

INSPECTION REPORT

ARTHUR MELLOWS VILLAGE COLLEGE

Glinton, Peterborough

LEA area: City of Peterborough

Unique reference number: 110875

Headteacher: Mr F Mann

Reporting inspector: Mr D J Thompson
15640

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th February 2003

Inspection number: 251195

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: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18 Years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Helpston Road
Glington
Peterborough
PE6 7JX

Postcode:

Telephone number: 01733 252235

Fax number: 01733 252206

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D G McLaren

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15640	Mr D Thompson	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and students' achievements. How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
09865	Ms S Howley	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18228	Mr D Gill	Team inspector	English	
32086	Ms J Bond	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10327	Mr P Garnham	Team inspector	Science	
12968	Mr J Parker	Team inspector	Design and technology	
08119	Mr D Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
07202	Ms E Hale	Team inspector	History	
12957	Mr J Stout	Team inspector	Geography	How well are students taught?
11830	Mr J Banks	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
12969	Mr I Middleton	Team inspector	Art and design	
18834	Ms S Green	Team inspector	Music	
19858	Mr J Follett	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

11684	Ms F Le Pla	Team inspector	Religious education	
11832	Mr G Matthews	Team inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion including race equality	
10170	Mr A Drane	Team inspector	English Media Studies	
15594	Ms J Felce	Team inspector	Citizenship Business studies	
01839	Mr M Edwards	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22785	Mr A McMurdo	Team inspector	Science	
17132	Ms J Copas	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism Media studies	

The inspection contractor was:

Northamptonshire Inspection and Advisory Service
Cliftonville Centre
Cliftonville Middle School
Cliftonville Road
Northampton
NN1 5BW

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Arthur Mellows Village College is a mixed comprehensive college for students aged 11 to 19. It has 1,386 students, making it above average size. The college is heavily oversubscribed and numbers have been increasing steadily in recent years. There are equal numbers of girls and boys. Students are predominantly of white British heritage, with small numbers of Indian, Caribbean or Asian students. English is an additional language for about one in 20 students. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average, but the college's socio-economic context is broadly average. Over 40 per cent of students live outside the immediate locality of the college, mostly in urban Peterborough. The college also serves an RAF base. As service children are not eligible for free school meals this results in the free school meal proportion not representing socio-economic characteristics effectively. Standards of attainment on entry to the college are above average and the proportion of students with special educational needs is below the national average. Of these, the proportion with statements of special educational need is in line with the national average. The college is applying for specialist technology status.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Arthur Mellows Village College maintains above average standards. The leadership team and governors have implemented appropriate strategies for improving provision further and these are beginning to have an effect; the quality of teaching and standards in tests and examinations have both been raised. Funding is prudently managed and the college gives good value for money. Increasingly ambitious targets have been set for the future and the college has a good capacity to achieve these.

What the school does well

- Provides a safe, caring environment in which positive relationships are formed and high standards of behaviour are maintained.
- Offers a wide range of high quality learning opportunities which enables the individual needs of all students to be met effectively.
- Has developed very effective pastoral partnerships, between teachers and other adults, which foster students' personal development very well.
- Provides a very rich and varied breadth of extra-curricular activities, which are valued highly by students.

What could be improved

- Students are not achieving well enough during Years 10 and 11 in science and English.
- There was a small number of unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection and the overall quality of teaching and learning for Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory.
- There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to let students know how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Many subject leaders are not sufficiently focused on strategies for raising standards.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in January 1997. The college has improved well since that inspection. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved in all subjects, and above average standards at GCSE have been maintained. Standards in A and AS level examinations have improved from below average in 1997 to above average in 2001. There have also been improvements in the quality of teaching, the use of assessment and provision for independent learning. However, these remain areas where further improvement is necessary in order to raise achievement. All of the health and safety issues raised by the previous inspection have been addressed successfully.

The report on the inspection of the school in 1997 noted that students with a statement of special educational need were making good progress in Years 7 to 9 and appropriate progress in Years 10 and 11. Now students with special educational needs at the college, including those with statements, make good progress in all years. Most subject teachers are aware of the special educational needs of the students in their classes, and students continue to receive excellent support for their learning from a dedicated and knowledgeable team of learning support assistants who are very well managed by the special needs co-ordinator. However, students' individual education plans continue to lack targets, which are specific and measurable, and the school has recognised this as an area for improvement. There is a positive whole-school ethos for the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

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

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. The proportion of students obtaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE has been consistently above average from 1998 to 2002, except in 2001 when it was well above average. This is in line with schools taking students from similar backgrounds. Girls' results were better than boys'. GCSE attainment was significantly better than the national picture in business studies, geography and history. Results in combined science and German were significantly worse than seen nationally. Work seen during the inspection showed that students make steady progress throughout Years 7 to 11, maintaining above average standards. At age 18, results in A and AS examinations were in line with the national average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Standards in examinations were above average in history, geography, art, media studies, business studies, design and technology and religious education. Results in physical education were well above average. Standards of current Year 12 and 13 students are above average representing sound progress. The college sets performance targets annually for examination results. These have a good element of challenge and were almost achieved in 2002.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students are enthusiastic about their time at the college. They are attentive and keen to participate in the activities provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is good and there is very little disruption to learning. The school is orderly and students are sensible and self disciplined. There have been no permanent exclusions for several years.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Students of all age groups mix well. Personal development is very good. Students cope confidently with college and are socially and morally well rounded.
Attendance	Good. Attendance has been above the national average for the last few years. There is very little truancy.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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 and learning are effective in most subjects. Consistent high quality teaching was seen in mathematics, geography, art, physical education and French. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching is good in ICT, music and German. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in religious education, music and German. Teaching is satisfactory in science in Years 7, 8 and 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 in English, design and technology and history. Overall strengths in teaching are teachers' subject knowledge, careful choice of activities and behaviour management. These result in students gaining good understanding and skills and developing positive attitudes. Areas requiring further development include planning and marking. A lack of clear objectives and too few comments on students' work result in some students being unsure about the purpose of lessons or insufficiently aware of their strengths and how to improve.

Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good. There is good teaching of ICT, as a discrete subject, during Years 7 to 9, but teaching of ICT in other subjects is not well enough co-ordinated in Years 10 and 11. Teachers work hard to successfully meet the needs of all students, including making effective partnerships with learning support assistants.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a very extensive range of courses for students in Years 7, 8 and 9, including dance and all aspects of technology. In Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of courses, including business studies. However, more needs to be done to ensure students in Years 10 and 11 use ICT in all subjects. The school offers very good extra-curricular opportunities. Provision of religious education and an act of worship do not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Partnerships between teachers and learning support assistants are effective in supporting the progress of students with special educational needs
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Although a few students are identified as having English as an additional language, their use of English is not a barrier to their learning.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral development is very good in many subjects and Life Skills. Concern for others is evident in all years, especially in the sixth form. Social development is good and there are opportunities for older and younger students to mix together. Cultural development is good, especially in the arts subjects, religious education and English and there are sufficient opportunities to learn about the culturally diverse society of Britain. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory because there are too few opportunities for personal reflection.
How well the school cares for its students	The college continues to provide a high standard of care and supervision. Students' needs are identified well, and personal development is given a high priority. Behaviour and attendance are monitored and promoted well. Effective child protection procedures are in place.
Links with parents	The college has very effective links with parents.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The leadership has a clear vision to provide a quality experience for all and this is used well to drive decision-making. However, subject leadership is too inconsistent and often not focused well enough on raising standards. Heads of year support students well but do not ensure effective use of tutor time.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are keen to know how well the college is doing and to ascertain proposals for improvement. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and are active in shaping the college's strategic direction. They do not ensure that statutory requirements for acts of worship, religious education and ICT are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The college has a good set of priorities but these are not sufficiently represented in the college improvement plan. There are effective partnerships with outside agencies for monitoring provision and there is widespread lesson observation but these are not yet having sufficient impact on raising standards. Subject development plans are often not focused well enough on strategies for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Education priorities are supported well through financial planning. Funding is substantially lower than most schools and is carefully used to provide a broad curriculum. Different providers of services are considered to ensure that best value is gained. Teachers' skills are very well matched to subjects taught. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, with some shortages. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in design and technology, science and private study areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and they are expected to work hard. • Their children are making good progress and the school is helping them become mature. • Behaviour is good and there is an interesting range of activities. • Teaching is good and the college is well led and managed. • They feel very comfortable approaching the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework arrangements. • Clarity of information reporting progress. • The college to work more closely with parents.

Inspection findings agree with parents' positive comments. Homework is regularly set in some subjects and students are required to log it in their planners, but the decision to operate without a timetable is not helpful to parents in their monitoring role. Annual reports meet requirements and have been supplemented well by additional information at the start of Years 7, 10 and 12 delivered in extra meetings of tutors with parents. This is a very positive development in helping parents understand their child's potential but the school may need to review how this information is delivered in order to ensure clarity. Attendance by parents at consultations, annual reviews and special interviews, like exclusion re-entry, are very good. Staff make considerable efforts to liaise with parents and the school has a very open approach to welcoming parents into the school and surveying their views.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 221 students in the sixth form, which is a larger than average number. Almost all are of white British heritage. There are a few more girls than boys. About half of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Standards on entry are above average. Arthur Mellows Village College offers an appropriately wide range of courses. There is a good range of AS/A2 courses and this is supplemented well with vocational courses. Opportunities to improve GCSE results are restricted to adult education courses, beyond the normal school day. There are some small teaching groups, balanced by other larger ones; overall, the sixth form is cost-effective.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The college provides continuing education through to the sixth form for all those who wish to continue their studies. Strenuous effort is made to meet the needs of all students and this is done very effectively. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and are now above average, representing satisfactory achievement. However, standards in science are too low, mainly because of unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, teaching is good and leads to effective learning. However, teaching of key skills is currently too inconsistent, with too many subjects not planning sufficiently to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT. There are too few opportunities for students to enrich their learning beyond examination courses. Provision for religious education and a daily act of worship is inadequate. The college's leadership team has a clear strategic view for post-16 education, and the head of sixth form manages the day-to-day running well but is not involved sufficiently in determining strategy. There is a good spirit in the sixth form and students value the provision highly.

Strengths

- Much of the teaching is of good quality and a quarter is very good.
- Students attain above average results in examinations.
- There is a wide range of courses, providing good opportunities for students.
- Students' attitudes, personal development and relationships are very good; they become mature, confident learners.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment are too low in science.
- Provision for developing key skills and enriching students' experience beyond lessons is inadequate.
- Provision of religious education and a daily act of worship do not meet statutory requirements.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Examination results have improved recently; current Year 12 and 13 students are making good progress to attain above average standards. Teaching is very good and students have very positive attitudes.
Biology	Unsatisfactory. A-level results were below the national average and standards of students in Years 12 and 13 are below average. Teaching is unsatisfactory and leads to insufficient learning. Leadership is unsatisfactory, with far too little planning to raise standards.
Design and technology	Good. A wide range of A and AS level courses is offered and examination results are above the national average. Relationships between staff and students are very positive and coursework is of a high standard. Planning is not detailed enough and there are too few opportunities for using ICT.
Business studies	Good. Examination results were above the national average, although only a few students achieved the higher grades. Students make good progress, taking their GCSE results into account. Teachers have very good subject command, enabling students to improve their understanding effectively. Research, analysis of data and presentation of ideas require improvement.
Leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. Examination results, for advanced GNVQ, were above the national average. Students enjoy the subject and course numbers have increased. Students have insufficient opportunities to develop practical skills and too few students complete their courses.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Results on the AVCE course are average. Students have positive attitudes and work placements are effective. Students do not have a base to keep or display their work. Too few students complete their course.
Art	Very good. Students produce consistently good results in examinations. Teachers have very competent knowledge, enabling good student understanding and development of skills. Assessment is used well to help students improve.
Modern foreign languages	Satisfactory. A and AS level standards are broadly in line with national figures and students attain average standards overall. Teaching and relationships are good in French and satisfactory in German. However, the German group is making enough progress and the take-up of foreign languages post-16 is low.
Physical education	Very good. Results in 2002 for the AS and A-level courses were well above the national average; students do well compared to their performance at GCSE and A-level. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching overall is good.
English	Satisfactory. A consistently high proportion of students has gained A-E grades over the last three years. Specialist teaching is of good quality and relationships between teachers and students are very good. Too few students are attaining higher grades and there is too little monitoring of teaching and learning to identify and spread best practice.
Geography	Good. A-level results are above the national average and students are achieving better than expected from their GCSE results. The high standard of teaching and students' positive and mature approach enable them to do well. There is too little use of assessment to let students know how to improve.

History	Good. A-level results have improved over recent years and are above the national average. Teaching is good and students have positive attitudes, leading to good learning. There is not enough use of ICT and students do not develop their own views, or challenge those of others, sufficiently.
Media studies	Good. Examination results were above the national average, although too few students attained the highest grades. good teaching with competent subject expertise, and positive student attitudes, produce effective learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good guidance is provided to students on entry to the sixth form. Students are well supported as learners by subject staff. Progress is well monitored through regular tracking.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. Leadership by the senior management team is satisfactory. Day-to-day management by the head of sixth form is satisfactory. The head of sixth form's role is insufficiently strategic. Management of tutors is effective. Tutoring is effective. Co-ordination of the leadership programme is effective. Co-ordination and monitoring of key skills needs strengthening. Provision for private study needs to be improved. The governing body takes a full role in making strategic decisions for the sixth form but the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education is not met.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoy being in the sixth form. • Teachers are accessible; they are taught well and encouraged to study. • Choice of courses is good, printed information is good and they were helped to settle. • Work is thoroughly assessed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of additional activities. • Level of advice for careers and what to study. • The college should take more account of their views. • Better information about overall progress.

Inspectors support students' positive views. The enrichment programme has been reduced and does not give sufficient provision. The key skills programme is inadequate. Whilst students can access general studies and GCSE resits through adult education, this is inadequate. Careers advice and information is available but there are insufficient links with the world of work and further education/higher education. The tracking reports shared with students and parents are very helpful but students do not have the opportunity to meet formally with staff to discuss overall progress. The sixth form committee currently has a predominantly social and charity fundraising brief, although sixth form students are involved in much of the life of the school, and senior staff are receptive to suggestions for improvement.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

Standards on entry

1. Students' attainment on entry to the college, at the beginning of Year 7, is above the national average.

Standards in tests at age 14

2. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. When compared with students' previous attainment, in Year 6 national tests, this represents achievement that is well above average in mathematics, average in English and below average in science.
3. In English, results improved from 1999 to 2001 when they were above average. Re-marking of papers in 2002 confirmed that above-average standards had been maintained.
4. In mathematics, results were consistently above the national average from 1999 to 2001 and then improved to be well above average in 2002.
5. In science, results were in line with the national average in 1999 and 2000 and then improved to be above average in 2001 and 2002.
6. When considering average performance over the last three years, boys did slightly better than girls in English and science, and boys did significantly better than girls in mathematics.

Performance in examinations at age 16

7. Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently above average in recent years, based on students' average points score. The proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C grades has been above average from 1998 to 2002, except in 2001 when it was well above average. The percentage of students gaining at least five A*-G grades was above average from 1998 to 2000 and close to average in 2001 and 2002. Over the last three years, 2000 to 2002, the average performance of both boys and girls has been above average. However, in the most recent year, 2002, boys only produced average results, whereas girls did better, attaining above average standards.
8. GCSE results, in 2002, were significantly better than the national picture in business studies, geography and history. Students did particularly well in business studies and geography when compared with their average performance in other subjects. Students' results were significantly worse than the national average in combined science and German. English results were average, but this represents insufficient progress when compared with their previous attainment at the end of Year 9. Overall, results in 2002 represent steady progress, when compared with students' previous performance in national tests at age 14.

Standards of students currently in Years 7 to 11

9. Overall, students make steady progress through Years 7 to 9, attaining above-average standards by the end of Year 9. They then continue to maintain these standards through Years 10 and 11.
10. Students make good progress during Years 7 to 9 to achieve above average standards by the end of Year 9 in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design. In English, science and physical education, students make steady progress to maintain above-average standards throughout Years 7 to 9. Students achieve average standards by the end of Year 9 in design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, religious education and citizenship. Taking into account their previous knowledge and understanding of the subjects when entering the college, this represents sound progress.
11. Students make good progress during Years 10 and 11 to achieve above average standards, by the end of Year 11, in mathematics, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art and design and religious education. Satisfactory progress is made in design and technology, music, physical education and citizenship, producing average standards by the end of Year 11. Students do not make sufficient progress in English, resulting in standards declining from above average at the beginning of Year 10 to only average at the end of Year 11. This is mainly because of variations in the quality of teaching and too little planning to provide appropriate work for students of differing abilities.
12. Standards in science are below average and represent unsatisfactory progress. This is a result of unsatisfactory teaching; leadership failing to set a clear focus on improving achievement; and students not knowing what they have to do to improve. The good progress students make in ICT during Years 7 to 9 is not sustained in Years 10 and 11 when they only make average progress. This is because there is high quality teaching in discrete ICT lessons in Year 7 to 9, but ICT is absorbed into the teaching of other subjects during Years 10 and 11 and this is not yet sufficiently co-ordinated. During Years 7 to 9, students apply and use their ICT skills in other subjects. In art, ICT is used to produce good reference book covers, whilst in geography, Intranet resources are used well to study the geography of Brazil. The national strategy is being used to develop work of above average standards across this age range successfully.
13. Students with special educational needs make good progress across the curriculum in all years. They make good progress in reading, writing, spelling and number work, and produce work that is both legible and neat. Where students receive additional teaching, for example, with their literacy skills, they make good progress and show enthusiasm to learn. They read with confidence and expression, and draw on strategies to learn a spelling or to read a word which they find difficult. In small group work on number, for example in Year 7, they make good progress in learning strategies for multiplications which they cannot recall easily. In geography, for example, students with special educational needs show good knowledge of the meaning of terms such as sustainable and renewable resources in their studies on Japan.

Literacy

14. A sizeable majority of students have above-average literacy skills. They listen patiently and express themselves accurately in discussion or on the page. Reading comprehension is at a similar level. The standard of literacy in the college can already support higher future attainment, especially at GCSE.

Numeracy

15. Students' standards in numeracy are good. Lower-attaining students demonstrate a range of calculating strategies. In geography, Year 9 students use maps and income data from textbooks to calculate average monthly income in selected countries around the world. They use calculators effectively and they rank and graph the data. In design and technology, Year 11 students use bar charts well to represent and compare food prices from a range of supermarkets. In physical education, Year 13 students make good progress in understanding the concepts of speed and velocity and apply these to biomechanics.
16. The college sets targets to predict examination performance for each year, in conjunction with the local education authority. The college set a target of 56 per cent A*-C at GCSE for 2002 and just missed the target, actually achieving 54 per cent. Future targets are ambitious, representing an improvement in year-on-year results, aiming for 61 per cent A*-C grades by 2004. The range of strategies which the college is introducing is focused well on raising standards and has good potential to achieve the targets.
17. Standards were judged to be above average at the previous inspection. This has been maintained so that attainment continues to be above the national average, both in standards seen during this inspection and in examination results.

Sixth form

Performance in examinations

18. Results in GCE A/AS level examinations in 2001 were in line with the national average. The average points score for both boys and girls were close to the average. Candidates entered for GCE, VCE or advanced GNVQ examinations did better than those entered for GCE A/AS level, achieving above average results. No comparative national data was available for 2002 results during the period of the inspection. However, results in the college improved in 2002 and are likely to be above the national average. Analysis of 2002 results, when compared with students' previous performance at GCSE, shows that good progress has been made.
19. Standards in examinations were above average in history, geography, art, media studies, business studies, design and technology and religious education. Standards in physical education were well above average and represent very significant improvement. Results in English, modern foreign languages and health and social care were average. Results were also average in mathematics in 2001 but improved in 2002. Results in science are below average for chemistry, physics and biology.

Standards of students currently in Years 12 and 13

20. Standards of current students are better than normally seen. This judgement is based on evidence of lessons observed during the inspection and from a scrutiny of students' work. Standards are better than normally seen in mathematics, ICT, history, geography, art, physical education and media studies. Students produce attainment similar to that normally seen in design and technology and in leisure and tourism, but this represents high achievement for many students who only achieved low standards at GCSE. Students make sound progress to attain standards similar to those normally seen in English, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and health and social care. Overall, the college has been successful in improving standards over recent years. Standards were judged to be below the national average, and in decline, at the time of the previous inspection and they are now above average.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Parents state that their children enjoy their time at the college and are expected to work hard. Students interviewed during the inspection spoke with enthusiasm about the college, particularly the range of experiences and opportunities and the supportive, orderly community. Attitudes to learning are good. Most students want to learn, are attentive, listen well and are very keen to answer questions. They work well in groups, share information and views sensibly and willingly join in with discussions. The majority of students participate well in practical activities, responding with considerable interest, especially in art, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education. Many students have a good work ethic as was frequently seen in mathematics and geography where expectations were high and responded to positively. A few students are less well motivated, for example in some lessons in modern foreign languages, English and science. The majority concentrate well and remain on task, particularly when teaching is good. However, they have too few opportunities to develop independent learning.
22. Behaviour is good throughout the college. Students feel secure and there is very little oppressive behaviour. There are occasional incidents and some bullying but students are confident that staff deal promptly with concerns. The majority of students come straight into college from the buses in the mornings and entry is calm, prompt and purposeful. Movement around the college is sensible; the majority of students are self disciplined. Most students are trustworthy, and property is generally respected and well cared for, although access to parts of the college has been restricted due to the poor behaviour of a minority. After lunch, movement to registration and lessons is often noisy, and not quick enough to ensure punctuality. Behaviour in most lessons is good and there is minimal disruption to learning. Where students clearly understand what is expected and teaching is stimulating and interesting, for example in art and design and design and technology, they respond positively and behaviour is very good. Where lessons are poorly planned and expectations are unclear, for example in some science and a few English lessons, students become bored and behaviour deteriorates.
23. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. Few students are removed from lessons and whilst fixed term exclusions are quite high, these are mainly for one or two days and are effective in maintaining a good working environment.
24. Relationships are very good and a strength of the college. There is good rapport between students in lessons, at meal breaks and in tutor time. Students of all ages mix well and collaborate productively on special projects like charity fundraising efforts. Staff provide good role models, and relationships between adults and students are very good. Personal development is very good. Students are friendly, helpful, polite and cheerful. The majority are well-rounded individuals who are supportive of one another and they cope confidently with the college environment.
25. Attendance is good and above the national average. The rate of attendance is over 93 per cent. Both authorised and unauthorised absences are below the national average at 6.1 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively. Punctuality to college and lessons is good overall, although pupils are not as prompt to lessons in the afternoons. The vast majority of students attend well, many gaining attendance awards. Less than five per cent, most of whom have identified needs, give cause for concern.
26. Since the last inspection, attitudes, behaviour and attendance continue to be good. Relationships and personal development have been further strengthened.

