in lower attaining bands, particularly amongst boys. However, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the college. They benefit from lessons given in smaller teaching groups and receive a good deal of effective, individual help from support teachers and learning assistants during lessons. Many achieve relevant qualifications, some at GCSE and others in Entry Level certificates for English, which are appropriate in the light of their abilities.

105. Students' attitudes in English lessons are good. The great majority respond well to teachers and are interested and engaged by tasks set. This makes an important contribution to learning in the subject. Teachers, in turn, emphasise the need to respect others and to listen carefully to views expressed. As a result, listening skills are good throughout the college. Speaking skills are satisfactory. Students are generally willing to make contributions to class discussions, but are most confident when giving answers to direct questions. Throughout all years, they find it more difficult to express their own ideas or opinions clearly – particularly when challenged to defend a point of view. There are exceptions. In one Year 8 lesson for lower attaining students, interviews about the class reader, 'Buddy' by Nigel Hinton, were recorded on video. Students were clearly motivated by this, and the activity helped them to speak clearly and develop their views more fully. Discussions often lack fluency, especially in middle and lower attaining groups. In many lessons, opportunities to take part in small group discussions were limited. Few are able to use a broad range of vocabulary in speech. Even higher attaining students sometimes need to be prompted to use standard English in more formal contexts.
106. Standards of reading are below average in Years 9 and 11. Many students are not fluent readers, and find difficulty when meeting unfamiliar words. Only a minority read aloud clearly and with appropriate expression. Poor reading skills hold back the progress of lower attaining students, but, throughout the college, students are given the opportunity to study a range of good literature. Teachers are also developing effective techniques for modelling key skills in shared reading sessions, in line with best practice in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. In Years 7 to 9, the use of reading logs seeks to promote sound habits of wider personal reading. Students have access to a wider range of literature in the college and class libraries. They are not always issued with their own copy of class readers, however, which can limit independent work. In Years 10 and 11, reading skills are developed through the study of novels, plays and poetry in preparation for the GCSE. The ability to evaluate what they read, in terms of style, structure and genre, remains well below average for most students, but higher and some middle attaining groups make good progress in developing analytical, close-reading skills. In one Year 11 lesson seen, students commented with discernment on imagery in the poem 'Jaguar' by Ted Hughes. They responded sensitively to nuances of meaning in the use of language and showed insight in discussing the overall impact of the poem.
107. Unsatisfactory standards in writing are the main factor in below average levels of attainment in the subject. Students generally take care to present their work neatly and carefully, showing some pride in their efforts, but in terms of content, written work is too often brief and lacks sufficient development. There are too many errors in grammar and punctuation. Spelling is a weakness across the age and ability range. In Years 7 to 9, opportunities for more extended writing and fuller development of ideas are limited for all students, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The pace of written work in middle and lower attaining groups is often slow. In Years 10 and 11, personal and imaginative writing is generally coherent and more fully developed. Students are also encouraged to redraft their work to good effect. Good practice in this respect was seen in one Year 11 lesson, on work experience diaries. Students had specific targets for improving their writing, based on detailed teacher feedback from first drafts. Lesson activities focused on key areas, including spelling of relevant subject vocabulary and incorporating telling description. In comparison, literature essays suffer from insufficient interpretation and personal response. The use of writing frames in class helps many students to structure their work appropriately, but they can sometimes be too restrictive for higher attaining students.
108. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to developing ICT skills. Access to computers is limited, but good work was seen in one Year 7 lesson, when students used relevant skills to present their work well and to check it for accuracy, using a word-processing program that reinforced understanding of spelling and dictionary work.
109. The subject makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. Social issues and moral values are explored in responses to literature studied; for example, in considering attitudes to marriage and social class in Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' in Year 10 and family relationships in 'Buddy' in Year 9. Literature from other cultures is an integral part of the GCSE course and features strongly in Years 7 to 9 in novels and poetry studied. These include 'Refugee

Boy' by Benjamin Zephaniah in Year 9, about events in the life of an Ethiopian refugee, and a study of racial tension in the southern states of America in 'Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry' by Mildred Taylor, in Year 8. Students also develop a good awareness of the English literary heritage, through study of Shakespeare, Dickens, Wordsworth, Tennyson and a range of other major authors, poets and dramatists.

110. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teachers manage students well in most classes, and constructive relationships are forged. Lessons are well-planned and clear aims and objectives are shared with students. Students' progress is monitored closely, based on a range of diagnostic tests in Years 7 to 9 and thorough assessment of work produced throughout the college. Resulting information is used in planning work relevantly and setting specific targets for improvement for individual students. Teachers are also prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Hard work in this respect, in a range of study support and booster classes, has played an important part in the higher levels of attainment seen this year in both national tests in Year 9 and at GCSE. The timing and pace of lessons were not always well judged, however. In a number of cases, too many activities were planned or sometimes allowed to over-run. The end of the lesson was rushed as a consequence and there was insufficient time to reflect on key points and evaluate learning in final plenaries. There was also a relative weakness in teachers' expectations for the quality and depth of written work. More could be expected, including from middle and lower attaining students. In several classes in Years 7 to 9, illustration and artwork featured at the expense of the development of writing skills.
111. Overall, students' learning is satisfactory. Most students are conscientious and try hard to improve their work. Throughout the college, students are encouraged to evaluate their own efforts and set targets for improvement. As a consequence, knowledge of their own learning is good for many, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where they have a clear idea of GCSE assessment requirements. However, there could be more emphasis on individual and group activities in some lessons to encourage more independent learning and personal response, particularly for higher attaining students. Weaknesses in basic literacy skills restrict learning for many middle and lower attaining students.
112. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory in other subjects, although there are some inconsistencies. Most subjects display and reinforce the use and understanding of key specialist vocabulary. Teachers model good reading skills in a number of subjects, and students are given regular opportunities to write for different purposes. Note making and report writing are required in most subjects. Students are encouraged to answer questions at length in many subjects, but some opportunities for discussion, in pairs and small groups are missed.
113. Leadership and management of English in the college are good. A clear emphasis on improving standards of teaching and learning is reflected in a detailed and challenging action plan for the faculty. Thorough and well-planned schemes of work exist. There is a well-established programme of lesson observations and regular monitoring of work set. Staff work together well as a team to share and develop best practice. New members of staff are well supported. The faculty is committed to staff development, and is willing to research and consider new approaches to long-standing problems. Current initiatives include trials of single-sex teaching groups in Year 10, which may impact on low achievement by boys, and team teaching in some lessons. Opportunities are taken to enrich the curriculum through visiting drama groups, study days and theatre trips. Summer schools for literacy and able and talented students are also organised.
114. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards of attainment dipped in the year following the reorganisation, but they have now returned to former levels, with a further marked improvement in 2002. Teaching is good, and all staff show a strong commitment to doing the best for their students. The faculty is well placed to make further improvements in standards of teaching and learning in the future.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- Students show interest and have an enthusiasm for the subject.
- The use of new technology as a teaching aid is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of students.
- The quality and use of marking, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' own learning skills and opportunities to become more involved in their own learning.
- Homework tasks need to include more challenge for the more able.

115. In 2001, the proportion of students at the end of Year 9 achieving Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above was well below the national average. When compared to similar schools, the proportion of students achieving Level 5 or above was also well below average. The proportion of students achieving Level 6 or above was below the average for similar schools. Girls performed less well than boys, but overall students do better in mathematics than in English. Results have been improving although results in 2002 fell away slightly from a high in 2001. Given their attainment on entry in Year 7, most students make satisfactory progress.

116. In 2001, the proportion of students at the end of Year 11 achieving GCSE grades A* to C and grades A* to G in mathematics was significantly below the national average. Boys performed better than girls although no significant difference in the quality of girls' and boys' work was observed during the inspection. Results overall in mathematics are not as good as in English or science, but have been improving. Results in 2002 continued this rising trend. However, in 2001, a significant number of students underachieved when their results are compared to their performance in the tests they took at the end of Year 9.