Sixth form

27. Attitudes in the sixth form are very good. Students are committed to their learning and are keen to be involved in the life of the college. They responded positively to the questionnaire, with a considerable majority stating that they enjoy being in the sixth form, feel challenged to do their best and encouraged to study. Many students display a high level of interest and motivation across the whole range of subjects. They are determined to achieve and have a very positive influence on younger students through a range of activities including the College Council, the "Buddy" system with Year 7 students, paired reading and charity events. However, the lack of a dedicated private study area and discontinuity in the management of the sixth form has had a negative impact on the attitudes and personal learning skills of some of the older students.
28. Relationships are very good between students and with adults in the college. The contribution of sixth form students to the life of the college is valued. Personal development is very good. Students are mature and responsible and exhibit very good social skills in lessons.
29. Attendance is satisfactory. The majority of students attend lessons regularly and punctually.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. During the inspection just over 250 lessons were seen. Teaching was sound overall and good in the sixth form. It was satisfactory or better in nineteen lessons in every twenty. In almost two thirds of lessons it was good or better. Very good or excellent teaching was seen in a fifth of lessons. There was however a small number of unsatisfactory lessons in which students made slow progress in their learning. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
31. Teaching and learning are effective in most subjects. High-quality teaching was seen most consistently in mathematics, geography, art, physical education, dance and French. There is good teaching overall in Years 7, 8 and 9 in ICT, music and German, and in religious education, music and German in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 in English, design technology and history. Satisfactory teaching was also seen in science and religious education in Years 7, 8 and 9, and in ICT in Years 10 and 11. A small number of unsatisfactory lessons were seen in science in Years 10 and 11.
32. An important strength of the teaching is that nearly all the teachers are subject specialists. They have a good command of their subjects and of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Additionally, they have a good understanding of the requirements of the examination syllabuses. They teach with assurance and authority. Students are therefore well prepared for National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. This was evident, for example, in an ICT lesson where students were preparing a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher used the Intranet confidently to explain to students how to find and use colour to enhance their presentations. This was demonstrated very well using wide-ranging knowledge to explain the reasons for using particular colours. Because of this, students could get on with their work straight away and produced high-quality results. Similarly, in a geography lesson, the teacher had a good knowledge of the processes which affect the location of industry. He led a very good class discussion, questioning students skilfully. As a result, they could then go on to explain industrial changes in South Wales.
33. Another major strength is the careful choice of class activities. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher used an excellent starter activity to engage students in learning how to add and subtract negative numbers. She encouraged the class to visualise large numbers by thinking about foreign currency. Consequently, students,

who initially found the task quite difficult, soon got the right idea. In a religious education lesson, students were set the task of finding out about the Passover in their work on Judaism. They were given a good set of questions as guidance. They worked well in groups in the library using books and the Internet. Students made good progress in developing their learning skills, as well as gaining a good understanding of an important aspect of their religious education.

34. A third important strength of teaching is the way classes are managed. Teachers establish good relationships with students. They create an atmosphere in lessons in which students want to try hard, and take their work seriously. In a physical education lesson, for example, the teacher started by demonstrating a sequence from roll to balance for students to try. They enjoyed taking part because it was a fun way to warm up. It also meant they were then keen to take part in the rest of the lesson. The teacher went round all the students offering encouragement and support as they tried various gymnastic techniques. Similarly, in a French lesson, the teacher built up students' confidence at the beginning of a lesson by encouraging them to practise in pairs telling the time. Mistakes were corrected firmly but sympathetically so that they made good progress in their understanding of the language.
35. Planning in some lessons is less effective. For example, in an English lesson, planning included few details about what the students should achieve. Although students enjoyed a story reading, the discussion that followed did not help them much in their understanding. The teacher spent too long questioning students about the story. Lower-attaining students found it difficult to maintain their concentration. Higher-attaining students were not sufficiently challenged. In one science lesson on respiration, the teacher did not match the work to the needs of students. They were not given the opportunity to build on their prior knowledge. The work set did not stretch them. To start with they tried hard to listen to the teacher and to complete the tasks, but their concentration deteriorated. Progress in their understanding of the topic was slower than would be expected for students of their age and ability.
36. There is too much inconsistency in the use of marking to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses so they can set targets for future learning. In several subjects including mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, geography, art and music, marking is consistent and helpful. For example, work in students' geography books is marked regularly. Teachers use a standard mark scheme to grade their work. Students are encouraged by the helpful comments on their work. In some subjects, however, marking is barely adequate. For example, in religious education, brief comments on students work do not always help them to know what to do to improve.
37. There is no homework timetable. This has led to students receiving homework at teachers' discretion. Students are unhappy with this arrangement as it makes it difficult for them to plan ahead, and parents feel inadequately supported in being able to monitor whether homework has been set or completed.
38. Strategies for supporting literacy in the college are good. The library is increasing its contribution to independent study and reading; the learning support department provides well taught 'progress units' for those arriving needing additional support; and the English department's clubs extend literacy for the gifted and talented. Some good examples of literacy provision occur across the curriculum. For example, there are high expectations in geography, and effective work on grammatical structure and key words in mathematics. Support for literacy in physical education is slightly higher than that normally encountered. Basic skills teaching in English is developing although the National Literacy Strategy is not yet embedded. There is currently not enough co-ordinated provision of literacy across the curriculum and key skills are not taught in the

sixth form.

39. There is a whole-school numeracy policy and a suitable action plan for further developing numeracy across the curriculum. Teachers build well on the mathematical skills that students have developed in primary school. Additional support sessions are provided by learning support assistants for targeted Year 7 students during morning registration. Students enjoy attending these sessions and they are developing confidence in their own mathematical skills and understanding.
40. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Most teachers know the needs of individual students and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Learning support assistants are very knowledgeable about the specific needs of the students and are effective in ensuring students contribute fully in lessons. However, there is no clear guidance available to teachers or to learning support assistants on the best ways of working together to support students with special educational needs. For example, too few teachers provide learning support assistants with information before the lesson so that support for students is improved further.

Sixth form

41. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, leading to effective learning by students. Over 70 lessons were seen during the inspection. Two thirds of these were at least good. A quarter of all lessons was very good. Two lessons were excellent. Only five lessons were unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.
42. Very good teaching was seen in mathematics and art. Teaching is good overall in English, media studies, theatre studies, design and technology, modern foreign languages, geography, physical education and business studies. Teaching is satisfactory in music, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. Teaching is unsatisfactory in biology.
43. There are many strengths in the teaching. Teachers are specialists, with a very thorough knowledge and understanding of their subjects which they use well to explain content and answer questions with confidence. In an English lesson, the teacher chose "Coronation Street" to illustrate aspects of narrative structure. She introduced humour into a very knowledgeable exposition and drew upon her own knowledge to give further exemplification from films. Students responded well to the familiarity of the content and the enthusiastic tone set by the teacher. In a history lesson, the teacher had very good knowledge of Nazi economic policy. He explained this well so students gained a good understanding of the economic recovery of Germany and the events which led up to the second world war.
44. Teachers also have realistically high expectations of students, so set engaging and challenging work. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher asked very probing questions which challenged students' understanding of mathematical theory. In a geography lesson on rural areas, the teacher's planning was very thorough. He questioned students very well, and challenged them to explain their thinking. This meant they could then go on and use their understanding to explain the complexity of comparing changes in rural areas in countries at different levels of economic development.
45. Teachers establish very positive relationships with students. This enables them to approach their work with confidence and maturity. This was clear in a drama lesson where there was a very good working relationship between teacher and students. A strength was the way the teacher asked key questions rather than provide answers. She challenged students' assumptions and enabled them to make good decisions. As

a result, they made good progress on work linking drama, dance and music as part of their coursework for the AS examination. Similarly, in art lessons there is a pleasant working atmosphere, coupled with a rigorous approach to the work. Lessons are managed well and students given clear deadlines for their work. In one art lesson on the analysis of still life, the circulation and intervention of the teacher was a major strength. She was aware of the need to maintain a brisk pace to the lesson and frequently re-established lesson objectives. Students responded very positively and worked with intensity and interest.

46. Teaching of key skills in the sixth form is too inconsistent. However, in many subjects students apply and develop skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. For example, in geography, students make good use of ICT to support learning particularly in their coursework assessment for examinations. Mathematics lessons make a very positive contribution to students' number skills. An important element of media and theatre studies is the development of independent learning skills. In other subjects it is a different picture, with too little emphasis on development of skills. For example, in history, there is some good work in learning to structure essays, but the full range of key skills is not identified or taught.

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

47. The school believes strongly in making appropriate provision for all students. Consequently, the range of learning opportunities is good. Courses match students' needs well and enable them to build on their learning in the primary schools and make continuing progress in their studies and personal development.
48. The quality and range of subjects offered in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very good. All students undertake the full range of national curriculum subjects and religious education. A strength of the curricular provision is that all aspects of design and technology are studied, as well as citizenship, dance, drama and a discrete ICT course. The college also offers thinking skills as a discrete area of study aimed at encouraging students to gain an understanding of how they learn in order to become better learners. The offer of thinking skills is beyond what most schools do and makes a significant improvement to provision.
49. The quality and range of subjects offered in Years 10 and 11 is good. Courses meet national curriculum requirements, although not enough is done to ensure that students use ICT in all subjects and there are no ICT examination courses for students to study. The college offers a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for Years 10 and 11, which provides individuals with different pathways. However, this banding restricts students' choices so that, for example, half currently study history or geography and the other half do not have access to vocational subjects. The college makes good provision for an alternative curriculum, with appropriate opportunities for a small group of students to study a good range of work-related subjects in college and at other institutions. This is valued highly by students but means that the college is not fulfilling the statutory requirement for a few students to study religious education.
50. Extra-curricular provision is very rich and varied. There are many music, dance and sporting activities available to students, and attendance is well monitored. The college is very actively involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, with a significant number of students each year gaining an award at all levels. The college encourages specialists to visit and this greatly enhances the curriculum. For example, Year 11 students had a visit from an African dance company with a workshop that involved other students in the college. A good range of off-site educational visits also enriches learning, and visits abroad enable students to practise their French or German.

51. There is good provision for ensuring students have equality of access to the curriculum. The college has a brief equal opportunities policy, which states aims and effectively identifies strategies to achieve these aims. The college has put a race equality policy in place and effectively monitors the achievements of different groups of students. There are planned opportunities to address issues such as sexism, for example, in Year 10 in religious education and cultural diversity is planned for, for example, in the study of Indian and Japanese music and again in religious education in the work on world faiths. However, such planning is not a strength in most other subjects. Teachers avoid stereotyping, and any bias or prejudice is dealt with sensitively but firmly. There are few displays in classrooms and around other areas of the college that help students to develop an awareness of an ethnically diverse society. Students have access to counselling and the college has a high commitment to working with students who are at risk of becoming disaffected. In Years 10 and 11, the college has established an innovative alternative curriculum programme that has successfully prevented students being permanently excluded.
52. The college also makes good provision to meet students' special educational needs. No students are disapplied from the National Curriculum; almost all students with special educational needs have access to the whole school curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The special educational needs co-ordinator organises and deploys support very well and withdrawal lessons are effective in helping students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, in Year 8, two students do have their entitlement to music interrupted by withdrawal arrangements. The social inclusion programme for students in Years 10 and 11 is providing them with relevant opportunities to learn vocational skills, such as carpentry and car mechanics, and is proving extremely effective in enabling students to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning.
53. Overall, the quality of provision in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. There are good elements within the programme followed by all students. This is provided through life skills lessons taught by teams of teachers, each team focusing on a specific aspect. Other life skills work is embedded in the curriculum or delivered on collapsed timetable days. This programme covers many important issues and gives the students the opportunity to discuss and become well-informed about topics affecting their personal development. Contributions by well-chosen visitors are valuable and deal with some sensitive issues as on the Year 11 Health Day entitled the 'Big Picture' which deals with HIV, sex and relationships education. Students make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills across an appropriate range of contexts. There are also some good units of work in Years 7 and 8 on anti-bullying issues, presenting oneself confidently in various situations and working co-operatively with different people. Students have a positive attitude to PSHE and articulate a clear understanding of the overall purpose and content of the programme. However, there is little monitoring or evaluation of the provision. No evaluation has taken place recently, either with staff or students. The recording and assessment of the PSHE and Citizenship programme has not yet been implemented.
54. The college makes very good use of the local community to enhance students' learning. The college is the focal point of a very large rural community. Good adult education provision on site both during the day and after college not only benefits the community but also enables students to access other learning, for example, General Studies A/S level and resits in mathematics GCSE. Good links with external providers also benefit students in physical education activities like dance. College facilities have been improved due to increased access to alternative funding for the benefit of the whole college community. The provision is managed from offices at the college, and the links between the college and the many villages it serves are well established.

Additionally, the Youth Service provision in five locations is facilitated by the college and many students attend these clubs, with benefit to aspects of their personal development. The arrangements for work experience placements use a wide range of local services and businesses. Good use of local business benefits students on work related learning activities. Excellent relationships with other agencies make valuable contributions to the Life Skills programme and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. The college is also fortunate to have several governors with strong links to the community, including the RAF base.

55. Relationships with partner institutions are satisfactory. Links with primary schools, particularly the main feeder schools, are very good, and the quality of liaison to support effective transfer is good. In the current academic year the college liaised effectively with 28 schools. Curricular liaison is still fairly limited and is mainly focused on national strategies, for example, numeracy through bridging units. Links with other organisations are used effectively to support work-related learning/social inclusion. Links with further education colleges for post-16 students are underdeveloped.
56. Standards and provision for gifted and talented students are satisfactory. Planned provision is in the early stages of development. The college identifies the most gifted students in Year 7 and, in discussion with parents, provides an accelerated learning programme enabling them to access higher levels of attainment. The gifted and talented students are identified by most departments but curricular provision is inconsistent. Provision in mathematics is good for Years 7 to 9 and these students make good progress. The department runs regular master classes for local Year 6 students. When these students are in Year 7, they are taught for some of their lessons as a separate group. Most able students are entered for UK mathematical challenges and participate in the Open University graphical calculator challenge. In English, Year 10 students are developing their own written style and are working towards work of publication standard. In geography, the most able are given extension work but they also cover the easier work as well. Identification and provision for gifted and talented students is weaker in science and ICT. The percentage of students gaining A* and A grades at GCSE in 2002 was below the national percentage in many subjects. The clear exception was in geography where the percentage of A* and A grades was well above national figures. A* and A grade GCSE results in business studies, design and technology and physical education were in line with the national results, but in science and German were well below the national picture.
57. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. There is a comprehensive programme in careers lessons for Years 10 and 11 and as part of the life skills and tutorial programme in Year 9. All students are also able to undertake two weeks work experience in Year 11, with good preparation in Year 10. Further development is needed to bring together the elements covered in the tutorial programme, the life skills programme and careers lessons. Students are given a good range of information as they move through the school and they understand the different options open to them in Years 10 and 11. However, some students still say that they are unclear about the contents of some of the new course or combinations of subjects that they might choose and some need more help with developing decision making skills. The Connexions service provides a good service either through students asking for or being referred for individual interviews. Information in the careers library is well maintained, comprehensive and up to date. Careers education and guidance is well organised with records being kept of students and the stage they have reached regarding their future choices. Two members of staff have a diploma in careers education and there is a team of staff teaching the careers lesson in addition to the role played by the tutors. The teaching is good with effective resources and support, as in a Year 10 lesson where students were choosing possible work experience placements using the database provided. More detailed monitoring and evaluation of the programme is

needed. Most students have positive attitude to careers education and guidance. They say that they are well prepared to move on to their next stage of education, training or employment. They also know where to obtain further help if needed.

Sixth form

58. The curriculum for sixth form students is broad and balanced overall. There is a good range of subjects provided, including vocational courses that students can start at age 14 or as post-16 students. The process of making options available and helping students to choose what to study in a sixth-form programme is managed well. Parents are given opportunities to be involved and, unusually, to play a part in the induction process. Students can almost always follow the combination of courses that they wish. Some attractive new subjects have been introduced in the last two years such as performance studies, dance, music technology and philosophy and ethics, and these are popular with students. There are some very small and some very large groups and the amount of time allocated to subjects is in line with the national average. Overall, the sixth form is cost-effective. Because only a minority of students is encouraged to take-up a broad programme, the very good curriculum offered is under-exploited.
59. There are currently no timetabled arrangements for enrichment activities because of financial constraints, or core provision of religious education, and general studies is an option for those who have a light programme. If students want to re-sit GCSEs, revision opportunities are held out of school hours. Key skills provision is poor. It is restricted to lunchtime support, and very few students on advanced courses have taken advantage of this arrangement. The one-year intermediate course does not include planned support for developing key skills competences. There is also no taught element of ICT to help students to develop the ability to make use of information technology as a study tool. Students complain that access to computers is sometimes difficult. The environment for the sixth form is not yet well organised to support independent study, and facilities for working outside lessons are limited.
60. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, both within subject areas and for the sixth form as a whole and this is a real strength of the curriculum. There is a good level of participation in Young Enterprise and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and the good leadership programme provides students with a wide range of opportunities to develop personal skills and qualities through voluntary activities in the local community. A very small number of students make their own arrangements for work experience and there are currently no collaborative links with other providers of post-16 provision in the area.
61. There is a good programme of careers education and guidance for Years 12 and 13 which prepares students for moving on to further education, training or employment. The quality of information available to support the process of applying for entry to higher education is good, but there is a need for more guidance to help students to make decisions about career choices. However, there are timetabling difficulties this year which have made the programme difficult for students to access. This is reflected in the views of a large proportion of students who do not feel that they have sufficient guidance. The programme is taught by a team of teachers. The teaching is good as seen in a Year 12 lesson where students were helped to think about their abilities, qualities and learning styles in the context of the impact on future choices they might make. In lessons, the students' attitudes are positive and they respond well to the task set.
62. The Connexions service provides individual guidance for Years 12 and 13 students either through referral by the individual or by the school. They also have access to a very good range of up to date information in the library and the Connexions personal

advisor attends parents' evenings. Progress in choosing the next step is recorded and followed up by the careers co-ordinator and supported by Connexions.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

63. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but there are variations.
64. The provision made for student's spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Across many subjects of the curriculum, such as history, science, modern foreign languages, music, ICT, design and technology and geography, opportunities for reflection and consideration of the deeper meanings of life are often missed. Religious studies lessons provide good opportunities for spiritual development through encouraging students to make a personal response to the teaching of religions studied. Year 8 students reflected on the teaching of Buddhism by creating their own Eightfold Path for life. Some assemblies contribute to spiritual development through providing time for reflection. In a Year 10 assembly on Leprosy, students were encouraged to think about what they could do to help others who are suffering. In form time, opportunities for reflection are not taken. There are not enough opportunities for students to take part in collective worship.
65. Provision for moral development is very good. Most subjects consider moral issues, such as in geography, where Year 9 students discussed the ethical issues of sweatshop labour and exploitation in less-developed countries. In sports activities, students show good regard for playing by the rules. In their drama work, students often explore responses to moral dilemmas. As part of the life skills programme, 'You, Me and Us' days contribute well to moral development through exploring issues such as drug taking and vandalism. In GCSE religious studies lessons, work on poverty and wealth, and Euthanasia provide valuable opportunities for moral development. In history, sixth-form students consider moral issues raised by the Holocaust when they meet with survivors. Students show a moral concern about the needs of others less fortunate than themselves by raising money for charities such as Comic Relief through events such as non-uniform days and student auctions. Sixth form students take part in events such as World Challenge. In 2002, students raised money to visit Venezuela and help with building projects. Staff set good role models through the relationships they establish with other adults and students. They clearly demonstrate by their work, words and actions that there are principles that distinguish right from wrong.
66. Provision for students' social development is good. Collaborative group work is developed effectively in subjects such as music, English and modern foreign languages. In dance lessons, students work well together to evaluate their own and others work. At sports day, all students are encouraged to join in and points are awarded to those who participate in the events. Sixth-form students support and mix socially with younger students in Year 7 very well as part of the 'Buddy' system. Extra-curricular activities such as the Leadership scheme encourage sixth-form students to support teachers and mix with others, both in the college and the community. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is well established in the college; it provides opportunities for social development through involvement in voluntary work and outdoor expeditions. The Student Council is actively involved in projects to improve amenities and, in all years, students have the opportunity to be elected as form group representatives. The sixth-form committee, led by the head boy and head girl, takes responsibility for organising social events. Younger students in Year 8 undertake reception duties.
67. Provision for cultural development is good. Students benefit from visits to the theatre in drama and English. Drama workshops, in conjunction with outside agencies, offer opportunities for participation in cultural activities. In art, students visit galleries such as

the Birmingham City Gallery and some in Year 12 have the opportunity to work with a local sculptor at Burghley House. The good range of extra-curricular musical activities provides opportunities for cultural development. In modern foreign languages, the thriving tradition of exchange, work experience and other visits, such as to the German Christmas Market, help to raise students awareness of European culture. In most subjects, opportunities to enrich teaching by using examples from a range of cultures are taken up. In dance, students benefit from working with African and Indian dance groups. In music, students have the opportunity to learn about Japanese and Indian music. In textiles, Year 9 students use a variety of images from different cultures in a multicultural cushion project. Religious education contributes to students' growing awareness of religious diversity through the study of Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism and visits to places of worship. The 'You, Me and Us' programme helps students to discuss issues relating to racism; this helps to prepare them for life beyond the College.