117. The standard of work seen in Year 9 was below average, but better than recent test results would indicate. This is because of a continuing improvement in standards, and the fact that some students do not always perform to their potential in tests. In the classroom students apply their limited basic skills well, but weak learning skills mitigate against more successful performance at test level. Higher attaining students have satisfactory numerical skills and in Year 7, for example, are able to calculate the area and perimeter of shapes and to discover the relationship between area, shape and a fixed perimeter. Lower attaining students in Year 7 can combine strings of numbers when calculating perimeter, complete number pyramids and are developing confidence in their 'tables' through snappy practise sessions. Students in Year 8 were able to use and apply data collected, but experienced difficulty in forming a hypothesis. In Year 9, higher attaining students determined Pythagoras's theorem confidently. Lower attaining Year 9 students made good use of the protractor measuring angles in a triangle, and understood the relationship between exterior and interior angles. However, many students lacked confidence in their mental computation. Students' achievements are satisfactory given their prior attainment. Those students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Their learning is better when they are supported by a learning support assistant.

118. The standard of work seen in Year 11 was also below average overall, although some higher attaining students reach above average standards. In Year 10, higher attaining students can apply the rules of algebra to expanding brackets and form quadratic expressions, checking results using the graphical calculator. In Year 11, students understood fully the properties of three-dimensional figures applying appropriate trigonometrical functions including the 'sine' and 'cosine' rules to their solution. Students listen well and contribute to the brisk pace of lessons when answering questions. Both year groups demonstrated good analytical, computational and learning skills although estimating skills and establishing hypotheses are not strongly reinforced. Lower attaining Year 10 students were reintroduced to angles and bearings, but experienced difficulty in calculating and measuring. Work on ratio that was well prepared for lower attaining students in Year 11 was

undermined by their lack of understanding of multiples and factors. Students' written work is generally neat and accurate with a concern for layout and appearance using a variety of means to convey information. Poor work is often challenged. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory for all students, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

119. Across the college, work in most subjects makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of numeracy skills and teachers encourage students to apply them wherever they can make a relevant contribution to learning. In science, for example, Year 8 students read scales and apply the rules of algebra to formula for the density of solids and liquids. Older students make good use of algebra to calculate acceleration when constructing speed-time graphs. In mathematics, lower attaining students whose basic numeracy skills are particularly weak receive additional support. Provision is carefully and sensitively implemented by the numeracy co-ordinator, coupled with specialist learning support. There are many examples of numeracy skills being reinforced from other subjects, including physical education, design and technology and art and design.
120. Teaching is good overall throughout Years 7 to 11; a significant improvement on the quality reported at the time of the last inspection. Teachers create a sense of shared purpose in most lessons by explaining at the start what is to be learned. Relationships among students, and between teachers and students, are very good and this promotes a strong sense of shared endeavour. There is a strong work ethic and teachers ensure that students persevere and complete their work, even if they find it difficult. Teachers have high expectations of their students. Excellent use is made of ICT by teachers and students to support learning. Work is well planned to cater for the wide range of attainment that exists in some classes. In the most effective teaching, the teachers use challenging questions to promote deeper thinking, while taking good account of the lower attaining students' capacity to concentrate. Good use of time and 'bite-size' activities effectively promote learning and good behaviour. For example, in a well-planned lesson for lower attaining Year 7 students combining numbers, good use was made of a variety of short activities that helped the students to sustain concentration, make progress and enjoy the work. Effective use is made of learning support assistants who work with individuals. Homework is set regularly and often used well to reinforce learning. However, sometimes homework set for the highest attaining students lacks challenge.
121. On the other hand, some aspects of teaching could be improved. Students experience few opportunities for sharing and demonstrating their knowledge and, as a result, lack confidence. Planning for the 'three part lesson' referred to in the National Numeracy Strategy is good, however, attention to the plenary session in lessons is sometimes cursory. Students are aware of their level of attainment, but marking in exercise books shows no ongoing assessment grades that indicate how well each student is performing or what to do to improve. Progress in the lower sets is sometimes slow. This is because of an over reliance on prepared worksheets or very little in the way of a 'mental starter' at the beginning.
122. The quality of learning is satisfactory, but not as good as the teaching. This is because the students' learning skills and confidence are not strong. A lack of basic skills inhibits rapid progress and retention and recall of basic skills is often poor. The focus on conceptual understanding in lessons sometimes results in a lack of consolidation of basic skills. Most students work individually, but lack the organisational skills to manage their learning independently. Overall the students' attitude to learning and behaviour is good.
123. Leadership and management of the faculty are good. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed, and improvement since then has been satisfactory overall. Subject specialists work well together and are committed to raising standards and sharing good practice. The subject leader is well informed and provides clear educational direction. The scheme of work and development plan are thorough and detailed. The faculty has realistic targets for raising standards, particularly the higher test levels and GCSE grades, together with a manageable plan for achieving them. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. The faculty has introduced GCSE statistics for Year 10 students who wish to take the examination. The suited accommodation is

excellent and provides a good, stimulating learning environment. Resources are well used although there are too few mathematical books in the library that might support the students' learning.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the subject is good.
- Very good teamwork is evident between teaching and non-teaching staff.
- The monitoring of teaching is improving teaching skills.
- There is an increasing use of computers to improve students' learning.
- Levels of attainment in national tests show an upwards trend.
- The standard of accommodation is very high.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of students.
- There is a lack of consistency and depth in the marking and monitoring of students' work.
- Homework tasks do not include sufficient challenge for higher attaining students.
- The quality of written materials to support learning is often unsatisfactory.
- Students' record cards provide them with regular reminders about their standard of work, but there is inconsistency in their use.

124. Students' standards in science on entry to the college are generally well below the national average. In national tests in 2001 at the end of Year 9, standards remained well below the national average, and below those of students in similar schools. Boys performed better than girls. In 2002 results were in line with those in mathematics, and slightly better than those in English. The results of higher attaining students indicate that they had made more improvement than lower attaining students during their time in the college. Overall, achievement during Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. These results show a significant improvement on the standards in Year 2000. This higher standard was maintained in 2002, with boys again gaining better results than girls.
125. In the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 in 2001, results were well below the national average. Students' achievements since taking their national tests in Year 9 were satisfactory, and overall results showed a significant improvement on those in Year 2000. Boys' results were better than girls'. Students' results in science were similar to those they obtained in their other subjects. In 2002, overall results were similar to those in 2001. However, girls' results improved considerably and were better than boys', even though these boys had obtained better results in national tests at the end of Year 9.
126. In work seen during the inspection, standards in both Years 9 and 11 were below the national average, but better than those achieved recently in national tests. The reasons for this improvement include the supportive supervision of classwork by teaching and non-teaching staff. Factors that reduce the standard of results in national tests include the difficulty experienced by a high proportion of students in expressing their scientific understanding clearly in writing, and the lack of continuity for a high number of students caused by irregular attendance. In Year 7, students respond positively to the increased challenge in the work. They particularly enjoy practical work. They learn that scientific principles and rules can be established from their results. Standards of written work remain variable, but many students learn how to record results methodically, and the value of labelled diagrams. They are also taught how to draw graphs; higher attaining students use both bar charts and line graphs, and are taught how to analyse these. By Year 9, students show more independence, and are encouraged to use the index in textbooks, and computers via the Internet, to learn through research. Overall, students' achievements in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, the challenge of the work increases significantly. In Year 10, for instance, they use computers to learn details about the process of breathing, the action of alveoli, and the circulation of the blood through the heart and lungs. By Year 11, students are able to discuss and show some understanding of Newton's laws of motion, and even lower attaining students are taught the principles of genetic engineering. Overall achievements in Years 10 and 11 are good. There is

good provision for students with special educational needs and they make satisfactory progress. A lower attaining group in Year 10, for instance, were fascinated to watch the dissection of a pig's heart, and completed their written work carefully. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds make particularly good progress in all year groups.

127. Students' attitude to their work in science lessons is good overall, but shows wide variation, even within classes. This is particularly the case in Years 7 and 8, where a significant minority of students show a lack of concentration, and a lack of pride in their work. Skilled teaching normally ensures that these students do not interrupt the work of more conscientious students. However, the attitude of this minority inevitably restricts their learning, and their test and examination grades do not always do justice to their basic understanding of the work. There is often a lack of clarity and finish in the written work that these students produce. In a number of classes, the quality of presentation of written work produced by girls is better than that of boys. The regular assessment procedures introduced by the college, and the rewards for those students making good progress, provide incentives for hard work, and are beginning to make an impact.
128. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11; it is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject, which enables them to add interesting background information to their lessons; for example, in lessons in Year 8 about the solar system. There is very good liaison between teachers and technicians; this helps teachers to begin lessons promptly. Teachers' planning is very thorough, particularly in ensuring that there is good progression in the content of the work, as in a Year 9 lesson on the eye. Less emphasis is given to devising the most appropriate activities for students. In a minority of lessons, therefore, the lesson is too dominated by the teacher with insufficient opportunity for students to learn by using their initiative. For instance, in a Year 11 lesson on sound, students watched a number of demonstrations, without the opportunity to reinforce their learning through practical work. Teachers are adept at using question and answer sessions in order to involve students in the progress of the lesson, and to ascertain their level of understanding. These sessions are often dominated by boys, with only limited attempts to involve girls by directing questions to them. The result is that in a significant minority of lessons, girls are not fully involved in the work, and their standards suffer. In the best lessons, opportunity is provided for students to ask questions; this increases their thinking about the lesson topic.
129. Relationships between teachers and students are normally relaxed, with few signs of confrontation. In the best lessons, the use of praise for positive contributions by students, or for good work or answers, provides encouragement, and maintains a good working atmosphere. There is regular use of homework; this is most effective when it provides challenge for even the highest attaining students in the group. However, the routine marking and monitoring of students' written work, including homework, is unsatisfactory. Students do not, therefore, receive regular guidance about how to improve the quality of their answers. There is also inconsistency in the use of the very good record sheets attached to students' exercise books. Teachers are generally aware of those students in their classes who require additional support, however, and also those who need to be provided with more difficult work. The practice of providing work at different levels within each lesson, to cater for the needs of all students, is increasing.
130. The science department makes a good contribution to the development of students' skills in literacy, numeracy and computing. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the meaning and use of keywords, with consolidation of these in the lesson plenary. In one Year 8 lesson on the solar system, each group of students reinforced their learning by preparing a presentation on one of the planets to give to the class. This exercise improved their practical skills, teamwork, organisation and speaking. Students also make frequent use of numeracy and measuring skills in science lessons, resulting in the use of graphs and formulae. Students in a lower attaining Year 8 class were unable to recall how to calculate the density of a substance, but with good prompts from their teacher, they completed the lesson by using measuring cylinders and balances to measure the density of water, and then used the density values of solids to predict which of them would float.
131. The science faculty has made good progress with the integration of computers into the curriculum in order to improve students' opportunities for learning. The use of both software and the Internet is

very effective, and often imaginative. In a Year 10 lesson on the impact of smoking on the lungs and heart, for instance, the teacher provided addresses of websites with appropriate information for the class. This enabled students to use the laptops effectively to research information for the preparation of a leaflet about the dangers of smoking. Although not enough laptops were available, students were very skilled in their use of the computers, and they became very involved in the work because the sites contained information at the correct level, and they were able to use their initiative to enhance their learning.

132. Leadership and management of the science faculty are good, with many very good features. One of the strengths of the faculty is the supportive teamwork between staff, and the shared commitment to improve standards. There is a detailed improvement plan that sets out the priorities to be addressed in order for this improvement to occur. There is regular monitoring of teaching, and department meetings include discussions about effective teaching methods. This emphasis on teaching skills is helping to raise standards. There is insufficient monitoring, however, of marking, students' presentation of work, and the use made of record sheets. The scheme of work and accompanying worksheets are under review to ensure that all learning materials are of a high standard; this is particularly important for those students having reading difficulties.
133. After the last inspection, student performance in tests in both Years 9 and 11 fell, but both are now improving again, with even higher targets for the next two years. This is mainly due to the ongoing improvement in teaching, and the resulting response from students. Furthermore, the impact of Technology College status has improved resources, and there has been significant improvement in the use of computers. Additional integration of the use of technology is planned in order to improve still further students' learning opportunities. The faculty has moved to a new purpose-built science block of a very high standard, and this contributes to the very good capacity for further improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good leadership and management of the subject are leading to improving standards.
- The teachers' knowledge and understanding ensures that students are increasingly well taught.

Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements relating to information and communication technology are not fully met.
- Students' basic skills of drawing from observation are unsatisfactory.
- The use of sketchbooks for investigation, experimentation and personal response is underdeveloped.

134. Teacher assessments of Year 9 students in 2001 were well below average. Girls attain higher standards and the gap between boys and girls was wider than average. Assessments in 2002 show that standards remain well below average and the gap between boys' and girls' performance has widened. GCSE results for Year 11 students in 2001 were well below average and less good than at the last inspection. Results in 2002 show good improvement and are closer to the national average. Less than one half of the national average numbers of students follow the GCSE course, although the college does provide a class after hours for those unable to study in normal time.
135. The work seen indicates that while standards are below average, there is clear improvement. Standards in Year 9 are well below average although the best work is close to expectations and reflects improving teaching. Innovative paintings and collages feature jungle scenes and exotic plants influenced by Henri Rousseau. There are improving pastel drawings of fruit and everyday objects. Multicultural influences include African masks and sculpture. Students can make connections with their own work and that of famous cubist, futurist and pop artists. There is original collage work based on the Mona Lisa's face translated into a cubist style. Students work from photocopies of paintings by artists such as Andy Warhol then develop the tonal areas into coloured compositions. However, most students lack any real understanding of personal research, have difficulty drawing from observation, and are unable to vary the quality of line to show space or

texture. Too many say, 'I can't draw'. Year 7 students have good knowledge of colour theory and work hard to improve their colour mixing and painting skills. The extra care taken by girls leads to better work and more rapid progress. Students use sketchbooks for homework rather than to experiment or record the world around them. Most lack confidence when talking about art and have difficulty explaining why they like or dislike a piece of work. None of the students make use of computers to create artwork. This, allied to weak basic skills and varied, often limited previous experiences of art, means that their achievements by the end of Year 9 are only just satisfactory. Standards in Year 11, while improving, are below average. Students' continued inability to draw or keep a sketchbook are preventing them from knowing how well they are doing or how to improve. Most rely heavily on their teacher for guidance, limiting continuity in their work, which tends to be self-contained projects. An exhibition of the best GCSE work clearly demonstrates rising standards, increasingly original compositions, grander scale and more varied techniques. There is a strong emphasis on finished work with little development work displayed. This work is above average and signals an increasingly positive response. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. Those who are least capable make satisfactory progress due to their teachers' awareness of their special educational needs and their modifying activities as appropriate. Those who are most capable make satisfactory progress and benefit from exhibiting their work in a local superstore, Leicester's City Gallery, and in the University of Leicester.

136. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. While teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, disappointing attitudes and poor attendance, especially amongst the least capable students, limit learning to satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their caring manner encourages co-operation. Their planning of lessons and practical activities is very good, as is the homework that extends learning and improves students' literacy. Teachers are increasing the demands they make on their students, particularly in GCSE classes, raising expectations in students and teachers alike. Year 7 students made rapid progress as a result of a good explanation of colour theory and careful demonstration of colour mixing and painting. The students worked with pace and were keen to please their teacher. In a very good lesson Year 10 students' responded eagerly to the new challenge of printmaking, making rapid gains in knowledge and technique. The quality of the prints was lessened due to the disappointing quality of their original drawings, some of which were copied from photographs. Teachers make good use of famous artists' work to illustrate methods and the way they portray emotions. A display of work based on Picasso's interpretation of African masks illustrates good learning of technical skills and an appreciation of other cultures. However, the multicultural makeup of the student body is not yet reflected in the subject area's work. The great majority of students behave well in lessons and enjoy good relationships with each other and their teacher. Most lessons are characterised by a good, creative atmosphere. In the best lessons students reflect on their work and appreciate their classmates' efforts. There are occasions when the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of students, mainly boys, spoil lessons and interfere with the learning of others. Not all teachers have strategies to combat this behaviour.
137. The curriculum in art is satisfactory and has been improved by the introduction of three-dimensional work and printmaking. Students in Years 7 to 9 receive an above average allowance of timetabled time. There are insufficient opportunities for students to work with computers and specialist software, although plans are in place to resolve this situation. There are art clubs for the whole range of students. The assessment of students' work is good and data gathered is used to remedy weaknesses in the curriculum, but not yet used to identify gaps in students' learning. The leadership and management of art and design are good. The subject leader has been in college for less than a year and already he has raised standards, broadened the curriculum and increased the status of the subject. He provides very strong leadership and has an ambitious vision for the future. New, comprehensive schemes of work are in place and documentation relating to strategic planning and the subject's development reflect the college's development plan. However, the subject has yet to adopt the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning apparent elsewhere in the college. Displays of artwork in the public areas of the college do not fully reflect the quality of work in the department.
138. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning have improved, and although standards fell, they are now rising again. There is improved opportunity for