68. Current policy documents lack clear statements on how the college seeks to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although some subjects have addressed these aspects in their documentation, the absence of a clear policy means they are not planned systematically into schemes of work or monitored.
69. Since the previous inspection, provision for moral, social and cultural development has remained strong. Provision for spiritual development remains a weakness.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

70. The college continues to make very good provision for the care of its students. The college places strong emphasis on knowing its students well. Their needs are well identified and there are effective monitoring and support systems in place. High priority is placed on the support, welfare and guidance of individual students. Experience, commitment and thoroughness are strengths in the pastoral network, combined with very good support from external agencies. The form tutor is regarded as important, providing continuity for students, but there is variation and inconsistency in practice and in the use of form time. Health and safety arrangements are effective. The site is secure and well-maintained, with effective plans for further security improvements. Students are supervised well and particular care is taken over the bussing arrangements. Child protection procedures are very good and the college liaises effectively with external agencies. Arrangements for the care of "Looked After" children and those with specific medical need are good.
71. The funding of a first-aider and two counsellors is clear evidence of the importance the college places on providing individual support for vulnerable students. Regular and effective dialogue with other agencies, including the police and the health authority college nurse service, keep the college well-informed about their wide catchment area.
72. Arrangements for transfer to the college and induction into Year 7 are very thorough and include an interview with all new students in Year 6. Good liaison with the large number of feeder schools ensures that key information is made available to Year 7 teachers.
73. Good behaviour is maintained through high expectations and very good supervision. Incidents are dealt with effectively using appropriate sanctions. Internal exclusion from lessons and detention is kept to a minimum and very good monitoring and support is provided for the small number of students who misbehave. Exclusion from college is used effectively and good use is made of re-entry interviews and the "on report" system. Achievement in and out of college is recognised and given priority in special assemblies and awards ceremonies.
74. Attendance is promoted and monitored very well and the college benefits from an excellent relationship with a very knowledgeable and pro-active Education Welfare Officer who provides very good support for students with particular problems.
75. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good. The Life Skills programme is planned well to include relevant guidance, focusing on specific and topical issues for each year group. A range of opportunities is provided through enrichment, extra-curricular activities, trips and visits to support personal development. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is very well subscribed and the Student Council enables students to effect change.
76. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. However, the college's assessment policy is too brief and has been overtaken by current practice. The assessment information used to predict GCSE grades is very thorough and well presented for Years 10 and 11 but is less accurate for Years 7 to 9, meaning that progress comparisons between subjects are unreliable.
77. The documents detailing test data and grade predictions produced by senior management for individual students has the potential to be a very effective tool for teaching staff but there are too many inconsistencies in its use. Tracking information and target grades, now being produced at the start of Years 7, 10 and 12 and shared with students and parents, is a very positive development but is not yet sufficiently well

understood. Test results and predictions with regular progress updates during the year, are now being effectively used by heads of year to identify underachievement in all year groups and assign mentors. However, the role of the form tutor is not clearly defined, target setting is not sufficiently developed and there is insufficient use of tutor time for meaningful dialogue between students and teachers.

78. There is particularly good assessment practice in geography, art, modern foreign languages and design and technology. There is some very good practice by individual teachers. For example, in a Year 10 German lesson, a teacher made excellent use of data to enable her to monitor progress, provide encouragement and set appropriate targets. However, inconsistency in the use of the available data across all subjects is preventing students being given sufficient, regular information on how well they are doing and how to improve. Even within departments which make good use of data there is variation in practice. Teachers do not routinely make learning objectives clear and student self-assessment is underdeveloped.
79. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is satisfactory overall, with very good practice in art, and good use in modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory in science, discrete ICT and religious education where assessment is used insufficiently to plan the next steps in learning for individual students. There is too little analysis of assessment outcomes by many subject teams in order to make changes to planning and teaching approaches.
80. Monitoring of students' academic progress is satisfactory. Good use is made of the data to guide students into appropriate curricular choices at the end of Year 9. Current monitoring by Heads of Year is good, providing an overview of the year group, however monitoring by subject teachers is not developed sufficiently well and is having limited impact on teaching. Target setting specific to subject areas is not well-established. Students record grade information in their planners but are not provided with enough guidance to identify specific targets to help them improve further.
81. Assessment of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The needs of these students are identified before they attend the College. The college also carries out further assessment to ensure all students' special educational needs are identified. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are well-organised and usefully involve learning support assistants as well as the students themselves. The college provides a high level of classroom support to students with special educational needs to raise both their achievement and self-esteem. Targets set in student's individual education plans are too vague and are not specific and measurable. However, learning support assistants break down these targets into small achievable steps when they work with students. Insufficient use is made of the individual education plans from feeder schools to inform the students' first college individual education plan.

Sixth form

82. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good overall and very good in modern foreign languages. Students receive accurate information on how well they are doing through regular tracking reports. The diagnosis and provision for individual learning needs is good overall, with very good individual feedback in mathematics, although it is less rigorous in other subjects. Students comment favourably that their work is thoroughly assessed and that teachers are very accessible if they have difficulties. The tracking reports provide a good basis for discussion between students and tutors.
83. Staff provide good academic information, advice and guidance. Good support is provided to prospective sixth-form students in Year 11 with individual interviews to

discuss subject choices, and further guidance is provided after examination results are known. The majority of students enjoy being in the sixth form and are confident that their courses are matched well to their abilities. Students are given satisfactory support for the preparation of UCAS forms and there is a very good range of up-to-date information available to them in the Resources Centre. However, they would welcome better drop-in access to careers guidance which is currently provided for one lunchtime a week. Links with the world of work and other educational providers are inadequate to provide appropriate guidance. Most students actively participate in the leadership programme. There is insufficient dedicated space for, and supervision of, private study.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

84. Arthur Mellows Village College is a popular, heavily over-subscribed school, about which parents feel very positive. They feel fortunate that their children attend. Parents' attendance at consultations and the good range of information sessions is very good. The college produces good quality written documents and provides very good information for the post-16 phase. Students' planners contain good information that is used effectively but parents are unclear about homework arrangements. New arrangements need to be clarified to enable parents to support and monitor what their children are doing.
85. Staff work hard to communicate effectively with parents and involve them in any concerns and parents feel very comfortable in approaching the college. Partnership arrangements with parents has improved since the last inspection. The large majority of parents regard the teaching as satisfactory. They feel the college sets high standards for learning and expects students to work hard. A few parents believe the college does not set students the right amount of homework
86. There is a supportive parents' association, the Arthur Mellows Association (AMA), which is actively involved in the life of the school through good links with the School Council. It successfully organises social and fundraising activities to support specific projects.
87. Annual reports are satisfactory; most parents find them accessible and useful. Helpful comparative information and target grades are included as well as relevant information about effort, behaviour, presentation and organisation. Written comments do not always include enough information about progress and often lack clear, specific targets to help students improve. The recent introduction of 'predicted' grade information at the start of Years 7 and 10, with general targets for improvement, is a good initiative, but, at the parents' meeting, there was some confusion about how parents could best interpret and use this information to support their children. The use of 'predicted' grades is much more firmly established, and better understood, in Year 12.
88. There is a good level of attendance by parents of students who have a statement of special educational needs at annual review meetings. Learning support assistants also make telephone calls to parents to provide information on students' successes as well as contacting parents about any concern. Parents also receive a progress report card every two weeks. However, this report often lacks information on what the student needs to do before the next progress report card is sent home.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

89. Overall, leadership is sound. The warden and members of the leadership team have a very clear vision to provide each individual student with access to a relevant, broad, balanced, quality learning experience which promotes and develops education and social responsibility as lifelong activities. The vision is communicated very effectively

through a 'mission statement' which is displayed prominently throughout the school. Students, parents, teachers and governors are very aware of the mission statement and support it wholeheartedly. The vision forms the basis of all strategic decision making and the college is making good progress in implementing the mission statement. This is seen particularly effectively in the college's curricular provision which has been very successfully designed to provide relevant opportunities for all students. However, leadership by subject teachers is too inconsistent and, although most are managing their department in at least a satisfactory manner, some have not been doing enough to raise standards of achievement. The leadership team provides a wealth of data on students' performance but this is not yet used sufficiently effectively by many subject teams. The overall impact of leadership and management throughout the college is that students are maintaining above-average standards, but not improving on them.

90. The leadership team has identified highly appropriate priorities for development, such as improving teaching and learning, making better use of assessment, increasing the use of computers and implementing national strategies for raising standards. The college has established highly appropriate partnerships with external educationalists, such as representatives of Cambridge University and local education authorities, in order to make sure that proposed developments benefit from research outcomes. This has a strong potential for success. Processes to support the priorities are at different stages of implementation and all need further work in order to have a greater impact on raising achievement. For example, the college's 'Effective Teaching for Effective learning' document does not cover enough of the aspects of high quality teaching. Staff training and monitoring of lessons have raised the quality of teaching since the previous inspection but further improvement is needed. Use of assessment has been getting better but many students are still unsure of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. The number of computers has increased substantially in recent years and careful consideration is given to their positioning around the college to maximise use, but the ratio of computers to students is still below the national average. Implementation of national strategies is being carried out effectively in some subjects, such as mathematics, but less well in others, such as science.
91. There is too much variation in the quality of improvement planning by subject leaders and their teams. Most subject improvement plans do not identify strategies for raising standards with sufficient clarity. Criteria for success and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are not made sufficiently explicit. The performance management of staff is well-established and external monitoring of the college's approach has produced a very favourable report. However, there are too few links between the college improvement plan, subject plans and the professional development of staff; this is hampering the impact of the college's priorities for raising standards. Members of the leadership team have worked closely with some subject leaders to produce a significant improvement in provision, such as mathematics. However, there has been too little support in other subjects, such as science, where students are not doing well enough.
92. The governing body is very supportive of the school and discharges its role of holding the college to account effectively. Governors are keen to know how well the college is doing and to ascertain proposals for improvement. They ensure that they can do this by involving themselves in training, such as in interpreting performance data, and by requesting presentations from college representatives on strategies for raising standards. They also receive good quality verbal and written information from the leadership team. This results in them having a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and enables them to be active in shaping its direction. Governors fulfil the majority of their statutory duties well but have not ensured that the college meets its legal requirements for providing acts of worship or religious

education.

93. There is a good system of supporting educational priorities through financial planning. The college receives a level of funding which is substantially lower than similar schools and it takes great care to allocate this wisely. For example, curricular planning is carried out to reflect the mission statement and then accurately costed to inform modifications. The low level of income often restricts the college's plans to enhance provision. In these situations the leadership team gives extensive consideration to how funding can be targeted to produce maximum benefit for students, but sacrifices in planned provision have to be made. For instance, the development of key skills and curricular enrichment for post-16 students has been temporarily suspended in order to fund a suitably wide range of sixth-form courses. Government grants to support specific action are very effectively matched to their purpose and detailed accounts are kept of expenditure. Alternative sources of provision are considered when allocating contracts, such as for catering and grounds maintenance, ensuring that best value is obtained.
94. The college provides good value for money. A lower-than-average income per student is used well to provide a broad curriculum and to maintain above average academic standards.
95. The special educational needs provision is effectively managed and organised by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Regular timetabled meetings enable learning support assistants to share information on students and to share expertise. Learning support assistants are supported and encouraged by the college to attend further training. There is annual appraisal, which acknowledges the quality of their work and supports them in improving their skills in delivering effective support. Most subject improvement plans do not include a specific reference to special educational needs. There is no whole-school, special educational needs improvement plan to inform the college improvement plan, although certain special educational needs developments are included in the college plan.
96. On balance, the standard of accommodation is unsatisfactory. The resources centre is a strength, the main corridors are generously sized and some subjects have teaching and office spaces that are adequate. There is an excellent dance studio, and physical education has good outside play areas and a dedicated theory room. However, all the resistant materials and graphics areas are outdated and inappropriate for a 'design and make' approach. Moreover, most science laboratories are too small and outdated and are having a negative impact on the quality of learning. There is a lack of private study facilities around the college.
97. The site is maintained well on a long-term as well as a daily basis. For example, additional lunchtime seating is quickly packed away and kept clean. Some departments make strenuous efforts to present their area well. For example, the art department creates a very positive learning environment through the quality and range of their displays. The predominantly metal window frames are resilient but they make it hard to control the temperature in some of the sunnier rooms. The lack of blinds is limiting the learning in several areas, most notably in media studies. A small number of minor health and safety points were noticed and passed on to the college's senior team. All health and safety issues from the previous inspection have been properly addressed.
98. The adequacy and suitability of resources for learning is satisfactory. The school has increased the quantity and quality of the computers available to deliver information technology to all students but lacks the flexibility to use the computers in all subject areas, for example resistant materials in design and technology, sixth form access and music. The learning resource centre is a well-managed asset to the school, well

stocked with up-to-date fiction, media and non-fiction books, periodicals and texts for all age groups. Many departments lack modern projection equipment and book stocks and resources are inadequate in languages, special educational needs and science.

Sixth form

99. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, overall. The college is in the process of developing a new management structure for the sixth form which it plans to implement in September 2003.
100. Members of the senior management team maintain a similar overview of the sixth form teaching, learning, quality and standards as they do for the main college. The senior management team has a clear view of the areas for development in the sixth form. There is a section in the school improvement plan, which appropriately focuses on improving the quality of provision. Responsibility for day-to-day management and the welfare of students rests with the acting head of sixth form and her assistant. The head of sixth form leads a team of tutors and is successfully managing their involvement in the personal development of students. The current management structure does not enable the head of sixth form to work sufficiently closely with the senior managers in shaping the policies and direction for the sixth form because she is not involved in meetings where these issues are discussed. She has too little involvement in implementing the improvement plan for the sixth form.
101. Course management by the senior management team is satisfactory; a good range of AS and A-level subjects is offered. However, too few students are encouraged to study more than three subjects at AS level. The great majority of sixth form students are able to study their preferred choice of subjects. The college offers three vocational courses after taking into consideration the range of courses offered at other local institutions. The management of key skills is unsatisfactory. Although some subjects identify opportunities for developing aspects of key skills within their curriculum this is not consistent across all areas and it is not monitored by the head of sixth form. There is no definitive list of individual subject provision for key skills. Outside examination subjects, there are no additional opportunities for students to develop aspects of key skills, such as ICT and the application of number. At present, due to lack of funding, there is no curriculum enrichment programme provided and this is unsatisfactory. Only a few students opt to do a general studies course in Year 13. Provision for statutory religious education is unsatisfactory; the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are not met.
102. The leadership programme for students in Year 12 is managed and organised well by the head of sixth form and provides a good range of opportunities for personal growth, through voluntary work and working with teachers and younger students. Form tutors and the head of sixth form are effective in monitoring students involvement in this programme.
103. The head of sixth form and team of tutors work well together and they are effective in supporting students throughout their studies through regular checks on progress towards achieving subject targets.
104. Governors take a full role in strategic decisions that shape the direction of post-16 education. This includes reviewing the range of courses offered and consideration of the policy on 'matriculation' requirements for three or four AS level subjects. However, they do not ensure that students have full access to the LEA's Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
105. Financial planning for the sixth form is good. Courses are prudently costed to ensure

that the sixth form is not using resources allocated to the main college. Some courses are running with lower than economic numbers to ensure that there is wide curricular access. These are balanced by the strong numbers in popular subjects.

106. The deployment of well-qualified staff is very good and students benefit from the expertise and knowledge they have in their subject area. Teachers have good access to professional development opportunities to update their knowledge, such as of current examination syllabuses. Learning resources are adequate overall but there are deficiencies in some areas. In design and technology, there are no opportunities for students to access ICT resources such as CAD/CAM within the workshop. Sixth form accommodation is of an adequate size but the space is not used effectively. There are insufficient spaces in the common room and elsewhere in the college for private study and students do not have sufficient access to ICT to support independent learning.
107. The sixth form is cost effective. The college offers a comprehensive sixth form education. The great majority of students make good progress in their studies. They have good attitudes and show responsibility to others. Students have a good record of successful entry to the next stage of their education or employment.
108. In the previous inspection report, there was no specific comment on management of the sixth form. It was reported that governors were not fulfilling their statutory duty to provide religious education in the sixth form. Progress in addressing this issue has been unsatisfactory because religious education is still not provided.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

109. The governors, warden and staff should:

- 1) Raise achievement in Years 10 and 11 in science and English by:
 - improving the development and monitoring of lesson quality;
 - ensuring that students are clearer about how they can improve;
 - producing better-focused plans for improvement.(Paras: 8, 11, 12, 89, 90, 91, 110, 112-115, 130, 132, 133, 135, 137)

- 2) Raise the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - widening the scope of suggestions to teachers in the 'Effective Teaching for Effective Learning' policy;
 - making better use of lesson observations to provide sharply focused advice to teachers on how they can improve;
 - helping teachers plan, using clear objectives, to provide a purposeful learning challenge for students;
 - making expectations of homework clearer to students and parents;
 - improving the teaching of key skills.(Paras: 30, 31, 35, 36, 37, 46, 84, 85, 90, 101)

- 3) Make better use of assessment by:
 - ensuring all students know how well they are doing and how they can improve;
 - making all teachers aware of how to interpret and use assessment data;
 - disseminating existing good practice to all teachers.(Paras: 76-82, 89, 90)

- 4) Improve the quality of subject leadership and management by:
 - producing subject improvement plans which clearly identify strategies for raising standards, criteria for success and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation;
 - ensuring that members of the leadership team work more closely with subject leaders to address the college's priorities;
 - making the links between the school improvement plan, subject plans and the professional development of teachers clearer.(Paras: 89, 90, 91, 100)

In addition, the governors may wish to include the following issues in their action plan:

- Meet statutory requirements by:
 - providing a daily act of collective worship;
 - providing religious education for all students;
 - ensuring that ICT is taught and reported in Years 10 and 11.(Paras: 49, 59, 92, 104)

- Improve the provision for students' spiritual development by:
 - producing a policy on how spiritual development is to be monitored;
 - identifying provision in subject schemes of work.(Paras: 64, 68, 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	186
	Sixth form	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		264

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	2	30	75	68	10	1	0
Percentage	1	16	40	37	5.5	0.5	0

Sixth form

Number	3	16	32	23	4	0	0
Percentage	4	20	42	29	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1165	221
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	64	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	20	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	114	2

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	15

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	61

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	118	119	237

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	96	97
	Girls	99	87	82
	Total	185	183	179
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (75)	77 (78)	76 (75)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (43)	58 (49)	36 (37)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	99	95
	Girls	100	93	85
	Total	188	192	180
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (76)	81 (78)	76 (69)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (36)	63 (53)	38 (36)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	106	102	208

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	45	91	103
	Girls	67	96	100
	Total	112	187	203
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	54 (57)	90 (91)	98 (96)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	42.2
	National	39.8

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	36	52	88
	Average point score per candidate	15.9 (14.9)	15.2 (17.6)	15.5 (16.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	33	51	84	4	1	5
	Average point score per candidate	15.8	15.3	15.5	12	12	12
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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	1,333	74	0
White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	14	3	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	1	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	14	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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.32
Number of students per qualified teacher	19.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	713.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	24.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3,785,059
Total expenditure	3,831,167
Expenditure per student	2,836
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,444
Balance carried forward to next year	-30,664

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	35.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1,386

Number of questionnaires returned

203

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	55	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	50	3	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	57	6	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	46	21	7	1
The teaching is good.	32	56	6	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	14	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	45	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	43	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	45	20	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	37	46	4	1	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	65	3	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	48	4	4	13

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 national tests have risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- The newly appointed head of English is beginning to focus the subject team well on strategies for raising standards.
- Good relationships between students and staff are producing positive student attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not achieving well enough in GCSE English.
- The development and monitoring of lesson quality is having insufficient impact across the department.
- Assessment is not used well enough to let students know how well they are doing or how they can improve.

110. Results in national tests are now above the national average, with 80 per cent of Year 9 students reaching Level 5 or higher. There has been a significant rise in performance over the last three years. In the recent GCSE examinations, the proportions of students reaching grade C or higher in English and in English literature were in line with the national average but represent too little progress when compared with students' previous attainment at the end of Year 9. Candidates perform significantly worse in GCSE literature than in many of their other subjects.

111. Students enter the school with standards of literacy that are above the national average. A typical Year 7 mixed ability group ranges from students working at Level 3, who are concentrating on sentence accuracy, to those attempting Level 6. The latter are capable of selecting precise evidence to back up their own deductions or successfully adopting the main features of a specific style of writing. One class discussion featured the students' own thoughtful and original metaphors which were creative and apposite. There is steady progress during Years 7, 8 and 9, with students maintaining above average standards. They are succeeding with more demanding texts, including analysis of Shakespeare. By the end of that year, most students remain above the national average for English. Students with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress throughout Years 7 to 9.

112. Towards the end of Year 11, standards in English are in line with the national average. This is an underachievement and represents too little progress considering the standards reached by the end of Year 9. Some Year 11 work samples showed significant variations in breadth and quality amongst students of similar prior attainment indicating too little achievement for many. Moreover, there were lessons in every year group where the brightest or most motivated were not sufficiently extended, even when they were being taught in sets, resulting in them not having sufficient opportunity to demonstrate high attainment. However, many students are helped by the department's after school 'more able' clubs in Years 8 to 11 and this improves their progress. Students with special educational needs make steady progress during Years 10 and 11.

113. Overall, teaching is satisfactory but the quality is diverse and a small number of unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The best teaching supported students' learning by providing: clear learning objectives; helpful examples; precise deadlines; good variety; and effective periods of review. As a result, students worked ambitiously from the outset, maintained a good pace, enjoyed themselves and consolidated their progress. The unsatisfactory teaching was associated with low expectations, limited planning, slow pace and poor classroom discipline. In some lessons, the failure to plan for different ability levels held back some very willing students. An inventive series of 'booster' classes is used well to improve the standards of lower-attaining students. The department makes good use of ICT in the study of English, for example in supporting students well in improving their word-processing skills. Students with special needs receive in-class support from teaching assistants and are given well taught 'progress units' in separate groups which enable them to learn effectively. However, in a number of the lessons seen, the least and most able were given inappropriate or insufficient challenge and progress diminished accordingly.
114. Teachers use the national strategy for raising standards of literacy and are now making a satisfactory contribution to developing students' literacy skills. The vast majority of students are interested and keen to do well. Their positive attitudes made a significant contribution to learning in every lesson observed.
115. Leadership and management within English are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has made an encouraging start by creating a team approach to marking, the revision of schemes of work and new ways of preparing candidates for examinations. There has not yet been sufficient work on generating agreed models of good teaching practice, so that lesson quality can rise, and ensuring that lesson planning meets the needs of all abilities in a class. Assessment information is not used well enough to raise standards through the setting of student targets. There is also insufficient monitoring of practice to determine whether teachers' strategies are having a positive effect.
116. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards in the national tests for thirteen year olds have risen significantly. Units of work have been developed which are effective in broadening students' experience of speaking, listening and reading. The department now makes greater use of ICT in the teaching of English.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The good relationships with students and the management of their behaviour through suitable teaching methods.
- The physical and creative effort shown by the students.