higher attainers. The time allowed for art in Years 7 to 9 has improved. Statutory requirements relating to information and communication technology are not yet met. Teachers' expectations are higher and students' increasingly accept challenge. Their knowledge of art and artists is improving and they can relate their work to that of famous artists. Opportunities to work with craft materials have increased. Those who have special educational needs now make similar satisfactory progress to their classmates. The subject is in very good hands.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- A comprehensive audit of citizenship across the college, which includes students' extra-curricular involvement, has enabled a good policy to be developed.
- Senior managers have successfully led the introduction of citizenship through departmental guidance.
- The very wide range of activities outside lessons helps students to become responsible citizens; they demonstrate well that they are prepared to take on responsibility within college and the community.
- The citizenship curriculum includes a variety of stimulating events and activities that involve a range of community partners.

Areas for improvement

- A minority of subjects do not yet fully contribute to the college's citizenship programme.
- There is a need for increased opportunities for writing about citizenship to compliment the discussions

139. Standards are above average in Year 9. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of society. This is well demonstrated through the humanities and the PSHE programme. For example, in a Year 7 PSHE lesson students learn the reason for rules within college and society. In a Year 9 drama lesson, students investigate through role play the consequences of telling lies or telling the truth. In physical education students are given responsibilities; for example, working in groups and carrying of equipment in lessons and in their extra-curricular work. They learn to work as a unit for the benefit of the group. Students have a basic understanding of voluntary and forced migration and how this has affected different countries; for example, the influx of people from parts of Europe into the United Kingdom. Higher attaining students show a good understanding of these issues and talk articulately about them. In a Year 9 science lesson students successfully discuss conservation issues; they also compare the range of food in the United Kingdom and less well developed countries. Year 9 students have a reasonable understanding of the work of their year council and school council. The school council has recently taken action relating to litter and the college décor. Work undertaken and student involvement has given opportunities for students to think, discuss and take action on issues. Students understand about the ethnic composition of Leicester and its cultures through visits and meetings with local people.

140. By the end of Year 11, students' knowledge and understanding are above average. Students have a good understanding of a democratic society. They understand the different factors of conflict; they draw spider diagrams to show good examples of disputes, competition, rivalry, conflict of interests and violence. High attaining students understand the need for compromise and co-operation; however, low attaining students have difficulty with these two concepts. In a Year 10 geography lesson students develop the idea of the factors relating to the migration of people.
141. In a Year 11 religious education lesson the ideas of being powerful and powerless and the associated ethical issues was very successfully explored by the teacher and a youth leader visitor to the class. Students were well challenged to think and feel especially about injustice. A small number of students take advantage of the frequent opportunities to apply skills of enquiry and communication when justifying and expressing their opinions. Some students of all ages participate actively in the school council and others in community activities; for example, Young Enterprise or the Young Engineers. Visitors to the college such as the police and theatre groups also contribute strongly to citizenship. For instance, a theatre group brought out many racial issues significantly raising racial awareness. Within college responsibilities are given as prefects, drama lighting and sound, and mentoring younger students.
142. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good across the college; students' achieve well. Teachers mostly have high expectations and work from clear citizenship objectives, which are shared with students. For example, in a PSHE lesson students researched a range of newspapers. The teacher successfully challenged the students about gender, bias and racism and, as a consequence, students had a greater understanding of these concepts. In these lessons, students are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. Controversial issues are mostly dealt with sensitively, contributing significantly to students' moral and social development. Teachers work hard to ensure that balanced points of view are given, and that there is enough opportunity to reflect and respond. The majority of teachers show a good understanding of how citizenship enhances understanding. A Year 11 humanities lesson observed on 'power' and a Year 9 lesson on 'trading', both brought out ethical issues. Students are often challenged to think and form their own opinions. All students, including students with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups are very successfully integrated into the lesson.
143. Senior managers have led the introduction of citizenship well. Planning included a thorough audit of citizenship and, as a result, a policy was drawn up with clear objectives. Most subjects have already started to contribute to the citizenship curriculum. The college has made significant inroads into the implementation of the subject in the curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The standard of teaching in resistant materials and systems and control.
- Leadership provides clear vision and direction.
- The quality of individual lesson planning.
- The planned provision for students of all abilities within the schemes of work.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that the good practices recently developed are consistently applied across the whole department.
- Developing computer-aided design and making greater use of computers to support learning.
- Greater challenge for higher attaining students.
- Developing more effective design, analysis and evaluative skills.

144. In 2001 teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as well below the national average and this was confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. Students join the college

with limited experiences of design and technology and with very low levels of literacy, which inhibits their progress. Overall students' achievement is satisfactory during Years 7 to 9. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was well below the national average. Girls performed better than boys overall. Students' results in design and technology are in line with those obtained in most other subjects.

145. In the work seen during the inspection, the students' attainment in Year 11 is well below average; students' achievements, however, are satisfactory given their prior attainment. As in Year 9, practical skills are well developed. Students' show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and are beginning to use product analysis as an effective research technique. The quality of making, particularly in resistant materials is often good. The higher order design skills of analysis and evaluation are often subjective and lack the rigour needed to achieve high levels of attainment. Design specifications and their subsequent evaluation are not being used consistently as the basis for assessment. This often, therefore, results in a superficial quality of design. Both lower attaining and higher attaining students follow this pattern, but the impact upon attainment is greater for higher attaining students as it precludes them from achieving the highest GCSE grades. The quality of student's presentation of work varies considerably and students are not always given sufficient guidance or support on how to improve the standard of their work.
146. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are always well planned, and the pace of lessons is usually brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs progress at a rate, which matches those of other students. However, work is not always matched to the needs of the students and higher attaining students in particular are not consistently extended or fully challenged. The department has planned some extension activities in Year 9 for students identified as being able and talented, and has developed schemes of work with clear learning expectations. This represents good practice and should be established across all years. The introduction of computer-aided design, for example, in the Year 9 clock project, is a positive development, but as yet ICT has not impacted upon standards.
147. The college meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is broad and balanced and whilst opportunities for the use of ICT are limited, designing and making using computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are now evident, largely as a result of recent investment. A good example of this is the Year 8 packaging project where students are given the opportunity to use a computer-aided cutter to produce a packaging net. In general, at this level, design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in all material areas.
148. The carousel system used to teach the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not fully ensure sufficient planned progression to take into account prior learning between the units; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some of the material areas. The good practice established in the development of the new schemes of work should be embedded across the whole department. Homework is effective in Years 7 to 9 and is set consistently across the department and is used to reinforce learning. The department has an established assessment policy. However, all teachers are not consistently applying it. In particular, assessment is not being used effectively to provide constructive feedback or set targets for future improvement.
149. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory overall. There is some very good teaching; for example, in resistant materials technology and textiles technology, where students are actively engaged in activities, the pace of lessons is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. The standard of marking is satisfactory although evidence from the scrutiny of student's work shows that not all teachers apply faculty policy consistently. Where assessment is effective, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with students on a regular basis. Where it is least effective, it does not set targets or provide feedback on how to improve. There is an inconsistent approach to the monitoring of student performance, particularly in GCSE coursework. Where it is used effectively, clear targets for improvement are set and guidance given to support students in raising attainment.

150. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. They are generally interested in their lessons and work co-operatively. This is particularly evident in the new GCSE manufacturing course in Year 10 where all students are required to work in teams. However, in a significant minority of lessons learning is affected because some students' approach to the lesson and their behaviour is unsatisfactory.
151. The department makes a good contribution to the development of students' literacy skills by concentration on the use of technical vocabulary. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms.
152. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear direction and the new head of department is building upon an established platform, understands the current limitations in provision and has identified an extensive development plan for future improvement. The team meets regularly and teachers work together to achieve common goals. An extensive support programme for new teachers is in place and the monitoring of teaching and learning is well established. The department is beginning to use self-evaluation as a tool for improvement. The department has benefited greatly from the introduction of specialist technology status and there is much good practice that needs to be embedded throughout the department.
153. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. However, since the dip in performance in Year 2000 there has been rapid improvement. Across the whole department clear signs of sustained improvement are evident. Attainment in both Years 9 and 11 reflects this continuous improvement. The department has been very active in developing strategies to improve all aspects of teaching and learning and is now well placed to deliver sustained improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and high expectations of their students; they show enthusiasm and a commitment to improvement.
- Good relationships between students, teachers and learning support assistants promote a culture of supportive learning.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment is well below average.
- The learning skills of students and the opportunities for students to take a more active part in their own learning.
- Non-specialist teaching affects standards of attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9.

154. Geography is taught in Years 7 to 11 as part of a humanities programme; geography, history and religious education rotate in blocks. However, in Year 2000 geography was offered as a GCSE subject in its own right. The organisation of geography within a humanities faculty is inhibiting overall standards. Firstly there is a lack of continuity in learning as students study other subjects within humanities, and secondly, the use of non-specialist teachers within the faculty to teach the subject means that specialist geography skills and understanding are not sufficiently reinforced. A limited range of geography lessons was available for observation; in years where no lessons were observed books were well scrutinised. The subject has been badly affected by the impact of staffing changes, a series of temporary staff and poor student attendance. The present head of humanities has only recently been appointed to the post; she has identified areas for improvement, but has had limited time to put them into action.

155. Standards in humanities at the end of Year 11 are well below national averages. GCSE humanities results in 2001 confirm this, with only one fifth of candidates reaching the higher grades, A* to C, and with a similar proportion failing to achieve even grade G. Provisional results for 2002 indicate a slight improvement; more girls achieved the higher grades, but boys performed less well than in 2001. Students make satisfactory progress, given their attainment levels on entry to the college. Learning is satisfactory. Good teaching is steadily overcoming the unsatisfactory attitudes to the subject shown by some students, although the impact of the teaching is affected by the amount of absence and lack of commitment by too many students in Years 10 and 11.
156. The college received their first ever GCSE geography results in 2002. A comparison of these results shows standards to be well below the 2001 national average with girls outperforming boys. Students' results in geography in 2002 were at least as good as those they achieved in most other subjects in the college. However, because it was a small cohort of both boys and girls that took the examination statistically any comparisons are invalid.
157. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain in Year 9 are well below average. However, students' achievements in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7 are satisfactory. Students in Year 7 start from a very low base with very limited geographical skills in map work, in the presentation of their work and in ways of recording. Basic geographical skills are introduced and Year 7 students, for example, show a reasonable knowledge of linear, nuclear and dispersed settlements. Students often have a better knowledge and understanding than is demonstrated in their written work, and poor literacy skills are inhibiting learning. Year 9 students for example, were able to explain verbally the push and pull factors of people migration, but their supporting written work was not always clear. Year 9 students understand the differences between the lesser and more economically developed countries of the world. They have a reasonable understanding of global trade and issues related to unfair trading. Many have an understanding of the Italian culture, climate and physical geography; a minority are able to compare northern and southern Italy. Students' books show a basic knowledge of volcanoes; they use technical words like 'lava' and 'crater' to label diagrams; higher attaining students start to understand some of the human consequences associated with volcanoes and earthquakes. All students including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress.
158. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 11 are well below average. However, all students achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Year 9. The deployment of specialist teachers is beginning to have a positive impact on geographical standards, although poor literacy skills continue to inhibit learning. Work in the students' books, for instance, revealed only limited levels of extended writing and writing for different audiences. Presentation was often merely in the form of bullet points or spider diagrams. The majority of Year 11 students, following a humanities course, understand the factors affecting population growth in an area like Leicester, but many students find it difficult to apply this concept more widely. Most students show a sound understanding of alternative energy and their advantages and disadvantages; they show good understanding related to the moral issues related to energy. Students studying GCSE geography show a good knowledge of the Amazon rainforest, and higher attaining students show a good understanding of the consequences of deforestation, possible solutions and some of the associated moral issues. Year 10 students show an understanding of population change and the impact of birth rates, death rates and infant mortality on different countries. However, students have difficulty in linking the physical, human and economic aspects of topics studied to form a comprehensive analysis. At present students have few opportunities to use computers to support their learning.
159. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, but the rate of learning remains only satisfactory. This is a consequence of a number of factors, including: the poor attendance of some students, which clearly affects the continuity of their learning; the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of a minority of students also impacts on learning and finally, poor levels of literacy mean that students often struggle to articulate their knowledge in writing. At its most effective, the teaching is characterised by high expectations and good relationships. As a consequence, students respond with maturity and a sensible approach to

learning. Students also respond well to probing and challenging questions. In a Year 9 lesson on 'world trade', the teacher's effective use of questions challenged the students to think more deeply and to clarify their own thinking. The learning in this lesson was also good, because the lesson was planned to involve the students actively through a game. Students were being stretched to think and do their best throughout. Marking of books is regular, with good attention given to ensuring geographical accuracy, spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, there is some inconsistency in the marking. Homework is set regularly to consolidate learning. Challenging behaviour is handled effectively and without confrontation. This was evident in a Year 10 humanities lesson observed. However, learning during the lesson was unsatisfactory because of the time wasted and the slow response of some students to tackle the work set. Ongoing assessment during the lesson of what students know and understand is less well developed.

160. Since September 2002, there has been a new head of humanities. She is providing sound leadership and shows a clear educational direction for the subject. Areas for improvement have already been identified. Lack of access to computers constrains the investigative elements of geography and presentation of work. Progress made since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, although much remains to be done. The quality of teaching has improved and the humanities team are working closely together and are committed to raising standards and improving provision.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers are caring and committed to subject improvement.
- Curriculum planning is good.
- Effective procedures are in place to monitor learning and progress.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially at GCSE, need to be improved.
- The quality of learning in Years 10 and 11, and in particular the opportunity to learn independently.
- More use to be made of ICT.
- Develop greater consistency for behaviour management.
- Widen the range of teaching strategies.

161. History is taught in Years 7 to 11 as part of a humanities programme; history, geography and religious education rotate in Years 7 to 9 in blocks and in Years 10 to 11 as part of an integrated humanities curriculum. In 1999 history was offered as a separate GCSE subject in its own right and the college had the first results in 2001. There are periods of time when no history is taught in Years 7 to 9; this can inhibit the continuity of students' learning. History is taught by specialist and non-specialist teachers, which can impact upon standards. Currently there is no senior history specialist within the faculty. A limited range of history lessons were available for observation, none in Year 7; in this case where no lessons were observed, books were well scrutinised.

162. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well below average in both Years 9 and 11, reflecting their performance in the teachers' own assessments and GCSE results in 2001. Students did relatively worse in history than in most other subjects. The results in 2002 showed a further decline in the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades. However, they are on track to improve in 2003. The current pattern of achievement is, given the entry level, satisfactory for all groups of students, including those who are able and talented, those with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language.

163. The history area within the humanities faculty has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Schemes of work have been reviewed, amended and strengthened to include assessment criteria and clearer learning objectives. Information and communication technology activities and research data have been included in all years and new textbooks and CD-ROMs have

been purchased. A separate GCSE history syllabus has been taught in Years 10 and 11 for three years.