Areas for improvement

- The absence of specialist leadership is having an adverse effect on the status and development of the subject.
- Too little use is made of grade criteria to inform students of their current performance level and how they can improve.

117. Students who opt for GCSE drama achieve results which are above the national average and in line with their performance in other subjects at the college. In the 2002 examinations, every candidate passed and 72 per cent reached grade C or above. Standards and progress in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Students are familiar with the main questions and conventions of drama. For example,

when exploring the theme of status, they suggested and used straightforward ideas such as tone of voice and anger. Although their concentration was good, relatively few students were ready to employ the broader and subtler devices suggested by the teacher.

118. Students make satisfactory progress to maintain above average standards in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 10, students have made the progress associated with increased maturity and breadth of outlook. One Year 11 class worked with great energy and commitment in preparing their improvisations. They demonstrated good technical, communication and evaluative skills. A sample of their final written work showed similar qualities.
119. The quality of teaching in drama is satisfactory. The best teaching observed demonstrated subject knowledge, skilled demonstration and calm, effective student management based on mutual respect. In such circumstances, the students responded with increasing maturity and skill. The weakest teaching was associated with limited subject knowledge and poor behaviour management. This led to students lacking focus and respect for the subject. In many of the lessons observed, teachers did not ensure consistent progress within lessons or provide enough opportunities for students to share ideas. There is little use of time at the end of the lessons to recap the main learning points with students. There is little use of assessment and target setting, securely based on grade criteria, to help students improve.
120. There is currently no specialist subject leader for drama. Teachers are working hard to maintain a satisfactory provision but the lack of a specialist head of subject is having an adverse effect on planning for improvement and on effective support for non-specialist teachers.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- Students' national test results at the end of Year 9.
- Provision for the most able students during Years 7 to 9.
- Effective implementation of the national strategy for mathematics
- A well-managed database for tracking students' progress

Areas for improvement

- Students do not know what they have to do to improve their performance in mathematics
- The scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 does not provide sufficient guidance to support teachers in their planning.

121. Over recent years, students' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been improving and in 2002 were well above the national average. The performance of boys improved significantly in 2002. The test results for students are in line with the assessment that teachers make of students' performance.
122. Results at GCSE have been above the national average in recent years but dipped to being in line with the national results in 2002. However, it should be noted that the percentage of the Year 11 cohort that was entered for the GCSE examination in 2002 was higher in mathematics than in other subjects, and the proportion of students with very low grades was considerably less than the national average. The percentage of students gaining A* and A grades in 2002 was below the national average.

123. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and students make good progress throughout Years 7 to 9. Students across the ability range have a variety of strategies for performing mental and written calculations and they generally use correct mathematical vocabulary when describing their methods. Middle and higher attaining students confidently extend their calculation strategies to working with decimals. Lower-attaining students in Year 9 have a good understanding and recall of the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They use the correct terminology when describing shapes and use the formula to calculate the area of a rectangle. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 calculate the scale factor of an enlargement and use this to calculate unknown lengths of similar shapes. Students in Year 9 are prepared well for the national tests.
124. Based on the students' work that was seen during the inspection, standards are above those normally seen in Years 10 and 11. The progress made by students is good overall but is better in Year 11 than Year 10, as a result of good or very good teaching. Students make better progress when the context of the learning is of interest to them. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on ratio, the teacher used coins to model the sharing of a given amount of money between two people in the ratio 2:1 and then progressed to other ratios. Lower-attaining students were supported by the teacher and a learning support assistant, and progressed well from ordering positive and negative numbers to using a number line to calculate the sum and difference of a mixture of positive and negative numbers.
125. Teaching is good overall and this leads to good progress in learning. Teaching was good or better in almost four-fifths of the lessons observed, with all lessons in Year 7 and Year 11 being good or very good. Teachers have successfully adopted the key principles of the national strategy for mathematics. Teachers in both key stages are following the recommended three-part lesson structure and have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject content. Where teaching was very good, the teachers had high but realistic expectations for what students would be able to achieve. The questions were challenging and students had to apply their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar problems. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, higher-attaining students began by drawing the graph of the sine function in the range 0° to 360° . By the end of the lesson they were able to apply their knowledge and understanding of the function to solving sine equations in the range 360° to 720° . Where teaching was weaker, the teacher did not challenge poor behaviour and allowed students to continue their own conversations while explaining key points, asking questions or explaining a task. Consequently, students did not know what they should be doing and the pace of learning was slow as the teacher helped individual students. Students in Years 7 to 9 use ICT effectively, for example in creating charts and diagrams for the purpose of comparing sets of data. There is, however, no evidence of planning for the use of ICT in Years 10 and 11. Most teachers are not regularly marking students' work in exercise books and students do not generally receive sufficient written feedback to help them know and remember what they have to do to improve.
126. Students generally enjoy their mathematics lessons and relate well to their teachers. Students' response is better when the teacher presents an activity within a context that is relevant to the students. For example, in a Year 10 probability lesson, students enthusiastically collected data from playing the "scissors, paper, stone" game in order to then compare experimental and theoretical probabilities. Students very quickly collected sufficient data to make realistic comparisons.
127. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. The head of department has a clear focus on raising achievement. Teachers in the department work well as a team, using meeting time to share planning and develop resources. New teachers to the

department are supported well by the head of department and other members of the team. The department has a well-managed database that is used to record student assessment results and to track student progress. The mathematics team has not yet determined how assessment information could be used to set targets for individual students so that they know what they have to do to improve their performance. The department makes good provision for the most able students in Years 7 to 9 by building on the master classes that the department runs for local Year 6 students.

128. Progress since the last inspection is very good. Improvements have been made to address most of the issues raised in the last report on mathematics. The area still to be addressed is the improvement of the Years 10 and 11 scheme of work so that it becomes a document that supports teachers in their planning.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Curricular development and planning for Years 7 to 9.
- Some innovative teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' depth of subject knowledge and effectiveness of questioning students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are too low – understanding of key concepts is not secure.
- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management fail to set a clear focus on raising achievement and to monitor teaching and learning effectively.
- Students do not know what they have to do to improve their performance in science.

129. Over recent years, students' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been improving and in 2002 were above the national average with boys and girls performing equally well. The test results are in line with the assessments that teachers make of students' performance. However, this performance is below that of schools with students with similar prior attainment and background.

130. Results at GCSE in 2002 are well below average and continue a downward trend over recent years. Students' science results are well below what they achieved in other subjects, with girls' performance worse than boys. The percentage of students gaining A* and A grades in 2002 was also below the national average.

131. Standards for current students, towards the end of Year 9, are slightly above average and students are making satisfactory progress throughout Years 7 to 9. Students across the ability range have reasonable grasp of planning an investigation. They can explain different variables and some students begin to use their scientific knowledge to explain their observations, for example explaining the effect of light on the rate of photosynthesis in pond weed. Most students use the correct scientific vocabulary and have established a satisfactory understanding of key concepts across the science disciplines. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 are using their understanding of particle theory to explain the content of water in different soil/rock types and can research topics such as the effect of alcohol on body tissues and organs. Progress for some students is slowed by an insecure understanding of key concepts and a lack of knowledge of their own progress.

132. Based on the students' work that was seen during the inspection, standards are below

those normally seen in Years 10 and 11. The progress of students is unsatisfactory. Although attitudes to learning and concentration are satisfactory and on many occasions good, this application and interest in the subject is not translated into effective learning. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students showed a basic understanding of particle structure but found difficulty in using this information in different contexts. This resulted in slower-than-expected progress in relation to the students' capabilities. Lower-attaining students who were supported by the teacher and, on occasion, a learning support assistant, made satisfactory progress, for example in explaining the effect of smoke on lung function.

133. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Although satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, leading to satisfactory learning, a significant minority of unsatisfactory teaching is evident in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge which is used well to question students' knowledge and understanding of key ideas and provide clear explanations of scientific concepts. In Years 7 to 9, the principles of the national strategy for raising science standards are beginning to filter into lesson planning. In the occasional lesson, the recommended three-part lesson structure is evident. Many lessons, however, in Years 7 to 9, and particularly in Years 10 and 11, lack a clarity of lesson objectives shared with the students. Too often, lessons proceed at a slow pace without clear, measurable and understandable outcomes for the lesson. Ends of lessons are ineffective without suitable reviews or plenaries that consolidate what students have learned. For example, in a Year 11 biology lesson, although the students behaved reasonably well and tried to listen and take an active part, it was unclear to them what level of understanding of inherited diseases was expected by the end of the lesson, resulting in most students having a fragmented understanding of the subject matter. The teaching in unsatisfactory lessons also tends to be repetitive and lacks appropriate rigour and challenge for capable students and relies too heavily on teacher-led activity, copying notes and the active participation of only a minority of students.
134. Where students enjoy science lessons, especially girls, the subject matter is relevant and understood well by students. It relates to their lives and they become actively engaged in the activity. For example, in a Year 10 waves lesson, students modelled transverse waves as a human chain which had a strong, positive effect on their learning.
135. The management of Years 7 to 9 is good. The schemes of work and planning documentation have been fully revised and a comprehensive set of data is beginning to be used to inform teaching and planning. Overall, the leadership and management of science is unsatisfactory. The department has no clear focus, strategies or coherent plans to raise achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are working hard to improve provision in Years 10 and 11, for example the syllabus has been changed and work has been carried out to improve the scheme of work. However, guidance for new staff is unsatisfactory and expectations are unclear. The department lacks a comprehensive and detailed development plan with costed improvement strategies, monitoring routines and success criteria by which to judge progress. Teachers lack clear guidance on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Expectations are inconsistent across the department. Students are unsure of how to improve their performance, lacking annotated guidance of level or grade expectations. The department does not use assessment information well enough to set targets for individual students so that they know what they have to do to improve their performance. The provision of a dedicated ICT suite in the science faculty has good potential to improve learning. Unfortunately, due to its outdated specification and limitations in teachers' experience and confidence, ICT remains an underdeveloped resource for use in science teaching.
136. The learning environment in many laboratories is unsatisfactory. Display is often

uninspiring and fails to interest students or give them exemplars of how to improve their own work. Some laboratories are outdated, too small, with damaged furniture and fittings and are in need of refurbishment.

137. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Attainment has declined in Years 10 and 11 and progress is now unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, has become worse and overall management of the subject is now less effective than in the previous report.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- There is a comprehensive scheme of work which enables students to experience a wide range of art media and artists.
- Effective assessment approaches provide students with clear and accurate feedback about how to improve.
- Students have good levels of understanding about art and artists and particular confidence in use of line, colour, pattern and visual composition.
- Teachers have an extensive depth of specialist expertise.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average and boys did not achieve well enough.
- Teachers do not encourage students sufficiently to value experimentation as a basis for creative risk taking with media, including mixed media.
- There are too few opportunities for students to encounter art and artists, through first-hand experience in Years 7 to 9.

138. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate attainment above that achieved nationally.
139. GCSE results over many years have achieved A*-C grades for a higher proportion of students than nationally. The performance of boys has been the most significant variable over the last three years with their success boosting grades in 2000, and their underachievement in 2002 causing a fall in A*-C passes to below the national average.
140. Work seen during the inspection showed the majority of students achieving results above those typically seen at the end of Year 9. During the Year 7 to 9 course, girls and boys of all abilities experience success due to the breadth of the course, which enables them to discover personal strengths. For example, in one Year 9 lesson observed, a boy working in papier mâché to interpret Matisse's work, expressed a high sense of achievement in relation to his 2D work. The thorough assessment approaches used, which include student's self-evaluation, contribute well to their understanding. Students control, yet exploit, media creatively in order to achieve a good result. For example, the printmaking techniques by Year 7 show an awareness of the unique qualities of print to interpret a still life. The role of the art technician in supporting the teacher is significant in enabling groups larger than those normally seen to achieve well. Students observe and record using a range of media. The Year 7 observation studies show high expectations being achieved. Where the scheme of work connects directly to other artists work, students' understanding is applied well. For example, in a Year 9 project, students have studied the colour used by the Fauve artists and applied it creatively to drawings of landscape observed from the school grounds. Although sketchbooks show some evidence of experimentation, there is limited evidence of

students explicitly relating their mark-making with those of different artists, across the full range of media used. There are strong developmental drawings evident in Year 9 sketchbooks in preparation for making three-dimensional work inspired by Matisse, although the collection and analysis of ideas, experiences and observations is generally an area for development.

141. The work of Year 11 students seen during the inspection was generally in line with previous results above the national average. Students make particularly good progress in developing critical skills in relation to their analysis of different artists and movements. The curriculum builds on their knowledge about individual artists by comparing and contrasting the work of different artists. For example, in the Year 10 still-life project, students compared different work by the artist Morandi, comparing the still life of Morandi with that of Cézanne, and progressed to comparing their own work with that of other artists. Although the quality and range of research is often good, some students lack the confidence to apply their earlier experiments with media. The gallery visit makes a significant impact upon students' work. Year 11 students were able to make an imaginative response to poetry due to their analysis of Pre-Raphaelite images in relation to text at the Birmingham City Gallery. Imaginative composition is a strength with all students.
142. Overall the teaching of art is good. The most effective teaching is characterised by high expectations of students and perceptive observation of their progress to help them improve. A brisk pace is achieved by giving advice and demonstration using interesting stimuli, producing creative activity from students. A consistently good feature is the use made of examples to illustrate a lesson objective. Displays are used well in the department to show a range of creative solutions to a common problem. Good feedback is given to students about how to progress and, in some GCSE lessons, individual pieces of work are analysed effectively with suggestions about how to develop them. This builds on the thorough assessments made in Years 7 to 9 by students about their own work, alongside teacher evaluations, as a basis for target setting. As a result, students clearly understand how to improve their work and a productive atmosphere is enjoyed. In a minority of cases students give insufficient value to their achievement from direct observation and this limits the impact of their work. The way in which students re-visit their work to improve previous GCSE projects is a significant reason for higher grades but there is not enough reflection on their work in Years 7 to 9.
143. The response of students is generally good and in large group settings they show thoughtful consideration for each other, working co-operatively and respectfully.
144. Leadership and management of art are good. The department has efficiently developed resources which support teaching, learning and assessment, reflecting a depth of commitment to art education over many years. The art curriculum has been carefully and successfully planned to include many opportunities for students to encounter the art of different cultures. However, there are too few opportunities for students to encounter art and artists through first-hand experience.
145. There were few areas for improvement identified in the previous report. The target to improve students' painting has been address well. Although changes in staffing have challenged the sustainability of the department's strengths, the combined talents of the current teaching team provide the potential to flourish.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- Help and support for individual students by teachers is effective.
- Informative marking is used well to let students know how to improve their work.
- Work booklets guide students successfully through their coursework projects.

Areas for improvement

- Design-and-make tasks are not demanding enough for students in Year 9.
- Some Year 11 students in graphic products and resistant materials do not complete their practical coursework in the time available.
- The recommendations of the national strategy for raising standards are not yet used to determine lesson structure.
- There is too little use of ICT to enhance designing and making across the department.

146. Recent statutory teacher assessments for the attainment of 14 year olds show standards well above those recorded nationally. However, these results were not subject to moderation. Students' results in the GCSE examinations over recent years have gradually dropped, from well above the national average at grades A* to C three years ago, to below average over the last two years. Most recently, in 2002, both girls and boys results in the design and technology subjects overall were slightly lower than in their other subjects.

147. In the current Year 9, the attainment of students is similar to that normally seen at this age. From Years 7 to 9, girls and boys are making sound progress overall, developing a foundation of designing and making skills through a series of short units of work within each material area. For example, in Year 7, students in food technology develop their knowledge and understanding of the safe and correct use of basic equipment by designing and making a fruit salad. In Year 8, they develop their sensory analysis skills by taste testing alternative meat products as part of a vegetarian project. In textiles, students in Year 7 develop a sound understanding of the properties of different fabrics. In Year 8, they learn how these fabrics can be decorated in a variety of ways and experiment with fabric paints, tie dye and appliqué techniques. They then use these skills to create a variety of designs for bags. In both food and textiles, work booklets help to guide students through each project and provide a full record of the knowledge and skills that have been covered. In Year 9, students in resistant materials design and make a small bedside storage item and broaden their experience of using a variety of materials, such as wood, metal and plastic. In graphics in Year 9, students practise and develop their two and three-dimensional drawing techniques by designing the packaging for a CD. At present, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to apply these skills in more challenging design and make tasks which would enable them to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum.

148. Students with special educational needs integrate well into the mixed-ability groups, and make sound progress, developing their designing and making skills.

149. In Years 10 and 11, students specialise in one material area. In these years, progress and achievement are sound and students extend their designing and making skills to produce a range of appropriate products. In the current Year 11, the attainment of students in the design and technology subjects overall is similar to that normally seen at this age. In Year 10, they learn a broad range of skills before starting upon their GCSE coursework projects. For example, in textiles in Year 10, students learn how to adapt existing patterns and produce well-constructed garments, using a variety of hand and machine sewing techniques. In graphics, students making packaging for perfumes draw and model a variety of shapes from which to construct their designs. In resistant

materials, students use hand tools confidently to make an ergonomic figure that they will use when designing their GCSE project. Coursework folders in Year 11 demonstrate that students' work is matched closely to the requirements of the GCSE examination. Gifted and talented students have produced work of the highest grades. For example, in food, students successfully test out and evaluate a wide range of individual dishes, including ideas for food for special diets and multicultural food products. However, at this late stage of the course, the GCSE projects are much nearer completion in some teaching groups than in others. Within graphic products and resistant materials, a significant number of students have spent an excessive amount of time on the design stages of their projects, leaving insufficient time to fully demonstrate their making skills. A good number of students are now using ICT to enhance the presentation of the coursework. However, the use of ICT to enhance students' designing and making is insufficient within the department at the present time.

150. Overall, teaching is sound. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their material specialisms. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are planned well and teachers give clear instructions describing the work to be undertaken. These provide students with a clear picture of what they are expected to achieve within the session. For example, in a Year 8 textiles lesson making bags, the teacher questioned the students carefully to confirm that they fully understood the process they were required to follow. However, teachers do not generally take the opportunity to set targets for students, or to evaluate progress at the end of lessons by discussing the learning that has taken place and assessing the progress made. Where teaching was good, for example in Year 10 textiles, the teacher concluded a lesson on fashion detail by sharing and discussing the work of a sixth-form student as a stimulus for the homework task set. In all materials, teachers provide good help and support on an individual basis within lessons, discussing the work completed and showing students how to proceed. Where teaching is less effective, insufficient opportunities are taken to demonstrate skills to raise the standard of students' designing and making. In a significant number of lessons observed, students had no taught input during the lesson to extend their skills and techniques. In Year 11 resistant materials, the range of GCSE projects being tackled by groups is too broad and teachers are unable to provide individuals with sufficient help and support to enable them to make significant progress within the lesson. The marking of on-going coursework is a strength; students are given detailed advice and guidance about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.
151. Students respond well and show a good level of interest in the subject. They settle down quickly and sustain concentration throughout lessons. Standards of behaviour are nearly always very good. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. In Years 7 to 9, students have limited opportunities to work independently within the short units of work. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE coursework provides good opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their learning, and many have put a good effort into the presentation of their folders.
152. The head of faculty is providing satisfactory leadership and management of the teaching team. In terms of leadership, this is evident by the personal example being set to raise the quality of designing and making within the faculty. In terms of management, this is evident in the strategies being employed to raise levels of achievement, for example, the closer monitoring of students' work and new approaches to the management of coursework. Further work is required to demonstrate how the school improvement plan priorities are to be supported and developed within the faculty. There are significant resource and accommodation issues which are restricting students' achievement. The facilities for graphic products and resistant materials do not present appropriate environments in which to design and make. In resistant materials, opportunities for students to use a range of industrial processes to manufacture

products are very restricted by the range of machinery and equipment currently available. Students have no opportunity to use ICT within these areas, for example to use computer-aided design and manufacture.

153. Since the previous inspection, progress has been satisfactory. In Year 9, standards remain similar to those normally seen. In Year 11, standards that were judged to be above average are also now similar to those normally seen. Teaching remains sound overall.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- High standards of attainment, particularly at GCSE.
- A high standard of teaching.
- Very effective management and organisation.
- Positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students.
- Positive ethos and firm commitment to improvement.

What could be improved

- Some boys are not achieving well enough at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.
- Assessment is not used well enough to help students improve.

154. Attainment in geography at the end of Year 9 has improved in recent years. In last year's assessments, standards were a little above those normally seen for the majority of students. More girls than boys reached the higher levels. Examination results at GCSE are also improving. In 2002, the proportion of students who achieved the highest grades was well above the national average. Over three-quarters of students gained grades A*-C. More girls than boys gain the highest grades. Overall, students do better in geography than in their other subjects.

155. Students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 make sound progress. They are given plenty of opportunity to work in small groups and on their own, so have a sound grasp of how to pursue geographical enquiry. Their work on patterns of crime in the UK is particularly good. They have a sound knowledge of places around the world. Their work on Japan and Brazil gives them a sound understanding of life in countries at different levels of economic development. Learning about the weather and coasts gives them a sound understanding of some of the processes which shape the natural landscape. They gain environmental understanding from topics on the national parks and farming. The recent introduction of new topics on the fashion industry and sport helps students understand some important issues about the way the world is changing. Carefully planned extension work helps gifted and talented students achieve the higher levels, for example in their work on urban settlement patterns in the UK. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. They are very well supported by their teachers and teaching assistants. In one lesson, for example, this helped them understand changes in Tokyo and Japan. Geography lessons are effective in helping students develop their literacy skills to a good standard. In one lesson students used their books to find out the meaning of 'sustainable' and 'renewable', then explained, confidently, these key words to the rest of the class. Some very good climate graphs in students' exercise books, show they are also developing sound numeracy skills.