164. In Years 7 to 9, students develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of appropriate historical evidence and data, the analysis of complex historical issues and the understanding of chronology. Students use a range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, videos and a range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is satisfactory and students effectively work on their own to develop their understanding of history. There is some evidence of good, paired work, but little use of effective group activities was observed. In Year 8 students can analyse the different attitudes to religion in sixteenth-century England and the students in the red-banded lower group are able to successfully sort the changes into their correct chronology. By Year 9 students are able to extract relevant information about the entrepreneurs, Richard Arkwright and Josiah Wedgwood, from a variety of eighteenth-century sources. Lesson observations and written work of Year 9 clearly demonstrated a good knowledge of the changes to people's lives and working practices resulting from the Industrial Revolution. The standard of written work in Years 7 to 9 ranged from broadly average to well below average, and its quality and quantity, including the use of diagrams and charts varied in line with the overall student capability.
165. In Year 10 students made good progress in the lesson observed and enthusiastically shared their knowledge of Hitler's plans to undermine the Treaty of Versailles. The students were able to read a passage and then make comprehensive notes without further reference to the evidence. The scrutiny of work over time indicates that note making is, however, at times inconsistent and incomplete and that the good practice observed is not necessarily fully embedded. Overall progress and achievement are satisfactory. The present GCSE history class is small and contains the full range of ability.
166. Teaching is satisfactory overall in all years and with some very good practice. The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is well planned. In the best lessons learning aims are shared with the students and reviewed at the end of the lesson, so that the teacher can judge how much progress has taken place. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and in many lessons every student has the opportunity to read aloud. The teachers use this experience as the basis for structured question and answer sessions. However, too much reliance is placed upon students volunteering to answer the questions, leading in some instances to an over reliance on a few, often boys, responding. Good examples of students listening carefully to each other were observed and co-operation amongst students in all years was satisfactory. However, the range of teaching strategies was relatively narrow, leading to an over reliance of students on the teachers. Good individual support was given by the teachers to support student learning, but some of the time was used to underpin confidence rather than in developing historical understanding. Student learning strategies need to be systematically developed by extending the opportunities for collaborative group work, by the development of ICT research opportunities and by the extended use of evidence analysis. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together and, as a result, students with special educational needs make similar progress to others in the history area. Good practice supporting EAL students was observed in several lessons.
167. The humanities classrooms are spacious, well decorated and support an effective learning environment with some displays of students' work. However, space is limited, as each classroom has to include geography, religious education as well as history material. Currently there are no dedicated history rooms. Resources are satisfactory with a wide range of books, videos and worksheets. Access to ICT specialist facilities is improving and teachers are beginning to develop the strategies outlined in the schemes of work. This is an area where a wider range of teaching strategies could develop student learning and understanding. Most of the teachers have undertaken ICT training. Library resources are relatively limited and do not provide a strong foundation for individual research, project and coursework. Fieldwork activities are evident in each year; for example, Bosworth Field is visited in Year 7 and very good use is made of Leicester's local industrial history. Effective links have been developed with the museum service.

168. The leadership and management of the history area are satisfactory. The current acting head of faculty, a geography specialist, has been in post since the beginning of this term and has had to support an unqualified teacher and a newly qualified teacher on supply. This has been done well. The GCSE schemes of work are being developed and good monitoring and assessment procedures are in place to support an improvement in the standards of students' learning. Regular faculty meetings take place and there is a strong commitment to improving learning, standards and opportunities for students. The faculty has since the last inspection introduced a new GCSE course, successfully included many new students from other schools, experienced a change of faculty leadership and managed a difficult staffing situation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching by specialist ICT staff is good.
- Extra-curricular provision at after school sessions enhances the learning and qualifications of high attaining students.
- The quantity and quality of the hardware is very good.
- All students have the opportunity to obtain a qualification at the end of Year 11.
- Technician support is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of detailed lesson planning by some teachers has a detrimental effect on learning.
- The lack of specialist teachers.

169. On entry the students' experience and attainment in ICT varies, but is well below average overall. Teacher assessments in 2001 indicate that 42 per cent reached Level 5 or higher and just nine per cent reached Level 6 or higher; well below average. In 2002, attainment improved and teacher assessments indicate that standards are now close to the average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, although slightly more girls than boys reach higher levels. At the end of Year 11 in 2001, the proportion of students achieving A* to C grades was significantly below the national average at 16 per cent. Only 76 per cent achieved an A* to G grade. Results in the GCSE short course and GNVQ course improved in 2002, with all students now being entered for ICT accreditation.

170. Attainment in work seen in Year 9 is below average. Most students, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily given their attainment on entry. Some work of the higher attaining students is of a high quality, but there is some underachievement amongst some lower attaining students. In Year 7, students use word-processing programs confidently, and CD-ROMs for research. In Year 8 students are able to create a web page, including both text and graphics. In Year 9, many students reached good standards in using databases and spreadsheets and were able to research confidently from the Internet. Most students in Years 7 to 9 are enthusiastic, well motivated and work with commitment. However, there is a small minority of students who find it difficult to concentrate on the task set.

171. In work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, attainment is below average, although most students achieve satisfactorily. Students produced good work in the design of business letters and brochures using a desktop publishing program; they were able to create and interrogate databases and use the Internet to research theory notes and other topics. While high attaining students achieve well, average attaining students sometimes show less commitment to learning and fail to complete their work. Where students are well supported, as in some low attaining classes, achievement is better.

172. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The knowledge and understanding of the subject and the quality of lesson planning by specialist teachers are strengths. Planning is thorough and allows students of all prior attainment to produce work of an appropriate standard. In the most effective lessons, explanations are clear, handouts are appropriate and students are challenged to produce

good quality work. Learning is reinforced by questions and discussions. Assessment is planned and carried out on a regular basis, although the students themselves are not always confident in how they might improve and proceed to the next level. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution ensuring good progress. In the most effective lessons, there is a brisk pace and tasks set are meaningful and relevant. This ensures that the students work with good levels of motivation and interest. However, where teachers are less secure in their subject knowledge, the planning does not always cater for the wide range of attainment in each class. In a Year 10 lesson observed, there was no clear lesson structure, and students were not given clear instructions. Exemplar material was not provided and the students were often unsure of how to proceed.

173. Very good support is given by the two full-time technicians, ensuring that teachers can spend time teaching and not dealing with technical problems. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow an accredited course appropriate to their ability, either a short course GCSE or a full GNVQ course. The good range of extra-curricular opportunities enables students to enhance their knowledge and the quality of the work that is produced. Assessment is in line with the college policy. However, students lack awareness of the requirements to achieve each National Curriculum Level, and what they should do to improve.
174. All teaching staff have received training on how to use computers in their own subjects, and schemes of work have been rewritten to accommodate the use of ICT. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but is variable. Some good examples of data-logging and the use of interactive software to learn about blood circulation and Newton's laws were observed in science. The mathematics faculty is making effective use of new technology to support teaching and learning; and in English and in a number of other subjects, students use word-processing programs extensively to present their work. However, the full potential for developing the use of computers has not been realised in a number of subjects including art, design and technology, history, RE, French and PE.
175. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory. There have been considerable improvements in the number of available computers and the software to support learning. At the time of the inspection, there was an acting head of ICT, who has shown commitment in his approach to managing the area. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject.
- The response to issues from the last inspection.
- The level of expectation from teachers.
- Planning for higher attaining students.

Areas for improvement

- Raising levels of attainment, especially for higher attaining students.
- The use of information and communication technology as an integral part of the subject.
- The use of assessment in marking, monitoring progress and setting targets.
- The increased involvement of students in speaking activities.

French

176. In the 2001 GCSE in French the percentage of both boys and girls with grades A* to C was well below the national average for all schools. At the level of grades A* to G results were just below the national average. At this level the subject performed well by comparison with other subjects with high entry levels. Results for 2002 have not been validated, but at A* to C they show a continuing upwards trend although the percentage is still well below the national average in previous years. There is a similar improvement at grades A* to G especially for boys, who are close to the national average for previous years. In both years students show satisfactory achievement over the two years leading up to GCSE. This is creditable because the college has raised the level of entry significantly and most students had a change of teacher during their GCSE course.
177. By the end of Year 9 the standards of work seen were below average. Good teaching helps students to reach levels that show at least satisfactory achievement from the time they entered the college. There are no marked differences between boys and girls. Students of minority ethnic groups are often in the higher attaining groups. The college's use of setting enables some students in higher sets to match national expectations. These students show a good understanding of basic grammar ideas. The best-written work has short conversations and students can write about past and future events. These students would benefit from being challenged to write in fuller and longer sentences. The use of worksheets and prompts helps both average and lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, to succeed in writing at appropriate levels. A recently introduced reading scheme encourages students to make sense of written French for themselves. It is a good strategy to support independent learning for higher attaining students. Listening and speaking skills of students of all abilities are not as well developed. This is because the timetable allocation does not give teachers sufficient time to cover the course and to do extensive speaking practise.
178. By the end of Year 11 the standards of work seen in French are well below national average levels and largely in the range of lower GCSE grades. Staffing changes and problems when these students were in Years 7, 8 and 9 meant that they did not get a sound foundation. Consequently, students are still learning grammar and vocabulary that would normally have been covered in those years. As a result, some students of all abilities are very dependant on the teacher for guidance in their work. Here again the low time allocation impacts on the learning needed towards the GCSE examination. Their achievement is just satisfactory. The written work of some higher attaining students shows some writing of good length, but it is often word for word translation from English, shows indiscriminate use of a dictionary and weaknesses in the use of verbs. The written work of average and lower attaining students generally succeeds in communicating their message, but shows weaknesses in most aspects of grammar. Exercises in reading comprehension are at a better level because teachers have succeeded in giving students the necessary skills. Listening and speaking skills are generally weaker and are an area where teaching has not been able to compensate for earlier years.
179. Teaching is good in all years. There are clear objectives shared with students so that they understand the purpose of each lesson. Teachers insist that students conform to classroom expectations and, as a result, they create a good learning environment. Lessons are well planned with a clear sequence of activities. Teachers sustain the students' interest by the frequent change of activity and involving them as active participants in their own learning – frequently in light-hearted physical activities. The use of individual whiteboards means that all students can offer answers to questions. Teachers adapt their lessons to match the level of their group. With groups of lower attaining students they plan to cover less new work and reduce the demands on writing. There are constant challenges to students to finish work in a certain time, to do more or to produce original work. In some lessons students are challenged to do work that will meet a National Curriculum target. A feature of all the teaching is in the support and encouragement offered to compensate for many students' low self-esteem, and in some groups, weak literacy skills. Teachers praise effort and accuracy equally and this encourages students to do their best. In one group where a student said, 'I got three wrong', the teacher encouraged the student to say, 'I got five right'. The variety, involvement and approaches adapted to different attainment levels produce good learning in Key Stage 3. Students of all levels show good attitudes and respond positively to the challenges and

expectations. In some activities they show a real sense of fun. They are encouraged to try by the support offered.

180. Students in Years 10 and 11 are more passive and their learning is only just satisfactory, despite the good teaching. Their language weaknesses give them low self-confidence and interest and they have not previously benefited from the approaches that are succeeding with younger students. Teachers have good personal language skills, but do not sufficiently challenge the students by using the target language or creating regular opportunities for sustained practise. Teachers regularly set homework, but the present marking system does not provide instant feedback, does not inform students of their levels and misses the opportunity to set specific language learning targets. Where there is some unsatisfactory teaching good guidance and support is bringing improvements for the benefit of teaching and learning.
181. The subject leader gives good leadership through the personal example of his commitment and teaching. He regularly monitors the teaching and work of the faculty and ensures uniformity of classroom practice. His work is supported by regular meetings with a member of the senior management team. The faculty has responded well to the college's improvement targets and identified its own subject-specific areas for improvement. The use of portfolios for better organisation of students' materials and the use of whiteboards to encourage full participation are having a positive impact in creating a good teaching environment. The faculty works well as a team. The second in the faculty has taken the lead in developing a good range of strategies to challenge able students in the drive to raise standards. Procedures for assessment are good and regular. The use of National Curriculum Levels with students is increasing and supported by classroom displays. Students are engaged in self-assessment. The extension of this to include National Curriculum Levels in schemes of work would enable teachers to challenge students with subject-specific targets. Staff record attainment data, but its use for tracking and target setting is not yet developed.
182. To date the faculty has not fulfilled the requirement to fully use ICT. The department is aware of the problem and has planned to enable able and talented students to use computers and to review the schemes of work more generally to incorporate the use of ICT. This will complement initiatives to encourage independent learning such as the reading scheme and dictionary use. The consideration of selective use of textbooks would provide a quality reference resource that is not available with worksheets.
183. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There is now curriculum provision for all and the team's commitment to this is reflected in the rise in examination entry levels. This has raised the status of the subject. To sustain this there is a need for more classroom support to match the large number of students with special educational needs. The faculty is now fully staffed and students are benefiting from this stability and the quality of the teaching. The faculty has shown the capacity to address the issues brought to its attention and to sustain and raise the contribution of modern foreign languages to the college.

MUSIC

During the inspection music and drama were inspected under the management of the faculty of performing arts.

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching is leading to strong improvements in attainment.
- There is good accommodation and resources.
- The attitude of students is making a positive contribution to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment and achievement of boys.
- The lack of opportunities for reflection.
- The low numbers of students taking instrumental lessons.

184. Since the last inspection music and drama have been reorganised under the faculty of performing arts. The head of faculty has pursued a very clear vision for music and drama that is based on high performing standards. The curriculum for music meets requirements and the drama curriculum makes a strong contribution to students' personal education. The music curriculum includes ICT links for students in Years 7 to 9 although equipment was not fully installed during the week of the inspection. There is good provision for students to study world music. The faculty is very well staffed and co-ordinated and enjoys the services of a full time technician and learning support assistant. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and these are very successful in giving students performing experience in the wider community. Instrumental teachers provide a broad range of lessons to a relatively small number of students. The faculty makes a good contribution to the social and moral education of students through performing and learning opportunities. However, no opportunity is taken to promote spiritual reflection. Gifted and talented students are well provided for with specialist workshops.
185. Overall accommodation is good. Resources for music are very good particularly in ICT. There are good resources for drama. Assessment procedures are highly detailed and ensure very good continuity through the curriculum.
186. There have been extensive and significant improvements in the performing arts since the last inspection. These include: the establishment of adequate teaching time and courses in Years 7 to 11; accommodation and resources particularly for teaching ICT in music; management of music; monitoring of teaching and higher expectations in music teaching; improvement in the range of instrumental lessons and a broad range of regular extra-curricular activities.

MUSIC

187. Teacher assessments show that the attainment of students in Year 9 is well below the standards achieved nationally. The attainment of boys is significantly lower than that of girls and the difference is greater than would be seen nationally. Staffing difficulties in recent years have had a negative effect on learning standards so that achievement and progress over time have not been as good as they should have been. GCSE music has only been taught as an extra-curricular subject to individual students in recent years and numbers involved have been very small.
188. In work seen during the inspection, standards were well below average in both Years 9 and 11. However, given the attainment of students on entry to the college, this represents satisfactory achievement. Students with special educational needs and those with particular talents in music make similar progress to their peers. Students in Years 7 to 9 show well below average musical skills and understanding. Their knowledge of the musical elements is poor and most find the performance of simple rhythmic patterns difficult to achieve with any accuracy. Keyboard skills are underdeveloped. Year 8 students are able to choose appropriate musical sounds to accompany a film sequence, and some are able to explain the reasons for their choice. However, in general, critical and appraisal skills are well below average. Students of all age groups display composing skills that are generally well below average. In the Year 11 GCSE group observed, most students struggled to perform with any fluency. Most can read note pitches, but performing skills are underdeveloped.
189. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are well planned and discipline is good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Good use is made of resources, and tasks match students' needs well. Students work at a good pace. In a Year 7 lesson with a high proportion of students with special educational needs, students were required to perform a variety of well-structured rhythmic tasks. Students quickly grew more confident and accurate in performing. In a Year 8 lesson on film music students worked with a well laid-out guide sheet and

were given good opportunities to appraise each other's work. Students extend their understanding of the task and became more independent in their work. Some teaching is very good and a high level of pace and challenge is maintained and, as a result, students make swift progress. Where teaching is less effective, it is often because the pace of learning is too slow and the transfer between tasks not smoothly managed. Only one GCSE lesson was seen. The standard of teaching was satisfactory overall. Resources adequately matched the needs of the group, but opportunities were lost to use assessment to keep the aims of the lesson alive. Students made satisfactory progress in composing serial music. A teaching assistant was effectively used to support students with special educational needs.

190. Improvements in music since the last inspection have been satisfactory. Music is now benefiting from the recent appointment of a new subject leader. At the time of the inspection, he had had little time to make any impact on the standards of work. However, a good start has been made and the potential and capacity for improvement is very good.