156. Students who chose geography in Years 10 and 11, make good progress. Work in their

books shows they have a good knowledge of places including the UK and contrasting localities such as Brazil and the USA. They gain a good understanding of the natural and man-made landscapes from work on glaciation and agriculture. Their work on the rain forests shows a good understanding of the complexity of natural environments, and of how exploitation may cause problems like global warming. They take advantage of the many opportunities to improve their writing skills. They also make good progress in the use of statistics and graphs, for example in work on weather patterns in the UK. Students with special educational needs make good progress. For example, in one lesson, a teaching assistant helped a student with his map work, resulting in him developing good understanding of changes in industry in the USA. Gifted and talented students also make good progress. Extension work helps them learn to apply their knowledge to both familiar and unfamiliar situations.

157. The standard of teaching is good. Observations of a sample of lessons shows there is an experienced team of specialists working well together. They organise their classes very well and create an interesting and stimulating atmosphere in which students want to do well. They plan lessons carefully. They include a range of interesting and worthwhile activities to engage and motivate students. In one lesson on Japan, for example, the teacher prepared a helpful assignment sheet to get pupils thinking about the original reasons for the location and growth of Tokyo. They used text and photographs in their books successfully and worked well together in small groups to correctly identify reasons of site and location. In another lesson the teacher got the immediate attention of students by asking them to look at an advertisement from a fashion magazine. He then went on to question students about their knowledge of where clothes are made. He led a very interesting discussion about conditions of employment in less-well-developed countries of the world. He set a challenging activity for students to compare levels of income of people employed in the fashion industry in different countries. All students gained a lot from the lesson. They showed competent skills in analysing the employment statistics and valuable understanding about the global fashion industry. Teachers make good use of a variety of resources. In one lesson, for example, the teacher provided a diagram to summarise the principles of industrial location. Students used this to analyse the growth of the coal and steel industries of South Wales. The teacher then showed an excerpt from a video showing the reasons for the subsequent decline of these industries. Students were very attentive, some taking careful notes. They all gained a clear understanding of the complexity of reasons causing change in a place. A carefully planned homework helped students summarise their learning from the lesson, and to begin to think about reasons why south Wales is still a good location for other industries. Teachers mark students work carefully and give helpful feedback on the standard attained and the effort made. They do not yet, however, provide sufficiently clear guidance on what students need to do to improve.
158. The attitude of students is very good. They are determined to do well, and try hard in lessons. They are attentive to their teachers, and work with co-operation and concentration. Their books are well presented, showing they care about their work. Standards of behaviour are very high. Students work particularly hard on their coursework and this is an important contributory factor to their success at GCSE.
159. The leadership and management of geography are very good. The head of department gives clear direction to his colleagues. A programme of monitoring helps identify strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared commitment to raising standards of all students. The work of the department on analysing data of student attainment is exemplary. The department is well placed to go on and use this data to set targets for teaching and learning.
160. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of

attainment have improved. Important weaknesses in teaching identified in the last inspection no longer exist. There is now a consistently high standard of teaching across the department.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good command of the subject and this, together with high expectations, leads students to good recall and understanding of the units followed.
- Students use source materials well, both in terms of analysis and interpretation.
- Good relationships between teachers and students produce positive student attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work is not sufficiently detailed or comprehensive and does not include some areas of skill development such as literacy, numeracy or the use of information technology.
- Individual lessons do not always have clear learning objectives which are shared with students or reviewed at the end of the lesson.
- Data is not used sufficiently to help monitor students' progress or to help students know what they have to do to improve.

161. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2000 and 2001, were above the national average and in 2002 they were in line. At the end of Year 11, students' examination results were well above the national average for those achieving the higher A*-C grades and above the national average in 2000 and 2002. In 2001, the performance of girls and boy was the same but, in 2000, boys achieved at a higher level than girls and this position was reversed in 2002.
162. Students make satisfactory progress across Years 7 to 9 and reach standards at the end of Year 9 which are in line with national standards. They use the sources they are given to answer questions which are set, as in the Year 9 lesson on conscription and recruitment in World War 1. They respond well to a range of historical information including video, pictures and portraits to answer historical questions. This was seen in the Year 8 work on the causes of Civil War breaking out in 1642. They are less critical of the sources and do not always give sufficient consideration to their reliability. Although some independent research is undertaken in projects, such as that in Year 7 on Roman Emperors this is not well enough developed. Lower-attaining students in mixed-ability groups in Year 7, and in setted groups in Years 8 and 9, make steady progress. Higher-attaining students make good progress.
163. Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress overall but this is better in Year 11 than Year 10, reaching standards above the national standard. They can evaluate source materials to a high level. This was shown in the Year 11 lesson when they were able to describe and analyse a cartoon relating to the New Deal, and many of them could also use their own background knowledge to put this in context. They have good recall of factual information and can show historical events which can be interpreted in different ways, such as in a Year 10 lesson when they were able to give different views relating to the events surrounding the Reichstag Fire. They are less able to put forward and build on arguments which are well substantiated by the use of evidence or use a wide range of source material. Higher-attaining students make good progress.
164. Teaching is satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. Where teaching is good, as in a Year 11

lesson on the New Deal, the teacher gave a clear introduction to the lesson and good guidelines on what was expected in order to reach the higher levels. This meant that students' work was well focused and they worked at a good pace. The teacher used questioning well to reinforce the work being done and to include most of the students who were willing to answer when asked directly. Good individual monitoring and support helped students to make good progress during the lesson. There was a good conclusion at the end of the lesson which gave the students an opportunity to show what they had learned. In the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, as in the Year 10 lesson on the Reichstag Fire, the students were given tasks to do but without clear direction so that some of them failed to concentrate or complete the task. The teacher used questions and individual support to help students learn but allowed a low level of chatter which distracted them from their work. Some teachers do not summarise students' learning at the end of the lesson, leaving students with a lack of clarity about what skills they have developed.

165. Most students are interested in history and show positive attitudes to their work. In Year 10, some students have poor attitudes when they lack focus. Most students are well behaved and all respond well to the teacher. A minority of students show a lack of self-discipline and show immature attitudes. There are underlying good relationships with students, showing they respect the teacher and each other and this is maintained even when students misbehave.
166. Leadership is good and management satisfactory in the history department. The head of department, together with the head of humanities, provide clear educational direction and have a good view of what is needed to improve. There is a good team of teachers who clearly wish to continue to improve. The department takes into account the aims of the school and is keen to improve teaching and learning. However, the department needs a clearer improvement plan which identifies priorities and timescales. The department also needs to share good practice. Only students in one half of the Years 10 and 11 are able to choose history as an option, restricting choice. In all years assessment is not used sufficiently well to help students know how they can improve. There is insufficient use made of information technology but visits and visitors do enhance the curriculum.
167. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Many areas have been maintained but some have been improved, in particular the level of challenge for the higher attainers, and the use of sources and historical reasoning in Years 7 to 9. Resources for use in Years 10 and 11 have also improved

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory** but students are not being given the opportunity to develop their capability across subjects in Years 10 and 11. When taught as a subject in Years 7, 8 and 9, provision is **good**.

Strengths

- The national strategy to raise standards is being implemented effectively.
- There is a consistent and co-ordinated delivery of taught lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Attainment in Years 7, 8 and 9 is assessed well.
- Support for special needs students helps them to improve.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are positive.
- Management of large groups of students by teachers is done well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT across the whole curriculum is not co-ordinated well enough.

- There is no assessment, recording and reporting of ICT capability in subjects across the curriculum.
- There is inadequate new technology for effective whole-class teaching.
- The development plan does not identify strategies for improvement sufficiently clearly.

168. In Year 9, teacher assessments for 2000 show that 55 per cent of students had achieved Level 5 and above. This had increased to 85 per cent in 2001, with a further increase to 95 per cent in 2002. The figures for the last two years are significantly above national levels, and from the standards of work seen, the judgements are secure. Examination courses are not offered in Years 10 and 11.
169. Students make good progress across Years 7 to 9, achieve well and attain well-above-average standards at the end of Year 9. In Year 7, students select and use appropriate images for PowerPoint presentations. During effective teacher presentations they criticise and comment on a range of symbols and images and learn how to discriminate between the most appropriate ones. Humour is used in interactions and they articulate their reasons well. When selecting and modifying images of themselves they use a range of editing tools to enhance the quality of the images. Text is also imported to add detail. These images are then added to very effective PowerPoint slides. Year 8 students gain a good understanding of how to use hypertext mark-up language when they design web pages for the college site. They are able to change text fonts, text size and enhance their text using different tags. They also understand the need to frame instructions precisely in order that their procedures work. Text and colour are used appropriately and literacy skills are developed through the learning of key words associated with web publishing. In Year 9, students learn how to add sound to their presentations to create atmosphere and interest. They learn to select sounds which link with images and navigate through complex software routes to find and experiment with sounds. Highest attainers import sound from the Internet. When combined with good use of colour, text and images, sound enhances their presentations well. Special needs students are supported well in lessons, are fully included and make good progress.
170. For current work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards are in line with those normally seen. Students' progress is satisfactory, but this is slower than in Years 7 to 9 because ICT is not taught as a subject and students' capability is not being developed across all subjects. Statutory requirements are not being met. In business studies coursework is word processed to a good standard. Students show spreadsheet statistics in bar and pie chart form when addressing an audience. In English, desk top publishing skills are developed. In topics involving social issues students relate their persuasive writing texts to images to convey their messages to audiences effectively. The digital camera is used to capture posed scenes. Relevant images are also imported from the Internet. Creative ability is used when cropping images, enhancing with colour, positioning text and experimenting with page layout. Here, ICT is used well to motivate students. In social inclusion lessons, students word process their CVs and job application letters. They produce correct letter formats and demonstrate understanding of the importance of including good descriptions of themselves and the quality of letter presentation when competing in a job market. In mathematics, students use ICT to competently handle and represent data, save charts and diagrams and download graphs and data from the Intranet. Students communicate information in a form suitable for various audiences. The use of ICT and the Intranet as a teaching and learning tool is being developed. ICT is being used appropriately in several subjects, but it is not being assessed, recorded or reported on, making it difficult for students to know what they are doing well or how they can improve. This is having an adverse effect on achievement.
171. The quality of teaching and learning in taught lessons is good. When taught as a

subject in Years 7 to 9, schemes of work are used well by all teachers. Lessons are well planned. The data projector is used effectively to introduce topics. Presentations, including sound, gain students' attention and provide them with the knowledge and understanding needed to be able to work independently. Students are provided with well-written task sheets which are clearly understood and allow all students to be included in lessons. Special needs students are supported well by learning assistants who understand their individual needs. All students are challenged by the tasks and the majority make progress. In lessons across the curriculum, teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers lack data projectors and make do with less effective methods of conveying information. There are no interactive whiteboards available. Much more use could be made of the Intranet but many subjects are slow to realise its potential. There are good displays of work in corridors and rooms.

172. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, they are attentive and listen well in lessons. They are confident users of ICT and work creatively to use the potential of the software to produce work of quality. Students are keen to work, concentrate well and remain on task throughout lessons. At the end of lessons their answers to questions reflect understanding gained during the lesson. Special needs students are supported well, fully included in all lessons and they achieve well. Relationships in groups are good.
173. Discrete teaching of ICT is managed well, and leadership is moving the subject forward. The writing of new schemes of work and the introduction of the national strategy has required considerable effort. A good assessment, recording and reporting system for the subject, where taught, is now in place. The co-ordinator provides good support to colleagues in the department who are not ICT specialists and continues to develop whole-staff capability. The monitoring of teaching is taking place, as is the monitoring of learning in Years 7 to 9. However, the co-ordinator has a heavy workload, being based in a core subject, and this is impinging on his ability to co-ordinate the subject across the whole college. Mapping of the subject across the curriculum has not taken place, and several subjects are not delivering statutory requirements. Recording and reporting of student's capability are not taking place across the curriculum. The provision of ICT suites is good but facilities are underused, although an efficient booking system is in place. The subject is well supported by a network manager and a technician. The subject development plan does not identify clear strategies for improvement or means of identifying success, making it difficult to carry out effective monitoring.
174. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. New schemes of work continue to be developed as the national strategy for improving ICT provision is adopted. Control and data logging are now in schemes of work. Taught units are marked on completion and marks entered into the central system. Documentation is now well developed and accommodation has been improved. However, delivery of the subject is still not co-ordinated in Years 10 and 11.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

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

Strengths:

- A very high proportion of students take GCSE and gain a G grade or above, and more students than average gain a GCSE grade C or above.
- The quality of teaching is good.

- Relationships and behaviour are very good.
- The department uses assessment data well to inform planning and to set targets.

Areas for improvement:

- Best practice in teaching is not sufficiently shared across the department.
- Teaching methods do not provide enough variety of learning styles or encourage students to speak routinely for a purpose.

175. Recent results of teacher assessments for French and German at the end of Year 9 are below national averages. Recent GCSE results have fluctuated considerably but, given the very high proportion of students entered, they are above the national average for A*-C grades and nearly all gain a G grade or higher. Girls' attainment is generally higher than boys'. The college results for German were somewhat lower than expected last year, although still above average, considering the full ability range entered. This decline was mainly caused by students having a series of different teachers because of maternity leave and staff leaving.
176. Standards observed in lessons indicate that attainment is improving. Students make steady progress and most are in line with average levels of attainment by the end of Year 9. Teacher assessment is now taking better account of higher levels of achievement. Listening and reading levels are good, as is guided writing. Speaking levels vary considerably: a few speak with considerable confidence, whereas most need support and lack confidence in using and re-using language.
177. There is a similar picture in Years 10 and 11. Relatively few students are working towards A and B grades. However, despite the fact that almost all students take GCSE, a higher proportion than usual are working at average or near average standards. Students are well drilled to cope with most basic language needs of the GCSE. Most make increasingly good progress as they approach GCSE. Listening and reading skills are good, but open-ended speaking and writing are limited, apart from among high attainers who have a good command of a wide range of expressions and grammar. Gifted and talented students are targeted well with tailored work and this lifts their progress. Students with special educational needs benefit from extra support, usually by a specialist linguist, which helps them to know what to do and make good progress. There are far more girls than boys in some upper groups, but not in all. Sitting boys and girls together has contributed to more even participation and achievement. The emphasis on accuracy and on sentence structure contributes well to students' literacy skills. ICT skills are developed well in some language lessons. There is no significant contribution to numeracy skills.
178. Teaching is good in German and very good in French. Lessons are always at least satisfactory, most are good and there are some very good and excellent features. In the best lessons, the teacher makes it very clear what the students are to learn and tailors the work well to different needs with well-organised materials. For example, in an excellent Year 11 French lesson, the teacher encouraged the students to set themselves targets for the lesson and made sure, at the end of the lesson, that they reflected on what they had learned and how to improve. So all students worked with a clear purpose, knowing what they needed to learn and how best to learn. The teacher tailored the activities and materials carefully so that students worked at the right level of challenge and support for their ability.
179. Other strengths of teaching are that teachers quickly establish good learning conditions, with calm, firm management and, in good lessons, with a warmth that generates good relationships and high expectations about behaviour and learning. They judge well the balance between teacher-led practice, to make sure the students

understand and speak correctly, and pair or group work which gives them the chance to build up confidence. Teachers use assessment well to help students to know what level they are working at and how to improve. Teachers are developing their use of ICT well to support language learning; for example, in ensuring that students draft and re-draft course work and produce illustrated poems and other work for display.

180. Where teaching is satisfactory, learning is prevented from being better than sound because activities do not engage students sufficiently, so they practise their language skills efficiently but mechanically, rather than because it is interesting. The use of language is not put into an everyday context so students do not see it as a real tool for communication. There are strained relationships in a few groups where students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, lack motivation and the pace of learning lags behind the teacher's drive.
181. In most classes, the good teaching results in good learning and progress, particularly in understanding and in guided speaking and writing but it does not often enough lead to students using the language independently. However, progress is slower than expected in some groups, particularly German, mainly because students have had to adjust to several different teachers, some of them temporary.
182. Some students clearly enjoy learning a language. Most are positive in attitude, show a responsible approach to learning and appreciate their teacher's commitment and respect. They respond by behaving very well, working hard, both independently and in pairs or groups. A few students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, comply with the teacher's firm classroom management but their heart is not in language learning. There are a few exceptions, where students are more openly reluctant to learn, making it hard work for the teacher to keep them on task and slowing progress.
183. The head of faculty manages a talented and committed department well, leading the drive for improvement. Monitoring and review have highlighted strengths and areas for development. However, staffing difficulties have hampered progress, particularly towards consistency of good practice and improving attainment. Despite some technical problems, the department has developed the use of computers to improve language learning successfully. Students benefit from a choice of foreign language in Year 7 but there is no provision for students to take a second foreign language. Exchanges and visits abroad and the presence of foreign language assistants, help students to develop their language skills and their cultural understanding. There is too little funding to buy textbooks for all students, making it more difficult than necessary for teachers to promote independent learning and homework. However, teachers make good use of a reading scheme and good quality cassette players and listening stations to develop students' reading and listening skills. The use of assessment information is very well used, and developing across the department, to plan how to improve provision, to give students individual targets and track their progress.
184. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Most good qualities have been maintained and considerable action has been taken to improve, particularly in monitoring and review of the department and in the use of assessment.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The number of students opting for GCSE music is above national averages.
- Students have above-average keyboard skills in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for reporting National Curriculum levels for students in Year 9 are not secure.
- Departmental documentation, including development planning, is not sufficiently focused on strategies for improvement.

185. Teacher assessments showed students' attainment recorded at the end of Year 9 to be well above average in 2002 and above average in 2001. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
186. In 2001, GCSE results were a little above average. In 2000 and 2002, results were broadly in line with national averages. In 2002, the percentage of entries was well above national averages.
187. Standards of current Year 9 students are in line with national expectations. Most students have above average keyboard skills. They play melodies with appropriate fingering. They perform pieces with a secure sense of rhythm and use two hands to perform pieces with pre set rhythms and single fingered chords. Most students also perform syncopated rhythms, for example when performing a ragtime style piece as an ensemble in a Year 9 lesson.
188. Students in Years 7 to 9 play complex chord sequences using the pre-programmed automatic bass line. However, many do not sufficiently understand what a chord is or how to form different chord shapes without this keyboard function.
189. All students in Years 7 to 9 compose simple pieces for glockenspiels and xylophones. Year 7 students, for example, create short pieces in D major or D minor using drones, rhythm, ostinato patterns and improvised melodies. They perform these with a good sense of rhythm but pieces sometimes lack expression such as dynamic contrast. Students make good progress between Years 7 and 9, particularly in their development of performing skills. Their progress in learning how to appraise and evaluate composition and performance is weaker.
190. Standards of students in Years 10 and 11 GCSE groups are in line with national averages. Year 11 students understand the main features of an Elizabethan pavan and use ICT appropriately to create and refine their own composition. They use appropriate musical vocabulary to talk about the music that they have studied and demonstrate the level and range of performance skill typically seen in GCSE music groups. The students have made good progress in most of the areas of study for the new examination syllabus, particularly in exploring the repertoire and composing for their own instruments.
191. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The pace of lessons is good and the way that new material is presented effectively challenges all students regardless of their prior attainment. For example, when students were learning keyboards they worked independently and at their own level while the teacher circulated and gave good support to individuals. In the second part of the lesson the teacher changed the activity so that students learned a new piece together, for example a cha cha in Year 8 and a ragtime piece in Year 9. The teacher effectively guided the students through the task, the pace was swift, instructions were clear and, as a result, the students made good progress in learning the syncopated rhythms and chord accompaniments. However, the opportunity to teach students how to evaluate and improve their performance or how to recognise the characteristics of ragtime or cha cha was missed. This has an impact on the development of their appraisal skills which are weaker than their performance skills. In lessons where performing, composing and appraising are effectively

integrated, the students make good progress in their learning. For example, students in Year 7 have been exploring major and minor. They made good progress in understanding the use of major and minor in an extract of Carmen by Bizet and how to use this information to create their own composition. Teachers keep thorough records of students' work. However, this information is not used well enough in Years 7 to 9 to give feedback to individuals or to set targets. For Year 11 students it is better. The teacher has devised good individual progress sheets with clear instructions about the examination requirements. The students know their predicted grade and they know exactly what work they need to complete and have clear deadlines. They are encouraged to be effective, independent learners. Students in GCSE groups use ICT appropriately to create compositions. However, in Years 7 to 9 the opportunity to use ICT to create, manipulate and refine sounds is underdeveloped.

192. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good. Students are well motivated by activities such as learning keyboards. When students are composing music in small groups they are organised and work together well. This helps them to make good progress in their learning.
193. The leadership and management of music are satisfactory. The department is committed to providing access to music for all students and this is reflected in both the larger-than-average number of students opting for the subject at GCSE and the broad range of instrumental lessons available to students. There is detailed documentation but it sometimes lacks appropriate focus. Strategies to ensure improvement are not clear. The development plan is not sufficiently linked to funding and training. Procedures for reporting national curriculum levels for students in Year 9 are not secure. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is good, music of a range of styles and cultures is integrated well and the scheme has clear aims and objectives. The new scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 is still being developed and currently consists largely of a series of activities and resources. There is a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities in music. The accommodation for music is satisfactory but the main teaching rooms are not carpeted which creates a noisy environment for practical work.
194. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have remained the same in Year 9. They have dropped slightly at GCSE but this is balanced by the increased numbers opting for the subject. Teaching has improved and there is a better emphasis on practical music making. Extra-curricular links with primary schools have improved, for example, through the organisation of a world music vocal day with local schools. However, curricular links remain underdeveloped.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Well-motivated, experienced and enthusiastic subject specialists who have good relationships with students.
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, especially GCSE theory.
- The good curricular and extra-curricular activities open to all.
- Students who are generally well motivated, enthusiastic in their work and have high participation rates.

Areas for development

- GCSE results are below the national average.
- There are not enough opportunities for all students to plan, observe and evaluate in their

work.

- Students do not understand how well they are achieving in the subject, or what they need to do to improve further.

195. Teacher assessment results at the end of Year 9 last summer indicated that students were attaining above the national average. GCSE results have been below the national average for the last three years. However, all students who took GCSE passed it and, on average, did better in the subject than they did in their other GCSE courses.
196. Almost all current Year 7 to 9 students are making good progress and are working at a level which is above that normally seen. Students are better at acquiring, developing, selecting and applying practical skills than normally seen in the main games and gymnastics. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson where students were working on developing sequences linking a roll, a balance and a jump, about half the group could perform a headstand requiring little support. Students are also starting to develop a good understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies. Students' observation and evaluation skills, to help improve their own and others' performance, are at too low a standard because of insufficient opportunities to develop them in lessons.
197. Current students are making good progress in the theoretical elements of the GCSE syllabus. For example, in a Year 11 lesson students had developed a good understanding of how sport is structured on a local, regional and national basis in England. Students who study the subject as part of the core curriculum generally have good practical skills when compared with other students of their age. For example, in a Year 11 soccer lesson, students demonstrated good levels of skill when moving into space to create passing opportunities for their team mates. The students who were refereeing had a good knowledge of the rules and were effective in applying these and controlling the game. Whilst students make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of fitness and health, their observation and evaluation skills are underdeveloped.
198. Overall, teaching and learning in the subject are good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. The pace of teaching is generally good and teachers provide sensitive support and encouragement to enable all students to make progress. For example, in the same Year 7 gymnastics lesson the assistant gave very good support to a student with a statement of special educational needs so that the student made good progress in completing the task set. Lessons generally show evidence of good planning and organisation and teachers employ good teaching strategies. Teachers have made some progress in developing literacy skills, especially the use of subject-specific terms. There is too little use of ICT as a tool for learning. The marking of GCSE work, although supportive in the comments teachers make to students, does not relate the work to GCSE standards, nor provide students with enough information on what it is they need to do to improve further.
199. The vast majority of students respond well to the teaching, and their level of concentration and co-operation is generally good. Participation rates are high, this partly reflects the positive attitudes most students have to the subject, as well as the department's policy of lending kit to students who have forgotten their own. Teachers know their students well and manage them very effectively. When students occasionally lose concentration, teachers are effective at bringing them back on task with the minimum of disruption to the lesson and to other students' learning.
200. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. The joint heads of department, although fairly new to the role, have established a sensible deployment of management tasks within the team that is effective in using the strengths of individual members. The

development plan for the subject is, however, not sufficiently focused on identifying clear and measurable targets for raising standards. The indoor accommodation in the sports hall is good, and in the gym it is satisfactory, although both are in need of some refurbishment. The provision of a dedicated room for the teaching of the theoretical elements of GCSE is excellent and enables the department to have all their resources to hand and to effectively display stimulating material relating to the topics being covered. Outdoors, a newly-provided hard court play area provides an excellent space for games development and the playing field area and swimming pool enhance the provision for the subject. Resources for GCSE are good, but in some areas, notably gymnastics and volleyball posts and nets, resources are poor.

201. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. In the last report students' attainment was above that typically seen, as it is now; teaching was mainly good and never less than satisfactory, as it is now; relationships were good and they are still; there is still a need for more opportunities for students to observe and evaluate; there are now better curricular opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11; monitoring of teaching now takes place: and all the health and safety issues raised in the last inspection have been dealt with.

DANCE

Overall, provision for dance is **very good**.

Strengths

- Well motivated, experienced and enthusiastic subject specialists who have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Very good student attainment levels.
- Excellent facilities offered by the dance studio.
- The good curricular and extra-curricular activities, with a good involvement of visiting groups.
- Students who are generally well-motivated, enthusiastic in their work, have high participation rates and show high levels of concentration.

Areas for improvement

- The college is not maximising its use of the excellent dance studio for teaching.

202. Teacher assessment results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicated that students were attaining above average standards. The level of attainment for the majority of students by the end of Year 11 who opt to study the subject at GCSE is above the national average. The results over the last three years have shown a very good improvement from a low point in 2000. GCSE results last year were above average. Almost all current students are making good progress and are working at a level which is at least in line with that to be expected for their age. Many students are making very good progress and are working above this level. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

203. The teaching in dance is very good. Teacher-student relationships are very good and the teachers' knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for dance is a major strength of the subject. Students with special educational needs are supported well. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the learning support assistant was very effective in reinforcing the teacher's instructions and modelled the dance steps to be learned so that these students made good progress. The pace of lessons is very good. There are high expectations made of students, with an appropriate emphasis placed on self-motivation and the presentation of performances of a high standard. Because of this, students make very good progress in their development, interpretation and performance of dance routines and in their understanding and application of the theoretical elements of dance. An example of this was in a Year 10 lesson where students were choreographing their own work, using excellent dialogue which showed high levels of critical thinking and concentration to develop their performance.

204. Students respond well to the teaching and show good levels of interest and concentration. Their levels of collaborative working and appreciation for others' performance are very good. Students make the most of good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and develop their own dance routines for examination assessment.

205. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The teacher with responsibility for the subject has worked hard to raise standards and she makes very good use of the instructors to ensure students benefit from their specific strengths in the subject. Accommodation in the purpose-built dance studio is excellent and makes a significant contribution to students' learning. It is not, however, used as efficiently as it might be because there are occasions in the timetable when the studio is not scheduled for teaching and other times when there are two lessons of dance time-

tabled at the same time.

206. Improvements since the last inspection are very good. Attainment for students is good and for a significant number very good; GCSE results are above the national average; teaching is very good; and the relatively new dance studio is an excellent facility.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- The subject provides good opportunities for students' personal development.
- There is strong leadership of the subject.
- There are good GCSE results from a large entry.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for assessing students' attainment in the subject are unsatisfactory.
- The work does not challenge the most able students in Years 7 to 9.
- There are too few opportunities for using ICT.

207. Students do well in their examinations. Results for the GCSE short course have shown a steady improvement over the last three years. Almost all students take the course and are entered for the examination. In 2002, the number of students who gained the highest grades was above the national average. Three out of five students gained grades A*-C and of these almost half gained grade A* or A. Girls performance was considerably higher than boys.

208. Standards of students currently in Years 7 to 9 are sound. Most students make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding of religions. They take up opportunities to reflect on their own values and experiences in the light of their learning about, for example, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Students enter the college with mixed prior-learning experiences from their primary school religious education. By the end of Year 9, students attain standards that are in line with the expectations of the Peterborough Agreed Syllabus. In their work on prejudice and discrimination, students in Year 9 know that people have a variety of beliefs and that these can influence the way they lead their life. They recognise that within Christianity there are many different views on issues such as women priests and that the teaching of the Bible is often used to support these views. Students have a sound grasp of the important terms associated with belief. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where students explained what the word Covenant meant and how the Ten Commandments were part of the terms of the Covenant for Jews. The majority of students make steady progress across Years 7 to 9. The progress of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The most able students do not make the rapid progress they are capable of because there are too few opportunities for them to extend their understanding of religions through extension activities and independent research.

209. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students make good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied as part of the GCSE short course. In Year 10 lessons on poverty and wealth, students know about the projects that charities such as Christian Aid are involved in to alleviate poverty and have a good understanding of the Bible teachings on which their work is based. By Year 11, students show good evaluation skills and discuss arguments for and against

euthanasia. Students recognise the impact that religious teaching can have on the way a person responds to moral and social issues. In the top sets, more-able students make good progress and write detailed answers to questions such as: 'Describe Christian beliefs about Crime and Punishment' using Biblical quotes to support their ideas. Students with special educational needs continue to make steady progress overall.

210. Teaching is good and leads to effective learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge. As a result, students' learning is clear and is enriched when they ask questions. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson when students were learning about the significance of Hindu Puja and the teacher explained what the different artefacts were used for. Teachers have a clear understanding of the GCSE examination requirements: in lessons they work hard to help students develop the skills they need to be successful in the examination. A Year 11 group was given a sample answer to mark and improve before writing their own version which they then marked and evaluated in class. This had a very positive effect on their understanding. Where learning is good, teachers use a variety of strategies to engage students including group work, role-play, video, research tasks and case studies to tackle the topic. Students in Year 7 were set an interesting research task on the Passover. They worked in groups in the library and, because the teacher provided them with a clear task and a good range of materials including library books and access to the Internet, the students were thoroughly absorbed in their work. In a Year 8 lesson on Hinduism, students enjoyed performing role plays to outline the main events of the story of the Ramayana and this helped them to understand more about why the Story of Rama and Sita is important to Hindus. Teachers have good relationships with students and this creates a positive working atmosphere across all years. They are keen to give students individual help when they need it. Lessons are usually well organised. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher moved students through a range of activities including discussion, use of a video clip and written work but all the time maintained a good pace and work rate.
211. Across Years 7 to 9, in particular, there are aspects of teaching that are less effective and require improvement. Learning objectives are not always made sufficiently clear to students so they do not know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Lesson activities are not sufficiently matched to the learning needs of all students. This lack of clarity in matching work to students needs means that the most able spend a significant amount of time doing work which they find is too easy. They are often not challenged to think philosophically about religion or to analyse first-hand sources of religious ideas and practice. In a Year 8 top set, the students were given tasks which only required them to find out basic information about Hindu Puja. They found this too easy and quickly lost interest in the work. In these lessons behaviour is not controlled firmly enough so time is wasted by students chatting. Marking of students' work gives encouragement but, across all years, there are too few comments about how standards can be improved. There is currently too little use of ICT in teaching.
212. The great majority of students are well-motivated in lessons. They are interested in the topics covered and willingly work on the tasks set. They are keen to ask and answer questions. They show respect for each other's views. In a Year 8 lesson on Hinduism, students listened patiently to those who were performing their role-plays. Behaviour is generally good. Relationships in lessons are usually positive and good-humoured and this contributes to an effective working atmosphere.
213. The subject is well led and managed. Schemes of work are well planned and detailed. The subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the priorities for development in the subject and is working very hard on implementing improvements. Further work is needed on improving assessment. At present, there are inadequate procedures in place for assessing students' work in the subject. This means that teachers have little

information on students' progress in religious education to help them with planning lessons and setting targets for improvement.

214. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE have risen and are now above national averages. Teaching has improved and is now good. However, more still needs to be done to ensure that work is well matched to the learning needs of all students, especially the most able.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship (life skills) is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Senior managers have strongly emphasised the importance of the introduction of citizenship.
- An audit has identified strengths and weaknesses in provision.
- The citizenship curriculum involves a variety of stimulating events on the collapsed timetable days and activities that involve a range of community partners.
- Students have positive attitudes to this area of the curriculum

Areas for development

- Some subject departments that are intended to contribute to the college citizenship programme do not include citizenship in their plans.
- There is no overall planning for citizenship to ensure full coverage of the statutory programme for all students.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to engage in 'active citizenship'.
- The assessment and recording system is not yet in place.

215. Standards are satisfactory in all year groups. Knowledge and understanding of aspects of society are developed through the subjects, including work in geography on environmental issues in Year 9. Students have developed skills so that, when given the opportunity, they can state and justify their opinions on varied issues, as in Year 8 on the collapsed day entitled 'What's the cost?' when they discussed the social costs of graffiti and vandalism. Some students do respond well and take opportunities to contribute to the school and community, as when representing their form on the school council, raising money in charity events or undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh's Award. All the work undertaken has given opportunities for students to think, write and discuss. However, these skills are not sufficiently developed for all students.

216. No direct lesson on citizenship was observed during the inspection. In most lessons, seen during the inspection, issues related to citizenship were touched on rather than fully explored, and links to citizenship were not brought out and explained. As a result of this, students' overall understanding of citizenship is limited. Individual lessons are well organised, as in Year 7 art where portraiture work enabled students to develop their sense of identity. In Year 11, a debate on euthanasia allowed students an opportunity to express their own views and respond to this controversial issue. In other subjects the strands of citizenship have been identified but are not, as yet, specifically taught as citizenship. Some Year 9 students were not aware of any citizenship sessions. Years 10 and 11 students recognise the school council as an opportunity to take responsibility but do not see the contribution this could make to citizenship.

217. The college has made a satisfactory start to the introduction of citizenship into the curriculum for all students aged 11 to 16. Time allocation is equivalent to one discrete lesson per timetable cycle and five tutor periods per year for each year group plus a

number of collapsed timetable days. Other life skills work, although it has not been properly identified, is embedded into the curriculum. Some good units of work are planned for the collapsed timetable days, with clear aims, priorities and targets for implementation.

218. The college has a structure which could deliver citizenship effectively. During the last academic year, the school's audit of citizenship clearly identified where coverage was taking place in lessons as well as identifying gaps. However, this does not yet cover the entire statutory programme of study. The planning does not yet show how the skills, such as enquiry, participation and responsible action, will be developed. There is also a lack of clarity between the relationship between the collapsed days and the life skills lessons in Years 10 and 11.
219. Resources are being developed and assessment and recording procedures are being planned but are not in place. Monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of citizenship needs to be addressed. Parents and carers have not yet been fully informed as to the college's policy for provision of citizenship.
220. The colleges provision for students' personal, social and health education gives it a good platform for further development of citizenship.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	43	62	-	15	0.6	1.5
Physics	4	100	52	-	4	1.0	0.9

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	16	100	96	75	46	8.1	6.6
Biology	5	100	88	20	34	1.2	5.3
Business studies	15	100	92	40	32	5.9	5.5
Chemistry	6	83	90	17	43	4.3	5.9
Communication studies	23	100	93	22	31	5.9	5.5
English language	29	83	91	14	30	4.3	5.3
English literature	6	100	95	50	37	7.3	5.9
English/language	8	75	92	-	30	3.3	5.3
French	5	100	89	-	38	3.6	5.6
Full design and technology	7	100	91	43	30	6.0	5.4
General studies	23	96	85	39	30	5.9	4.9
Geography	11	100	92	45	38	6.7	5.7
Graphical applications	11	82	88	18	22	3.8	4.7
History	19	89	88	21	35	4.6	5.5
Mathematics	29	86	87	38	43	5.1	5.8
Other social studies	21	62	87	5	34	2.7	5.3
Physics	6	83	88	33	40	4.7	5.7
Sports/PE studies	8	88	92	25	25	4.3	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

The inspection covered the AS and A-level mathematics courses offered by the college. Students study a modular course selecting options from pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The course includes project work in which students apply their knowledge of A-level mathematics to solve practical problems. Provision for those students re-sitting GCSE mathematics was not inspected.

Overall, provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards of work at AS and A-level have improved.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Leadership and management of the mathematics department is very effective.
- Relationships in classrooms are very positive.
- The system for tracking student progress is successful.
- Students attitudes towards mathematics are very positive.

Areas for development

- The written guidance in the departmental handbook for high quality teaching and learning is inadequate.
- Marking of students' work is unsatisfactory.

221. College results in the 2001 examinations at A level are close to the national average. The average point score in mathematics has improved for the 2002 examinations, although national comparisons are not yet available. The results over the past three years have been close to national averages with an exceptionally good performance in 2000. There are no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls. Currently, there are fewer girls than boys studying the subject in Year 13 but the department has a good recruitment policy designed to promote mathematics study to all students. This is reflected in the improved number of girls taking the subject in Year 12.

222. Standards of work seen in lessons and in students' books and folders are good for both Years 12 and 13, although for boys, written work is not always well presented. Students make good progress. Standards of work in the project element of the course are above average and often very well presented using information technology, demonstrating good use of the Internet to research their studies. In mechanics, students in Year 12 show a good understanding of Newton's laws of motion in practice and explain well the predicted motion of colliding bodies under different starting conditions. They are competent at finding multiple solutions to trigonometric equations and draw and justify the projections of a rotating vector on the x and y-axis. Year 13 students extend these skills and, for example, in pure mathematics use mathematical series to obtain successive approximations to well-known trigonometric and algebraic functions. A Year 12 group was observing the differing outcomes when a cricket bat came into contact with a range of balls of different densities and masses. The teacher expected a high intellectual and physical response when parameters changed. The students responded enthusiastically, with very good gains in their understanding and knowledge of momentum changes. Later algebraic analysis of the motion arose naturally from this practical activity. The impact of this very good teaching led to very good learning.
223. Teaching overall in the department is very good and this leads to very good learning. Teaching and learning in all lessons are satisfactory or better, and in the majority of lessons are very good or outstanding. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage students and encourage active involvement in lessons. Students are conscious of the ways they learn best and are able to work effectively, both co-operatively and independently. Where teaching impacts best on learning, students debate and present their solution to mathematical problems to the class. The debate is vigorous and the teacher encourages a range of approaches, including suggesting lines of enquiry or being 'devil's advocate'. The latter always leading to a correct group consensus and solution of the problem. Correct and precise mathematical language is asked for and students are expected to both support and extend each other's thinking. Students make very good progress and apply their knowledge and skills to a range of mathematical problems. Precise examination techniques are taught and practised but do not dominate the work. A Year 13 group was exploring Maclaurin's series during the inspection. The teacher set up a graphic calculator and its projection onto the whiteboard. Students then presented their successive approximations to the function $\sin x$. Different students were asked to explain their calculations and demonstrate what happened with 2,3,4...terms and by the end of the lesson, one student showed the effect of the 18th approximation. Later in the day, this student went on to show the effect of 30 successive terms and the almost perfect fit of his curve to the graph of $\sin x$ within the interval chosen.
224. Students know their predicted grades and the assessment tracking system is good. Oral feedback in lessons is of high quality and is effective in diagnosing individual difficulties. However, apart from project work, formal written marking and feedback is less effective and the department has not yet addressed this in their action and development planning. Students enjoy mathematics lessons. They are very well motivated and know why they are studying the subject. In many cases, this is to support other studies or future careers, for example, physics, engineering or architecture. For a few, they find mathematics a fulfilling study in itself.
225. The leadership and management of the department is very good. There is a very strong vision of what mathematics teaching and learning should be, although this is not yet part of the department's handbook. Through this very good leadership, colleagues know that, to improve standards, they must continue to improve the teaching and learning. The teamwork in the department is very strong and committed to these improvements. The monitoring and evaluation of the work, especially of teaching and learning is good and includes both internal and external observations. The documented action planning

arising from these evaluations is less well recorded and the department should indicate, more clearly, those elements that impact on high quality teaching and learning.

226. There are good improvements since the previous inspection and A-level results are improving. The mathematics department is a strength of the school.

Sciences

The focus was on biology but chemistry and physics lessons were also sampled. Group sizes in all the sciences have been small for several years. Roughly twice as many girls than boys opt for biology. The pattern is reversed in chemistry, whilst very few girls opt for physics.

Chemistry results are below the national average but have been improving slowly over recent years. One chemistry lesson was observed which was good. It involved practical work on halogenalkanes where most of the students demonstrated good practical skills as well as good ability to discuss their findings and apply them to other aspects of their learning.

Physics results are also below the national average and have been erratic over recent years. The results in 2002 were a distinct improvement on previous years. Two physics lessons were observed, one being satisfactory whilst the other was not. In the unsatisfactory lesson, poor planning, coupled with weaknesses in subject knowledge prevented the teacher from clear unequivocal teaching of electrostatics. In the satisfactory lesson the attainment level of the students was below what is typical because students were carrying out a practical task, to make a motor, which they should have done in Year 11. The students learned and made progress in this lesson by their own research and analysis abilities with textbooks coupled with a very good level of group work and co-operation.

BIOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision for biology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' attitudes and response in lessons is very good.
- Year 13 students' ability to discuss biological concepts is excellent.
- Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work and lesson-planning procedures do not sufficiently identify learning objectives, the use of ICT and assessment procedures.
- There is too little use of assessment information to set targets and improve learning for all students, particularly for those at the ends of the ability range within a group.
- The teaching provision is not matched well enough to the needs of individuals in order to promote learning across the ability range and improve the pace of lessons.
- Teaching styles are too narrow to foster independent learning, research, practical, writing and group work skills.

227. A-level biology results are below the national average. Results have been variable over the last five years, with two years above average, one average and two below average. Results have been characterised by few higher grade passes. The AS results in 2002, however, were in line with the national average. There is little difference in the attainment levels between boys and girls.

228. Standards of current students in Year 12 are just below what is expected. Students

demonstrated good levels of practical skills in relation to a practical on mitosis. They demonstrated good understanding of the phases of the cell cycle yet their knowledge and understanding of the circulatory system was just above that expected of GCSE students. In their written work, students are given limited opportunity to practise a range of skills with a result that standards are not as high as they could be.

229. As students move into Year 13 a small number choose to drop the subject. Standards of work in Year 13 are also just below what is normally seen. Students showed good ICT skills in a research task on bacteria: they talked meaningfully about cell physiology, but the nature of the teaching tasks often limited the standards of work seen. In their written work, students are not encouraged to develop their research or extended writing techniques.
230. The teaching of biology is poor. Of the five lessons observed three were unsatisfactory. In the two satisfactory lessons, teachers displayed good subject knowledge and this was used in their questioning, explanations and structured approach to teaching key ideas. It was also used with students as individuals or in small groups to add 'every day' relevance to some learning or to extend the more able. So, for example, Year 13 students were invited to note, and verbally share in a plenary session, one amazing fact about a bacterium they had researched.
231. When lessons were not satisfactory they were planned with activities in mind rather than a clear focus on what the students were to learn. This resulted in lessons being teacher led which, in turn, gave rise to long periods of time being spent on single activities. For example, Year 13 students spent all but ten minutes of a lesson copying notes on prokaryotic cells from an overhead projector screen. Students who finished these activities were often left idle for several minutes. The department has sets of textbooks which are rarely used, teachers preferring to lecture the students on the key theory. This often resulted in a lack of clarity for the students. For example, confusion arose in a Year 12 class over water potential and the osmotic effects of proteins and glucose in the blood. In addition, teachers often use photocopied resources when the textbooks would suffice and bring the added advantage of fostering some independence. In a practical session on mitosis, for example, the teacher circulated a photocopy of the phases of the cell cycle to the students instead of using the more complete and clear resource in the books.
232. Regular assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not check regularly that all students have grasped important ideas. Students are not receiving sufficiently frequent or detailed information about their learning and how they are progressing in relation to their targets. Though homework is set, much is not marked in a way which enables students to know how to improve. This compounds the problem that the opportunities for students to develop their own skills and take charge of their own learning are too limited. Overall, learning is unsatisfactory. A number of students, particularly the more able, are held back by the narrow range of teaching styles. For the less-able students too, there is little individualised teaching to help them learn.
233. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Development planning is poorly used to identify strategies for raising standards and there is too little monitoring of provision or evaluation of how provision can be improved. Since the previous inspection, standards have declined and management has deteriorated. Improvement is unsatisfactory.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused on the AS and A-level design and technology courses offered by the college. These include design and technology (product design), resistant materials

technology and graphics with materials technology, and design and technology (food technology).