DRAMA

191. Students come to the college with little experience of formal drama and achievement is good so that in Year 11 results at GCSE are around average. Students achieve better results in drama than in other subjects they take. They use voice and body language effectively to project meaning. In Year 9 students can control pace and characterisation in their work with increasing confidence and subtlety.
192. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Very good teaching was apparent in a Year 8 lesson on homelessness. Discipline was very good as students were continually reminded about the need to listen to each other. Regular assessment and review kept lesson aims alive. As a result, progress was very good and students became more fluent in reflecting the passage of time in their work. In a Year 9 lesson, students made very good progress because the teacher's own acting combined with student demonstrations enabled them to gain ever deeper insights into guilt, lying and truth. Students were well able to describe their progress and how to improve on it. Year 10 students displayed very high standards of learning in a lesson on 'themes within a plot'. They were given increasingly complex, but effectively timed tasks exploring the way in which rivalry between characters can be shown to an audience. They were organised into groups that managed themselves very well and were sensitively tutored. As a result, their independence and acting became increasingly subtle. The attitudes of all students are very good. There is an atmosphere of strong mutual respect and encouragement and high standards of professional behaviour are encouraged.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allow all groups of pupils to learn well.
- Students are well managed and motivated, and respond well.
- Leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results are too low.
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Attendance rates of pupils in Years 9,10 and 11.
- Curriculum development is limited by the lack of sports hall accommodation.
- Complete updating of schemes of work.

193. Overall, standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of Years 9 and 11. In the 2002 GCSE sports studies examination, the proportion of candidates gaining grades

A* to C was very low compared with national averages, but closer to average across the full range of grades (A* to G). Similar results were achieved in 2001. Students perform in line with their other examination subjects. Higher attaining students, including the talented, achieve well in extra-curricular sport, at city, county and sometimes national levels.

194. By Year 9, standards in lessons and work match national expectations. This represents good achievement given these students' below average attainment on entry in Year 7. Students with special educational needs and those who are talented, make good progress. Teaching is well adapted to meet their needs. Most Year 9 students show satisfactory individual and team skills in games; they understand basic fitness principles and when given the opportunity, judge performance well. Higher attaining students consistently use skills and tactics to outmanoeuvre opponents. The standards of a significant minority are below average. They show satisfactory skills in isolated practise, but cannot use them effectively in a game; below average hand-eye co-ordination hinders their progress in badminton. The achievement of some Year 9 pupils is restricted by poor attendance.
195. By Year 11, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory in relation to standards at the beginning of Year 10. The progress of a significant minority is affected by their irregular attendance. Students with special educational needs make progress in line with others. Most Year 11 students accurately analyse performance; they apply the principles of attack and defence in match situations and understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Higher attaining students use a variety of skills and tactics to beat opponents. Lower attaining students often understand principles and rules, but show poor tactical and spatial awareness in game situations. The Year 11 GCSE examination group is larger than in previous years. Most students are on target to achieve slightly below national expectations; a considerable improvement on past results. They show satisfactory practical skills, understand fitness aspects and are competent in oral work. Their written assignments lack extended writing skills, the enhancement of ICT and careful presentation. Most students, across the age range, show satisfactory numeracy skills when using scoring systems and measuring performance. Their literacy skills in written assignments are below average, but they listen well and willingly participate in oral work. Information and communication technology skills are below average, because the subject provides few opportunities for development. No significant differences were observed in the standards achieved by students of different gender or ethnic background. Students with special educational needs and those who are talented, make good progress.
196. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. In one out of every three lessons observed, it was very good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. A high proportion listen well and work hard; as a result, their learning is often good. Small numbers underachieve, because of poor concentration and frequent absence. Teachers' very good management of students creates a purposeful and safe learning environment. Teachers plan lessons very well and ensure that work is appropriate for students at all levels of attainment. In a Year 11 badminton lesson, lower-attaining students progressed well, because the teacher simplified instructions, modified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher attaining students, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular activities. Teachers provide opportunities for students to learn independently in most lessons. In a Year 10, health-related fitness lesson, students planned warm-ups, measured pulse rates, calculated their target training zones and judged performance. Their achievement and progress in such tasks are good. Learning is less effective when teaching is more prescriptive and students are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These improve the technical vocabulary, and speaking and listening skills of students across the attainment levels. Students improve their numeracy skills through opportunities to use scoring systems and by measuring performance. The subject provides few opportunities for them to develop information and communication technology skills.
197. The department is well led and managed. A dedicated team of young specialists provides good support. The subject leader is providing clear vision in the subject's development, particularly in curricular aspects, teaching and learning, and systems to monitor, evaluate and improve standards.

Assessment methods are good, but the use of data can be further developed so that students are more aware of their progress.

198. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Progress has been made on almost all issues, particularly in raising levels of attainment, behaviour and teaching, in boys' lessons. Resources are updated, health and safety issues rectified and appropriate development plans put in place. Absence in Years 9, 10 and 11 still hinders the progress of a significant minority of students. The recent updating of schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 needs to extend across all age groups. The proposed development of a multipurpose sports hall will extend curriculum opportunities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, including examination results.
- The attitudes of some students.
- The use of information and communication technology.
- Meeting statutory requirements in respect of the locally agreed syllabus.

199. There is no formal assessment of religious education at the end of Year 9. Almost all students are entered for GCSE humanities at the end of Year 11, so there are no separate examination results for religious education.
200. Standards seen during the inspection were well below the national average, in both Years 9 and 11. Only one third of students produce written work of a standard that would secure a grade C or above in a GCSE examination. Students' knowledge of and ideas about religious beliefs and practices are quite basic; Year 8 students can name 'Old Testament' characters and are aware that the 'New Testament' begins with the birth of Jesus, and can associate holy books with different religions. Year 9 students, however, had difficulties in constructing a leaflet for social workers about Islamic burial customs. Year 10 students are beginning to acquire a reasonable grasp of the culture and history of native Americans, but many students struggle to express themselves clearly on paper, even in Year 11.
201. Given their prior attainment, students' achievements are satisfactory throughout the college. The attitudes of students, overall, to religious education are satisfactory. Although most students cooperate well in class and can work sensibly in groups or pairs, there is a disaffected minority who are reluctant to apply themselves, or even to attend lessons. This impacts on the overall level of learning and hence, achievement.
202. This is a pity, because the quality of teaching is good, and some very good lessons were seen during the inspection. Teachers plan the lessons and manage their students well. In most lessons, it is clear what students are supposed to learn, and teachers review this at the end of the lesson. They make good use of resources and maintain a good pace, often setting challenging tasks. A Year 10 teacher used a competitive quiz to speed up a learning task, and made students think imaginatively through a more open-ended task that required them to find and explain links between seemingly random pieces of evidence. Two Year 11 classes were combined for workshop activities with their teachers and a local Christian youth worker who has visited the college regularly in recent years. The students were able to reflect powerfully on the injustices of much world trading, as a result of a simulation game they had played. All students are enabled to participate in learning activities, with some extra support being provided for those with special educational needs and for the small minority for whom English is an additional language.

203. There is some evidence that ICT is used in lessons, but this is an area that needs more development. It was not seen in use during any of the lessons observed, and students were not asked to research information on the Internet. In the written work provided for inspection, nothing using ICT was seen.
204. Religious education is taught entirely by non-specialists, within humanities, although the subject leader is well informed and committed to developing her own subject knowledge and that of colleagues, under the supervision of the acting head of faculty. Professional development is determined by the findings of thorough monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Staff are ready to share ideas and resources with each other.
205. Although the organisation and monitoring of teaching is good, the organisation of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Teaching religious education within humanities does have some benefits. In particular, it enables a wider study of beliefs, cultures and moral issues to be integrated into a study of human behaviour across time and space, and religious education is more focused by being taught in blocks of nine lessons in three weeks a term. A good contribution is made to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the integrated syllabus undoubtedly helps in this respect, but religious education as a subject is squeezed: in Years 7 to 9; an attempt is made to cover the locally agreed syllabus in about half the recommended time. In Years 10 and 11, there is simply no way that statutory requirements can be met, even with some religious education being included in a personal, social and health education course as well as within GCSE humanities. Students miss out on the opportunity to study moral issues from the perspective of the major world faiths in depth. It is also unclear how parents could, if they so wished, withdraw their children from religious education when it is so tightly integrated with history and geography. A new agreed syllabus is about to appear, and will provide the college with an opportunity to review curricular provision.
206. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Evidence points to standards in religious education, as in humanities as a whole, being more or less where they were at the time of the previous inspection. Results indicate that standards fell for a few years, but are now slowly climbing again.