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- There is a wide range of AS and A-level courses available to students.
- The relationships between staff and students are very positive.
- Students have a clear knowledge and understanding of their attainment and progress.
- The coursework produced for AS and A-level product design is of a high standard.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for students to use computer-aided designing and manufacturing techniques.
- Planning for each unit of work is insufficiently detailed.

234. The opportunity for students to study at A-level within design and technology has broadened over recent years and the department now offers three different courses. The number of students following courses over the last three years has remained fairly constant and the department has achieved almost a 100 per cent pass rate over this period. The most recent results are just above the national average, with 38 per cent of these students gaining A and B grades, compared with 30 per cent nationally. Ten students who completed the AS courses last summer have moved on to the A2 year having achieved a good range of grades, from A to D.

235. Current students in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress and are achieving standards that are in line with national expectations at this stage of their courses. In Year 12, students have embarked upon a wide range of individual projects to cover the coursework component of the AS examination. For example, on the new AS level course in food, students use ICT effectively to undertake research, using both the Internet and nutritional databases to develop knowledge and understanding of their chosen topics. Students' portfolios demonstrate a good range of work, well matched to the requirements of the AS course. They are developing competent making skills, manufacturing products to meet a variety of identified needs such as diabetic desserts for children and healthy takeaways for teenagers. Students on the AS graphics course are developing a variety of graphic and modelling skills which they used to present their coursework products, for example drawing in single- and two-point perspective and shaping styrofoam prototypes.

236. In Year 13, students on the product design courses are successfully completing the designing of their final coursework projects. They have produced detailed portfolios of their design proposals, well matched to the requirements of the A2 course. These portfolios demonstrate thorough research, using both primary and secondary sources, and show a good understanding of the influence of design movements on product design, such as the Bauhaus and the work of architects such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Students in the resistant materials group are producing a variety of both visually and structurally interesting designs for chairs, using models effectively to confirm details of their designs. Students in the graphics group are tackling projects, based on a variety of contexts, for example designing products such as a portable, wind-up, mobile 'phone charger and working in an architectural context to design secure bicycle parking for a city centre. Over this last year, students in these groups have started to use computer-aided design to extend their designing and presentation skills. However, this work has not yet been sufficiently represented in their portfolios. At

present, these students have no opportunity to use computer-aided manufacture to facilitate the making of their coursework projects and this is adversely affecting their achievement.

237. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their material specialisms whilst preparing students for the coursework units. For example, in Year 12 food, as part of the food science unit, the teacher enabled students to investigate the effects of different cooking methods on protein foods. Within the lesson, students completed a series of experiments, cooking meat in different ways and evaluating the results. The teacher supported the learning with appropriate worksheet resources that enabled students to make clear progress within the lesson and achieve a good standard of work. In Year 12 graphics, the teacher demonstrated how to construct perspective drawings confidently on the whiteboard. Teachers provide detailed help and advice on an individual basis, discussing the work completed and helping students prioritise on how to proceed. For example, in a Year 12 food lesson, the teacher provided the students with a list of relevant websites that enabled them to progress efficiently with their individual research tasks. In Year 13 resistant materials, the teacher sat alongside each student discussing the detail of their designs and sketching suggested developments and modifications to enable them to make further progress with their individual projects.
238. Students consistently enjoy their design and technology courses. They are motivated by the tasks set and work productively throughout lessons. In particular, students on the product design courses speak highly of the opportunity to design and make significant products within the department and the opportunity provided annually to display their work in public places. The assessment procedures established in the department ensure that students have a clear knowledge and understanding of their attainment and progress within each subject.
239. The leadership and management of the post-16 courses are good. The head of design and technology and the head of food lead by the example of their own teaching with the sixth form groups. Teachers have prepared appropriate outline plans and activities for each unit of the course specifications but, at present, these are insufficiently detailed. They do not show, for example, how the full content of each unit is to be delivered or how the work undertaken by one member of staff will fully support the work of the others. The department development plan appropriately prioritises the need to introduce more use of computer-aided design and manufacture and to develop other computer-based resources. However, it does not provide sufficient detail of strategies for improving provision, such as specific targets and deadlines that will be met.
240. The department has improved well since the last inspection. The number of courses offered has increased from one to three, and A-level results have improved from in line with the national picture to above average.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the provision in business courses is **good**.

Strengths

- Students make good progress from courses studied in Years 10 and 11.
- Most lessons provide an appropriate blend of direct teaching and individual assignment work.
- Teachers have a very good command of the subject enabling the students to develop their knowledge and understanding, including the appropriate use of business terminology.
- The social skills, maturity and personal development of students is good.

Areas for improvement

- Development planning is not focused well enough to ensure improvement.
- Students are not attaining enough of the highest grades in AS/A2.
- Students' ability to synthesise data and information, and to research and present ideas in innovative ways requires improvement.

241. In 2002, overall A-level results showed attainment above the national average, with 100 per cent of students gaining pass grades. There are, however, too few students attaining the highest A and B grades.
242. The standards of current Year 13 A2 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are in line with those normally seen for this stage in their course. There are no significant differences between the standards reached by boys or girls. The students recall relevant information and their folders show that they successfully practise the work they have covered in lessons. They understand new ideas and then apply them in new areas, as in the lesson on corporate objectives, which they then applied to the case study on William Morrison taken from a previous year's examination paper.
243. Current Year 12 students following the AS course are making good progress in the knowledge and understanding of the units of work being followed. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that standards are rising, particularly for the most capable students. When taking account of their previous attainment in GCSE this represents good achievement for many students. The most capable students achieve particularly well in understanding the methodology needed for their course requirements. All students develop a range of relevant terminology which they use effectively. Students have good research skills and use ICT technology with confidence.
244. Overall the quality of teaching is good, with some satisfactory lessons in Year 12. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. When teaching was good, the teacher enabled students to make good progress, as in a Year 12 lesson on factors affecting supermarkets' market share. There were good relationships which gave students confidence to ask questions and volunteer ideas. The ethical issues of market domination were discussed and students had a good understanding of the wider issues. Oral feedback was given to students at the end of the lesson to reinforce the learning that had taken place. However, in a Year 12 lesson on the difference between direct and indirect cost the teaching was only satisfactory because the lesson had been planned but there was too much teacher talk, so that students did not have enough active practice or participation in the work which would fix their learning. The task was not sufficiently structured for some students to succeed. In lessons overall, a better balance is needed between teacher-led activities and independent learning

activities.

245. Students' responses to learning are good. All students show good levels of interest and concentrate productively on tasks. Relationships are excellent. Students treat their peers with warmth and respect; they are mature and conscientious young adults. Their ability to work independently is being developed and most takes advantage of the opportunities to use the college ICT facilities available to them.
246. Potential students are guided and allocated to courses best suited to their individual needs taking account of prior achievement, relevant diagnostic assessments and teachers' judgements of the likelihood that students will achieve success in the work. This also supports progression from Years 10 and 11 business courses to more advanced study.
247. Leadership of the subject is good. The team is committed to working together, sharing ideas and good practice. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improve standards. This is not yet well enough supported with a sufficiently focused development plan emphasising teaching and learning and assessment issues.
248. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Responsibilities for overall management are located at a senior level and ensure effective support. Standards have improved from below to above the national average.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The subject is not offered as an examination course. ICT is used well in many subjects. Word processing and desk-top publishing skills are well developed for the presentation of work. The Internet is used effectively for research. Music technology develops composition skills well and complex software is used for the computerised editing and production of high quality videos in media studies.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, both pre- and post-16 programmes and the AVCE course in travel and tourism were included in the inspection.

LEISURE AND TOURISM

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

Strengths

- Achievement on pre-16 courses is good.
- Results on Advanced GNVQ were above average in 2001.
- Students enjoy the subject and numbers taking these courses have increased.
- There is progression from intermediate to advanced courses.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment on pre- and post-16 courses in 2002 was lower than standards obtained previously.
- Students have too few opportunities to develop practical skills and to apply their knowledge.
- There is a low level of retention on post-16 courses.

249. In both age groups there have been changes to the qualifications offered in the recent

past. In the 14-16 age group, Part 1 GNVQ in leisure and tourism was taken in 2001, equivalent to two A*-C grade GCSEs, and a full intermediate GNVQ, equivalent to four higher grade GCSEs, was completed in 2002. Older students followed a 12-unit Advanced GNVQ course in leisure and tourism from 1999 to 2001 and an AVCE course in travel and tourism was introduced in September 2000, providing students with the option of a 6-unit or 12-unit programme that was achieved in 2002.

250. On both pre- and post-16 courses, standards are average overall. Results for Advanced GNVQ were above average in 2001, whilst results on the AVCE course were below average in 2002. There has been a low level of retention in the last two years; a small proportion of the number of students who started their courses have completed or have done so successfully. Some students have progressed onto other courses or into employment, but the school has not kept records about students who left early. With the change from Part 1 GNVQ to the full intermediate GNVQ, the attainment of graded awards dropped. One student obtained merit but there were no distinctions in 2002. However, the pass rate for this younger age group has been high, and students with learning difficulties have made very good progress. Some students, who obtained low grades in GCSE subjects achieved significantly better on their GNVQ course - for many, two grades above their average GCSE performance.
251. Students often have below-average previous attainment for post-16 courses and achieve well given their starting points, particularly those on the 12-unit course. Their coursework demonstrates a sound understanding of the major characteristics of travel and tourism industries and students use data well to support their conclusions. They develop good research skills and relate key principles to case studies with some confidence, although understanding of historical trends and new developments are less secure. Most writing is descriptive, with a good level of detail, but reflective and analytical comment is limited for advanced level work. For example, in their studies of visitor attractions, the extent of students' understanding is not shown to good effect because comparison of strengths and weaknesses is insufficient, even though many students produce lengthy investigations into each attraction.
252. Teaching is satisfactory overall, because of good subject knowledge, clear presentation of theoretical elements and strong relationships with students. Sensitive personal guidance for students provides individual support and creates confidence. Teachers interpret assessment requirements correctly and have been particularly successful in ensuring that students complete what is required to achieve a pass on intermediate level courses. Lessons sometimes have little structure and students often work without a definite strategy. This is wasteful of time and their effort. Students are also uncertain about the level of current work; they do not receive frequent comments on how to improve and do not understand well enough what is needed to meet objectives for the higher grades. Teachers and students draw on their own experiences but there is insufficient extension of learning through the planned integration of inputs and links with industry. For example, in the unit on customer care, students have worked from common sense, imagining customer perspectives. As a result, their work lacks variety and realism.
253. Students bring a positive outlook to their studies and say that they find the content of the course relevant and interesting. They work well together in teamwork projects, arranging roles appropriately and managing practical tasks efficiently. They enjoy the freedom they are given for independent study and shoulder this responsibility well, although they are not practised in class discussion and find it difficult to identify for themselves the strengths and weaknesses in their work or in an approach they are using.
254. Co-ordination of the subject provision is satisfactory on a day-to-day basis. There are

regular meetings for the wider vocational team. A recent internal review highlighted key areas for development and some progress has been made in improving aspects of provision, whilst issues concerning the quality and consistency of teaching, such as the use of review activities to check understanding within a lesson, need further development. Teachers support each other well and there are opportunities for professional development, although quality assurance arrangements rely too much on informal contact.

255. Assessment is an area for further development. Teachers know individuals well and students can recall their predicted grades readily. However, feedback is largely verbal and directed mainly at completing rather than improving work. Deadlines are very long, assessment consists mainly of grading for each unit and the opportunity for re-working or taking a new direction is often suggested too late for a substantial change. Assessment information is available and of good quality and results are reviewed annually. However, in-course data is not used creatively to adapt teaching or to challenge the performance of particular groups of students.
256. Leisure or travel and tourism programmes have grown markedly in the last two years. Consolidation is important and a development plan for vocational education would support improvements in this area. It should include a higher profile on lesson planning, sharing good practice across the team, updating and cataloguing materials, building links with industry and ensuring that work placements continue and enhance learning on all vocational pathways.
257. The previous inspection did not include leisure and tourism, so comparisons cannot be made.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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

Strengths

- Achievement and the pass rate for intermediate GNVQ are good.
- Work placements are effective in extending students' understanding.
- There is progression from intermediate to advanced courses for 14 year olds.
- Students have a positive attitude towards the subject and some are committed to seeking further qualifications or training as a future career interest.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students completing the AVCE is low.
- Students suffer from not having a subject base to locate materials, to keep their work or to display what has been achieved.

258. The intermediate GNVQ and the AVCE course in health and social care were included in the inspection.
259. Two courses have been provided for the 14-16 age group. Part 1 GNVQ in health and social care, equivalent to two GCSEs at grades A*-C, was completed in 2001 and replaced by the full intermediate GNVQ, equivalent to four higher grade GCSEs. An AVCE course in health and social care was introduced in September 2000 with the first group of post-16 students completing in 2002.
260. Standards on pre- and post-16 courses are average overall. Results for students who obtained an AVCE in health and social care are close to the national expectation. The

pass rate was below average and retention was also low on this course. However, those students who completed the programme achieved very well in relation to their previous attainment. Results for younger students on GNVQ courses are broadly in line with the national average. Although the proportion of graded awards was lower on the full intermediate GNVQ, the pass rate was high on both courses. Students achieve well at GNVQ when their previous attainment is taken into account. Students have obtained better grades on GNVQ than in their GCSE subjects, with many of them achieving two grades higher.

261. The standard of work of current students is average. Coursework and work in class indicate satisfactory progress. Students have a secure understanding of how health and social care services are organised. They have adequate background knowledge of theories of human development, develop sensitivity to clients' rights and an awareness of major influences affecting health and changes at different stages in people's lives. The main body of their work consists of gathering information but there is insufficient evaluation and comment. This means that students can respond well to questioning but are not used to exploring issues in an analytical way and their skills in discussion are limited. For example, job roles have been described clearly, but research into the care value base underlying different kinds of work is light.
262. Teaching is satisfactory overall; some of it is good. The best lessons are well planned, make good use of a variety of activities and include exposition, challenging questions and a mix of group and individual work. This was not typical across most lessons observed. In many lessons, students are working in isolation; the extent and depth of their knowledge is not reinforced and more capable students are not stretched satisfactorily. This has an impact on how well students can learn from each other and the theoretical and practical elements of learning are not related clearly. Teachers possess relevant subject knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm. They know unit requirements well and actively guide students' writing. They are very effective in encouraging students who lack self-confidence, and a strong focus is placed on covering coursework, with areas of knowledge broken down helpfully into manageable tasks. However, teachers' planning is too often dominated by content and relies heavily on the textbook as the first source of evidence. Students expend much effort on retrieving and organising information, at the expense of developing skills and deepening understanding. Capabilities in reflecting, selecting, hypothesising and comparing are underdeveloped. For example, in the unit on using communication skills in interactions with clients, the more complex and controversial aspects, such as the potential for patient intimidation, were neglected.
263. Students find the subject interesting and personally relevant. They like the way it connects to their lives, now and in the future. They concentrate well in lessons and value the support that they receive from their teachers. They are comfortable with and capable of carrying out studies and research independently. Students make good use of work placements that they have arranged for themselves and some have developed a serious interest in continuing learning or further training in this vocational field.
264. Co-ordination of the provision for health and social care is satisfactory on a day-to-day basis and operates across health and leisure programmes. There are meetings between teachers and they support each other well, although contact and standardisation activities are often conducted informally. Teachers know students well individually and the tracking system ensures that students are clear about their predicted grades. However, they work to very long deadlines, assessment consists mainly of on-going verbal feedback and when comments are recorded, this usually refers to what has been completed rather than what could be attempted to improve current work. A recent internal review identified areas for development and some actions have been taken. Developments in health and social care should be

consolidated further and there is a need for a subject base to locate information and share resources, planning and examples of good practice.

265. The previous inspection did not include health and social care, so comparisons cannot be made.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

ART

The AS and A2 courses in Fine Art and Textiles were scrutinised during the inspection.

Overall provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students produce consistently good results and achievements which show a high level of creativity.
- Teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills are very competent.
- Learning opportunities outside school are used effectively.
- Individual and group reviews are used to provide clear and relevant guidance about how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Students have had little prior experience of some relevant areas of study, such as three-dimensional concepts or digital manipulation.
- There are insufficient opportunities to display students' work safely in public areas of the college.

266. Results in sixth-form art courses have maintained a high level over many years, the majority of students attaining grades in the A-C range.

267. Year 12 students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of different artists particularly where the comparative approaches used at GCSE have been applied to contrasting historical and contemporary work. For example, a student showed good analytical skills in comparing the work of 17th Century artist Willem Kalf with 20th Century artist Lisa Milroy. The high quality of observation is evident in students' recording in two and three dimensions of natural forms. Students show a willingness to explore a range of media although their confidence in three-dimensional media is limited by their prior experience of predominantly two-dimensional concepts. The positive impact of external course experiences on standards is evident, however. For example, a textiles student incorporated papier mâché with appliqué as a result of a visit to the national 'Knitting and Stitching' show in London. The development of a 'visual and tactile diary' of experiments shows the high value students give to this element and this evidently promotes creative confidence when applying these materials and methods.

268. In Year 13, the strengths identified in Year 12 are pursued. Students' first-hand encounters with art and artists stimulate depth of personal enquiry. For example a student has combined the influences of Escher and Charles Sheeler to create a large scale painting inspired by structures which reflects well her other subject interests, mathematics and graphics, and training for architecture. Her interest in the concrete art of David Undery, seen at the Guildenburgh Gallery in Peterborough, has provoked further study. A different student has used photo silk-screen printing as a result of him learning from the extensive depth of the teacher's knowledge, understanding and skills. The high quality of students' research is a contributory factor to the very good results achieved. In textiles, for example, students were observed modelling their fashion designs using professional techniques. Links with Wisbech College have reinforced the high expectations made by teachers, and understanding of the purpose and practices of the course are gained through visits, the fashion show and contact with past students.
269. Students show strong commitment to the course and use the resources in school well, including contact with teachers, to organise their time productively.
270. Teaching is very good. Different teachers use their passion for the subject and personal experiences well to advance students. Group and individual review is managed sensitively, enabling students to gain a clear understanding about how to progress and how to analyse and evaluate the work of others. Demonstration is timed appropriately. For example, following up a visit to Burghley House, where students have analysed the sculptures of Martyn Barrett, a teacher demonstrated a range of techniques with wire, papier mâché and modroc to equip them with a range of skills with which to express their own ideas in 3D, sensitive to the limitations of their insufficient prior experience. ICT is a further example of an area which current sixth formers have not experienced progressively because of its recent improvement in Years 7 to 11.
271. Staff are deployed effectively to enable students to benefit from different perspectives. Although this is enriched by contact with the art community beyond school, the department is remote from the school itself. There are many displays of art in the main school which enables others to benefit from the students' achievements but there are insufficient opportunities to display the work of the sixth form, which denies students and subject staff the feedback work at this level requires.
272. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. the quality of teaching has improved from good to very good, leadership has also got better and above average standards have been maintained.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is satisfactory; the teacher is knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- The students are well-motivated and are encouraged to work independently.
- Students make satisfactory progress in developing ICT skills.

Areas for improvement

- The course does not currently attract sufficient numbers of students.
- Resources for the subject are barely satisfactory.
- The scheme of work is under-developed.

273. The inspection looked in detail at the AS music technology course. This is a new course in the school, so there are no results to report on. There is no A2 music course available to students.
274. The most recent post-16 results were for A-level music in 2000 when only two boys took the course. Results were a little below average.
275. Standards seen in AS music technology lessons are in line with those normally seen nationally. The group consists of six boys. They have a satisfactory understanding of how to use computer software to transcribe a musical score. They sequence two contrasting short pieces of music in line with examination requirements. For example, a student who has chosen an extract from 'Ritual Dance of the Ancestors' from Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' worked from the score to produce an effective performance of the extract. The score that he worked from includes more than six independent parts, changes of time signature, muted violins, pizzicato and tremelo strings. The students are beginning to evaluate their performance appropriately. For example, explaining that the pizzicato string sound is not accurate – they have had to use short bowed sounds instead. They also talk about the balance of different parts such as the horns being too prominent. This demonstrates an appropriate understanding of where the areas for improvement are in their interpretation of the piece. Overall, the students have made satisfactory progress in acquiring and developing skills in using ICT to create, refine and manipulate sounds. Progress in lessons is generally satisfactory although one student with above-average prior attainment struggled with a sequencing task because he was unable to harmonise a melody line.
276. The teaching of AS music technology is satisfactory. The teacher's own knowledge and enthusiasm are a strength. The teaching exposes students to a varied musical repertoire such as comparing and contrasting versions of an extract from Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' including versions by Ravel and Emmerson, Lake and Palmer. The teacher helped the students to listen out for different features in the first version, for piano, by asking well-focused questions about what exactly is happening in the different parts. This enabled students to make satisfactory progress in their learning. For example, one of the students was able to hear the melody and a descending scale pattern but was unclear about how these parts are performed. With skilful questioning from the teacher the student was able to identify that the melody is played in the bass with the descending scale played above it.
277. The way that equipment and lessons are organised encourages students to become good independent learners but sometimes hampers their progress. The lessons take place in a small room and there are only four computers available in the department. The teacher sometimes manages this effectively by setting up appropriate activities such as two students writing up logs of their work while others use the computers. However, the progress of students working on computers is hampered when half of the group is doing the listening activity described above. The noise from this has a negative impact on the progress of students working on computers who find it difficult to hear their work. The student who is struggling to harmonise the melody from a Dorset folk song does not get the help that he requires because the teacher is focusing on supporting the listening work. The contribution of AS music technology to the development of key skills has not been sufficiently considered.
278. Students are well motivated by the course, particularly by the use of ICT. However, the course does not attract girls to study music post-16. Concentration and the capacity for independent study are good.
279. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department has consulted students over which examination courses to run for music. The course is

well organised but the scheme of work is largely a series of course materials and activities rather than a framework that ensures planning for building on students' achievement. The resources for AS music technology are barely satisfactory, there are not enough computers for all of the students to work independently on practical tasks.

280. The previous inspection report contained no judgements on sixth form music, so comparisons cannot be made.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- AS and A-level exam results for 2002 are well above the national average and show a very significant improvement on recent years.
- Good teaching, subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements ensures students make very good progress and attain well.
- Good opportunities for students to take some responsibility for their own learning produce very positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for development

- There is no provision for post-16 students to engage in a recreational physical education programme.

281. The 2002 AS and A-level results showed a very good improvement on previous years. In the A level exam the average points score for the subject was much higher than the national figure, with 53 per cent of students gaining A and B grades and all thirteen students gaining a pass grade, with no grade lower than a D. In the AS level examinations there was a similar pattern; of the thirteen students entered for the 2002 examination all but one gained a pass grade with 53 per cent gaining A and B grades. Students also achieve well when compared with their performance in the subject at GCSE and AS level. The numbers entered were relatively small and only a small number were girls, so it is not possible to compare girls' performance with that of boys'.

282. The standard of written work of current students is in line with that normally seen. Their speaking and listening skills and understanding of difficult concepts are slightly above average. All teaching groups contain students across the ability range and the majority are making good progress. Most students understand and relate some of the more difficult theoretical elements of the syllabus to their own experience and the practical work they undertake. For example, in a Year 12 AS level group students were able to relate the objective of the lesson, to develop a critical analysis of fitness testing, to actual fitness tests they had undertaken in their earlier years in the college. They understood well the differences between the concepts of test reliability and validity and explained these by relating them to their own experiences of fitness tests.

283. Overall, teaching is good. Students make good progress and learn well as a result. A particular strength of the teaching is the very good subject knowledge that teachers have. For example, in a Year 13 A level lesson focusing on biomechanics, the teacher effectively used the triathlon as an example to teach students the difference between distance and displacement and how to calculate speed, velocity and acceleration. The teacher gave very good support and encouragement to students who found these concepts difficult. This lesson was particularly effective in developing students' numeracy skills. Teachers set clear learning objectives for the lesson, share these with students and often recap learning at the end to ensure understanding. Teachers use a wide range of different learning methods and provide students with good opportunities

to develop their skills for independent learning. In a Year 13 A-level lesson, students used ICT well to research their own project and draw up an outline of their area of study. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of specific worksheets prepared by teachers, students' own notes and structured tests. Whilst this is usually marked accurately and contains encouraging comments on what has been done well, it often lacks comments informing students of how they can improve further. The approach, across all teachers in the department, is too inconsistent.

284. Students respond well to the teaching and, as a result, learning is good. They are generally attentive and participate well in discussion and small group work. They listen to others' views and contribute in a mature way to support, or counter, points being expressed. For example, in a Year 13 lesson where the focus was on the participation and representation of women in sport, students offered well-thought-out reasons why women are underrepresented in the media reporting of sport. This participation was particularly effective in moving the learning forward.
285. The good teaching and learning are a result of the good management and leadership of the AS and A-level work by a strong team of teachers. There is a shared commitment in the department to provide sporting opportunities as an enrichment for all post-16 students. However, there is currently no timetabled opportunity to do this. The Sports Hall and hard court playing areas provide good facilities for practical working and the provision of a dedicated classroom for the teaching of theory lessons enables teachers ready access to their resources and greater opportunity to enhance the learning environment with displays and key words.
286. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. There was no focused inspection of the subject at the last inspection and the judgement then that there is no entitlement to a physical education curriculum for sixth form students is still true. However, the college has introduced sports studies as an AS and A level subject and standards are well above the national average; teaching is good and students make good progress.

MEDIA STUDIES

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

Strengths

- There are good results overall in examinations at AS level at the end of Year 12 and at A2 level at the end of Year 13, with a consistently very good A-E pass rate.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have competent expertise.
- Recruitment to the course is good and students demonstrate strong commitment.
- Extra-curricular and enrichment provision is very good.
- The library contains excellent reference material to support media studies.
- The media studies curricular provision does not include GCSE or GNVQ options.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few students gaining top grades.
- Resourcing and accommodation is only adequate, bearing in mind the increasing numbers of students opting for media studies.

287. Results in media studies have been consistently good for the last three years, both at AS level at the end of Year 12 and at A2 level at the end of Year 13. Excellent A-E passes are consistently achieved with an entry which has a wide spread of ability. In 2002, students achieved very well with a third of them achieving A-B passes, four-fifths A-C passes and all gaining A-E. The AS level course in Year 12 provides a very good foundation for the work at A2 level in Year 13. The standard of work at A-level is generally good, with course work often very good. The standard of course work is praised extremely highly in examiners' reports.

288. For students currently in Years 12 and 13, written work is of an appropriate length, generally accurately presented and with effective usage of media vocabulary and concepts. Practical video work is a very good feature of the department's work, and the investment in high quality, computerised, editing hardware is ensuring production values are high and that the ICT capability of the students is being developed well. Media studies is one of the highest recruiting A-level subjects, with two groups per year, and it attracts as many girls as boys. There are no significant differences in the attainment of girls and boys, and many of the less academic make very good progress. There are examples of good achievement amongst those students gaining grades C-E. By the end of Year 13, students have considerable confidence in using media equipment and produce course work of a very good standard. They use technical vocabulary appropriately and apply the theoretical learning to their work. Presentation values are good as students try hard through interest and commitment. Speaking and listening skills are effectively developed through the emphasis on collaborative group work.

289. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the course content; their media expertise is recognised regionally. They also have an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Both of these features ensure that students develop a high level of interest and commitment to the subject, leading to good results. Both teachers are very experienced with A-level media studies and they prepare students very well for examinations. Teachers have developed a very good bank of materials and resources to support their teaching. A good example of this was seen in the Year 12 lesson, where a television report on the 'Animal Liberation Front' was skilfully used to show the numerous ways in which 'bias' could be seen in the way it was presented. As a consequence, learning on the topic of 'bias' was most effective. A wide range of teaching methods is used, including group work, independent research, practical projects and noting/annotating. Students develop good collaborative skills and gain confidence in their own abilities, with teachers operating effectively in the facilitator mode. This was seen well in a Year 13 lesson on 'British Broadcasting since 1990' where effective collaborative group work was used to analyse TV schedules in order to compare and contrast channel approaches. Not only did this lesson raise student awareness about industry approaches, it also provided the opportunity for the teacher to challenge stereotypical notions about schedules and audiences. ICT skills are developed well, both from the use of sophisticated publishing programs and through editing film.

290. Students are very positive about their choice of media studies, both at AS and A2 level. The retention of students to do A2 level in Year 13 is very good. In discussions with students they all comment on the level of interest and the quality of working

relationships with the teachers they experience in lessons. Many express enthusiasm for the practical video work and enjoy the amount of independence required. Teachers also want the students to do well and have high expectations. This level of enthusiasm and interest, coupled with the expectations of staff, creates a very effective ethos for learning and students strive to achieve well.

291. Management is very good but not formalised. Media studies is part of the English department but is mainly developed by two dedicated teachers who lead well through enthusiasm. In terms of general management responsibilities, for example monitoring and planning, they are part of the remit of the head of English. The subject is now outgrowing this arrangement, especially if the subject is developed to include GCSE and GNVQ media studies. Both the quality of the curricular experience and staff competence are high but there are issues about resourcing and accommodation, bearing in mind the numbers of students opting for media studies. Rooms are large but not customised for media studio work to any degree. Technician support is good.
292. Media studies was not a focus subject in the last inspection report, however, a review of the results and numbers of students involved over the intervening period, show that there has been good sustained achievement and growth.

HUMANITIES

There are courses leading to examination at AS and A-level. The number of students choosing geography is increasing. In this inspection some lessons were observed, and students books were looked at. These show that students enjoy their lessons, work hard and get a good understanding of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students build successfully on their achievements at GCSE.
- Teaching is of good quality.
- Effective planning provides an interesting, relevant and challenging course.
- Students have a very positive and mature approach.
- Leadership and organisation are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students receive too little guidance on how they can improve.

293. Standards at A-level are gradually getting better, with more students gaining higher grades. Twenty-eight students took the most recent examination and only one failed to gain a pass grade. Nine students did very well, gaining the highest grades. Overall, this is better than results nationally in geography. Students achieve more in geography than in many of their other subjects, and much better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls.
294. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' books is also better than normally seen. In Year 12, for example, students demonstrate good understanding of settlement change in the UK. They explain confidently some difficult ideas of urbanisation and counter-urbanisation. They apply their knowledge well. They show good understanding of the economic, social, political and environmental effects of the spread of new settlements. In Year 13, students continue to develop their ability to apply

their knowledge to unfamiliar situations. In one lesson, for example, they showed good understanding of theoretical ideas about the changing countryside in the UK. They used this to analyse the situation in less developed countries. They argued the case for and against a simple hypothesis very effectively. Coursework shows they collect data carefully and use a range of statistical methods to illustrate their ideas. Work is well written and includes clear evaluation of methods.

295. One of the main reasons students do so well is the high standard of teaching. Subject specialists work together well. They plan lessons carefully so students are engaged in challenging and purposeful activity. Students benefit from the knowledge of their teachers. In one lesson, the teacher clearly knew his subject well. He questioned students skilfully to get them thinking more deeply about changes in city environments. He provided a very helpful diagram so they could structure their ideas. In another lesson the teacher set very clear learning objectives to focus students on the causes of natural disasters around the world. They worked hard in groups and thought very carefully about ways of classifying various hazards and disasters. They gained a good understanding of connections between people and their environment. Homework is set regularly so students can consolidate their learning and prepare for future lessons. Students' work is marked very carefully. Positive, encouraging comments help students to know the standards they are reaching. Teachers do not, however, provide sufficient guidance to help students know exactly what they must do to improve.
296. The attitude of students is very good. They are attentive in class. They take a mature approach to their studies. They are clearly committed to achieving the highest possible standard. They work with concentration and determination. They work together particularly well on group activities, and value each others views. Their folders are neat and well organised. This is another sign that they care about their work.
297. Geography in the sixth form is very well led and managed by the subject leader. He gives a positive lead in planning work. He co-ordinates the work of colleagues very effectively. There is clear commitment to supporting students and raising standards further.
298. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Students' attainment has improved, from sound to better than normally seen, because they now make better progress.

HISTORY

Overall the quality of provision for history in the sixth form is **good**. The school offers an AS course in Year 12 and A2 in Year 13.

Strengths

- The teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables the students to develop good knowledge and understanding of the work covered.
- Teachers have high expectations of students, leading to good recall and background understanding.
- There is good development of the use and evaluation of source material and the development of techniques needed to be successful in the examination.
- Year 13 have particularly good attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The level of debate is not of high enough quality; students do not build on or challenge views or opinions sufficiently.
- ICT is not used sufficiently, either for research or for presentation.

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299. Standards at A-level over the past three years have improved and overall are just above the national standard, although the proportion gaining higher grades is too low. In the last two years the department has improved the level at which the students perform in relation to their previous attainment at the end of Year 11 so that, overall, students achieved grades which were higher than those expected.
 300. Students make good progress overall, and this is better in Year 13 than Year 12. They reach standards above those found nationally. They recall a detailed level of knowledge of the topic being covered and understand the significance of events and issues. They show an understanding of different historical interpretations, as in a Year 13 lesson when they were contrasting the views of the revisionist and liberal schools. They present information they have researched for themselves well. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson where students presented information and views on the role of Martin Luther King. The students do not challenge views sufficiently or build on each other's views in debate. Written work shows that they can draw conclusions but these need to be more detailed and supported by evidence.
 301. Overall teaching and learning are good. For example, in a Year 13 lesson studying the national government of the 1930s, the teacher's confident subject knowledge, understanding and organisation of the information enabled the students to gain a good overview of the issues involved. The teacher also drew parallels with more recent government situations to develop students' understanding further with some willing to challenge views and put forward a different argument. Good questioning further enabled the students' analytical skills to be used and gave them an opportunity to show what they had found out through their own research. When teaching is satisfactory this is still underpinned by good teacher knowledge. In a Year 12 lesson on propaganda in Nazi Germany the lesson was planned and organised well but the teacher missed opportunities to involve all the students in the discussion, resulting in some being very passive learners. Good resources were provided and the task set appropriate, but there was insufficient direction given to the students so that some time was wasted. There were some good responses and questions, dealt with well by the teacher, but the discussion was not structured well enough to ensure maximum learning.
 302. Relationships between students and teachers are good with students expressing the view that they are challenged and supported well by their teachers, leading to positive student attitudes to their work. There is regular and helpful feedback on written work as well as in the lessons. The written work is often based on examples from past examination papers so that students know how well they are doing and which elements they need to improve. Most students show a good level of interest in their work.
 303. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The teachers work well together and work hard to improve standards. The newly qualified teacher has made good progress, but all teachers need to further develop and share good practice. The teachers keep up to date with examination requirements, particularly in relation to the examination board difficulties experienced in 2002, and have adapted their work in response to the Board's advice. Good resources, including visits to historical sites, are provided.
 304. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. A-level results were slightly above average in 1996 and they were also just above average in 2001. Students are still not sufficiently skilled in presenting historical argument.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- There has been a consistently good proportion of students gaining A-E grades for the last three years for all three English syllabus options, at AS and A2.
- Specialist teaching is of good quality
- Working relationships between staff and students are very good.
- The newly appointed head of department has good potential for improving provision.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in combined English language and literature, and at higher grades generally, are too low.
- There is insufficient consistency in the implementation of key lesson structures, particularly of the plenary element.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure the sharing of good practice and consistency of approach.
- There are insufficient language – linguistics books in the resources centre to reflect the 50 per cent emphasis on this area within the A-level English courses

305. Results in English are satisfactory. The department tries hard to meet the needs of all students by offering three syllabus options at A-level: English, combined English and literature, and literature. This leads to students entering courses with a broad range of ability. Across the three examination courses, the department has a very good record for A-E passes for the last three years. There are examples of strong achievement amongst those students gaining grades C-E. Literature tends to be the minority option, usually dominated by girls, but students achieve well. The range of options with language has led to there being good take up of English by boys. In 2002, students taking A2 language did well, with a high proportion of A-E and A-C grades. Students taking combined English language and literature did well at grades A-E, but not well enough at the higher grades A-B. College analysis indicates that students, especially the less academic, find most difficulties with the language component, particularly the formal responses to language.

306. The quality of work observed in lessons and reviewed through the work sample is at least average, often above average with the most able producing work of a very high standard. Students generally make sound progress over the two years. They write at length with fair confidence and accuracy, showing an ability to quote appropriately and to use specific technical vocabulary well. Written work is less secure when needing to provide structured personal responses to language tasks and there are too few effective strategies to support the students, particularly in Year 12 AS courses. Standards of oracy are generally good, with students able to discuss and elaborate well on ideas. However, some students need too much prompting into discussion. A Year 12 lesson, which used the extract 'How To Be Famous' as stimulus, helped students develop reflective responses well by asking them to pretend they had written it and to explain their choice of vocabulary, ideas and effects. It also stimulated a lot of discussion. Most students read with confidence and fluency. In many lessons students have the opportunity to develop the key skills of note taking and annotating effectively. In lessons, boys and girls respond and perform equally well.

307. The quality of teaching is good. Observed lesson quality was at least sound, with most good and some very good. The overall specialist nature of the team ensures that there is a good breadth and depth of subject knowledge and understanding. The management of students' behaviour is a positive feature, rooted in good working

relationships between staff and students. In the best lessons, teachers share clear learning objectives with students and summarise learning well in a purposeful plenary. Where the plenary was given insufficient time or missed out, checking on the effectiveness of learning and the meeting of the set objectives was problematic. Effective use of the plenary was demonstrated well in the Year 12 combined lesson on 'Parody'. Objectives were shared and a task to parody Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech by turning it into an 'Eastenders' character's soliloquy was then ended well by the plenary being a presentation session which effectively checked learning. There was an appropriate mix of teacher-led and independent learning, with group work characterised by good collaborative skills. All lessons were provided with good materials and resources which challenged and informed students well, as well as honing their annotating skills. A good example of appropriate materials and approaches being used was in the year 13 Literature lesson, involving a 'sequencing exercise' where a cut-up 'Never Give All The Heart' by Yeats was required to be re-constructed as an introduction to two embittered love poems. This method helped students focus on the meaning and shape of the poem which aided access to Wyatt's 'They Flee From Me.' Course textbooks are used appropriately. Marking and assessment are generally carried out well, with the best marking using extended written comments on ways to improve, appended to individual pieces of work. As with the structuring of lessons, best practice marking is not consistently widespread across the team of teachers.

308. Students comment favourably on their provision in English. They apply themselves well to their work, clearly finding it stimulating and, in the case of the language work, challenging. Course work is carried out conscientiously. They are clear about working hard to achieve their predicted grades and generally want to do well.
309. The new head of department is very effectively establishing a largely new team of teachers after an unsettled period. There is a sense of direction and purposefulness about the department that indicates that the team has a very good capacity for further improvement. Monitoring of teaching is not yet effective so that good practice is insufficiently shared and consistency not achieved by the whole team. Resources and accommodation are adequate. However, the language – linguistics section in the resources centre needs to be developed to reflect the 50 per cent emphasis on this area within the A-level English courses.
310. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory, though there are some areas that continue to be areas for further development. The language elements, which were judged to be weak, still give problems to the less academic. Students now make good progress over the two years as opposed to the previously good progress in Year 12 with a slow down in Year 13. The achievement of the highest grades, however, is still an area where students do not do well enough. The previous report criticised the lack of independent learning and this was not seen to be an issue in the current inspection. The previous inspection report commented that students were overly quiet but this was not seen to a significant extent in the current inspection. Students responded well generally and were willing to venture ideas and elaborate on answers when required. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH AND GERMAN

French and German were inspected. There is one Year 12 French group and one Year 13 German group.

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

Strengths

- French teaching is good. The teacher gives students a thoroughly planned programme of activities.
- Work experience in France helps students to gain confidence in French.
- Much thought and effort has gone in to trying to make this year's German group work effectively.

Areas for improvement

- This year's German group is not making enough progress.
- There is low take-up for foreign languages post-16 and no alternative provision apart from AS and A-Level.

311. Attainment in French and German examinations is broadly in line with national figures, at A and AS level.
312. Standards in French are close to the national average. However, there is a wide spread of attainment in the Year 12 group. The highest attainer shows good knowledge of grammar and writes well with good expression and considerable accuracy. All lack confidence to speak, apart from one student, who speaks fluently, with a very good range of everyday expressions, but produces insufficiently accurate written work. The lowest attainers lack a secure grasp of structures and a sufficiently secure command of the language to be able to hold even a basic conversation. They are finding the gap between GCSE and AS difficult to bridge.
313. The quality of teaching in French is consistently good and there are some very good features. Lessons are well planned and structured to practise all the skills and to build up grammatical knowledge. The teacher maintains a strong pace, in French, constantly probing, encouraging, challenging and supporting. This creates a sense of purpose, clearly related to course requirements and the high expectations she has of the standards she wants the students to achieve. The teacher uses a good variety of lively activities that keep the students on their toes. She judges well the balance between speaking practice that she directs and individual or pair work. She makes sure that they understand and speak correctly before setting up intensive practice, for example with prompt cards to consolidate their knowledge of verbs and tenses or competing in pairs in a running dictation. She juggles well the support and challenge she provides to different students, depending on their different needs. Their progress is carefully tracked and she conveys students' strengths and weaknesses clearly.
314. Relationships are good; students respect the teachers' attention to their needs and are keen to learn, although they do not always share the teacher's sense of urgency and prepare as thoroughly as they need to, for example to prepare oral presentations on time. Progress is adequate but not as rapid as the quality of teaching would suggest. The students' GCSE knowledge has not equipped them well to cope with the demands of AS Level. They express confidence in the teacher, who drives them enthusiastically on, and they are willing enough in class but have not yet gained enough confidence and determination to believe that they can be successful.
315. In German, students started with good GCSE results but their AS results were low: one D grade, three Es and one ungraded. Standards in German are below what is expected at this stage of an A-level course. Understanding is at a basic level and students' vocabulary and grasp of language structures are not developed enough for them to convey confidently or accurately information and opinions about the topics they have to cover, such as the environment. They do not speak confidently and written work varies in quality. The best writing shows good use of technical vocabulary and a good variety of tenses but too many grammatical mistakes in word order, verb forms and adjective

endings. Other students' work lacks accurate control of language structures. Their grammatical understanding has not improved quickly enough to meet the demands of the AS and A-Level courses. The students are achieving less well than last year's successful group.

316. The quality of teaching in German is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, including one native speaker. They have good knowledge of the syllabus requirements and cover the topics and grammar well between them. They support the learning with a considerable range of materials from a variety of sources, including textbooks, the Internet, magazines and good listening materials. They track students' progress carefully, systematically recording attendance, marks and work completed. However, teaching is shared between three teachers, which gives variety but makes it difficult to ensure continuity. They question effectively and draw out understanding of texts and develop grammar points. However, there is not enough interest and variety of learning styles and there are not enough strategies to move the students from relying on text and prompts to using and re-using language they have learned.
317. The students' response is unusually negative. Relationships are cool. Occasionally, they speak out in German but some make little attempt to respond to the opportunities provided to speak in German and comments and questions are frequently in English. This reflects a lack of commitment and understanding that they need to try to speak as much as possible to develop confidence. So their language skills are not developing as quickly as they should. Progress has also been adversely affected by changes of teacher. Despite the teachers' efforts to liaise with each other, the students do not feel that continuity is satisfactory. Some got lower grades at AS than they hoped for and they expressed considerable resentment. However, they have not picked up the challenge to improve.
318. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory. Planning is carefully co-ordinated. Exam results are thoroughly analysed and students' progress is tracked to check whether they are on target. Work experience placements in France and Germany improve the students' language and cultural understanding. However, there are no alternatives to AS and A-Level for students who want to keep up a language without specialising. Teachers work hard to make a success of the courses, but have not yet found successful approaches for the current Year 13 German group.
319. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. A-level results in German were well below average at the time of the previous inspection and they are now average. French results have improved from below average to being average. However, the attitudes of current German students are much worse than indicated in the 1997 inspection report.