

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Wreake Valley Community College**

Syston

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120267

Principal: Helen McDermott

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain  
07661

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

Inspection number: 253793

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Parkstone Road Syston Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE7 1LY
Telephone number:	0116 264 1080
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Moorhead
Date of previous inspection:	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31765	Ian Hulme	Team inspector	Business Education	
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19983	Haydn Webb	Team inspector	Science (sixth form)	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

Wreake Valley Community College serves several communities to the north of Leicester. Students who attend Roundhill High School from Years 7 to 9 transfer to this College in Year 10. Wreake Valley High School shares accommodation and staff with the Upper School. Although the High School retains a separate entity within the college, for most purposes Wreake Valley College is a single, 11-19 institution, with community provision. The college is bigger than other secondary colleges with 1287 students (average 997). The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below national average at 7.5 per cent. The percentage of students with English as an additional language is high at 19.1 per cent. Students with special educational needs, including statements is below national average at 6.1 per cent, 2.8 per cent being statemented. This is broadly in line with national averages.

### **HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS**

This is a very good college. At all levels, students receive a very effective standard of education. This occurs as a result of very good leadership and management, which is excellently directed by a strong principal. Teaching and learning are good as are students' attitudes and behaviour. Standards in external examinations are rising. Overall, the college provides good value for money.

#### **What the college does well**

- Very good leadership and management; excellent vision by principal.
- Good teaching.
- Very Good relationships resulting from very good pastoral care.
- Very good provision for special educational needs.
- Excellent teacher support and checking of the effectiveness of teaching.
- Excellent strategic plan.

#### **What could be improved**

- The provision of information and communication technology
- The development of better numeracy in all subjects.
- The arrangement of accommodation

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

### **HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The college has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1997. Examination results have improved, teaching is better and the college's direction by means of the strategic plan, is very clear. The college has made considerable strides in its self-evaluation process. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now particularly strong. Although ICT provision has improved, it is still insufficient to meet requirements. Improvements in the provision of religious education are substantial. Citizenship is now integrated into teachers' schemes.

## 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 colleges			similar colleges
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	[ ]	C	[ ]	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

When students enter the High School in Year 7, they have overall levels of attainment below average although that of the current Year 7 is around average. This rise in standards is attributed to the impact of national strategies in primary schools and a change in the profiles of students entering the school. There are now more local students and less city students.

In statutory tests at the end of Year 9, students attain well above average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. Over the last 3 years standards were average in English and below average in mathematics and above average in science. Although there has been some underachievement by boys, results indicate that this is less pronounced and, in 2002, their attainment was average when compared nationally whereas that of girls fell below average at this level. When compared with the prior attainment of students, at the end of Year 6, standards are, overall, well above average. In mathematics, however, they are average. Compared with schools with a similar context, results were well above average in English, well below in mathematics and average in science. Overall, they are average. Over time results are above the national trend.

At the end of Year 11, results for students gaining 5 A\* to C grades and 5 A\* to G grades at GCSE are above average, as is the GCSE point score per student. Results for 1 or more A\* to G grades are average. When compared with the students' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, results are well above average for 5 A\* to C, 5 A\* to G grades and their average points scores. Again results for 1 or more A\* to G grades are average. Comparison with schools of a similar context indicates that point scores and results for 1 or more A\* to G grades are below average, whereas for 5 A\* to G, they are above average and those for 5 A\* to C are average. Over time results are broadly in line with the national trend.

The standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 to 13. At all levels students' achievements are good.



## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	<b>Good.</b> Overall, students have positive attitudes to their college. They arrive on time, are friendly, helpful and enjoy talking about their work. They are attentive in lessons and most are keen to take part in activities outside of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Good.</b> Behaviour is good. In lessons students are prompt and most get down to work quickly. They follow teachers' instructions well. Most are able to maintain concentration and are willing to answer questions with confidence. Movement around college is orderly. Students know the college rules and see the reasons for them.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Very good.</b> Students take on responsibilities with enthusiasm. Relationships are very good both between students and staff and with students.
Attendance	<b>Good.</b> Attendance is good, overall, but variable within year groups. Students arrive on time and so lessons begin promptly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

In 203 lessons seen, teaching and learning were good overall and marginally better in the sixth form. In a high proportion of lessons they were very good or better. Consistent good teaching reflected in good learning ensures that students receive cumulatively a very good education. Only a very small number of lessons were unsatisfactory. Particular strengths in teaching include teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects. Expectations are generally high and students respond well to teachers' confidence in their potential. Teachers' planning is good; most make clear the aims of lessons and finish lessons with a summary where they check on the effectiveness of students' learning. Teaching and learning are best in English, geography and the performing and expressive arts. In other subjects, they are at least satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is well established but numeracy is insufficiently taught across subjects other than mathematics.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Good.</b> The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where the balance of time affects information and communication technology and religious education, allowing only 2 per cent of curriculum time to each of these subjects. As these are taught in a carousel arrangement, 50 per cent of students are not following the subject in lessons immediately prior to examinations. Very good extra-curricular provision and contributions from the community are features.
Provision for students with special educational needs	<b>Very good.</b> Students make good progress against their previous learning because of the high quality of teaching and in-class support. The monitoring of their progress is excellent.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	<b>Good.</b> Most students for whom English is an additional language are fluent at English. Overall, they make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good.</b> The college gives these aspects of students' personal development high priority and a high profile. An ethos is created, where students can flourish. Several departments make significant contributions to students' SMSC development and this aspect of college life is very effective in supporting students' personal development
How well the college cares for its students	<b>Very well.</b> The college makes every effort to care for students well and they work in a safe and orderly community. They are very well supported personally. The college effectively embraces the spirit of inclusion and goes to considerable efforts in order to ensure that every student is treated fairly. However, if a student is particularly difficult, the college takes firm and decisive action. All students have access to all activities irrespective of gender, capability or ethnicity. Assessment is very good. The comprehensive policy is reflected in college practice and appropriate target setting has a positive impact on standards.

## HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	<b>Very good.</b> Leadership by the principal is excellent and management by the senior management team and other managers is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Very good.</b> The governing body is well led and is a strong group, which works hard to fulfil its responsibilities. It ensures that all changes relate to, or are reflected in, the strategic plan.
The college's evaluation of its performance	<b>Very good.</b> The college takes its evaluation very seriously and watches the effects of teaching, learning, behaviour and progress very carefully. If necessary it takes action to remedy downward trends.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Good.</b> Financial control is good. An accumulated deficit is now reducing in line with the expectations and agreement of the local education authority. Best value is sought effectively by the use of tendering and quality assurance. Consultation amongst all involved is strong within the college.

Overall, the adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behaviour in the college is good.</li><li>• The teaching is good.</li><li>• The college is well led and managed</li><li>• The college expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The college keeping the parents well informed about how their children are getting on.</li><li>• The college working closely with parents.</li><li>• The college providing an interesting range of activities outside lessons</li></ul>

This college recognises the importance of parental involvement in their work and makes every effort to involve them. Parents are welcome in the college and tutors make regular contact through meetings and telephone calls. A good range of information is provided both about college procedures and students' progress. Links with parents are strengthened by the community education sector of the college where parents, with other members of the community, can participate in courses and other features.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The school is larger than average. The sixth form, with 215 students, is average in size with boys and girls in approximately equal numbers. Very few students join the sixth form from other schools and some students at both ends of the ability range choose to pursue their post 16 studies at other institutions in the city. About one third of those in year eleven have chosen to study in the sixth form in recent years. To gain entry into the sixth form students must have obtained the equivalent of four GCSE's at grade C or better. These entry requirements are currently under review.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is good and financially self-supporting. Students join with GCSE scores which are below average for those beginning A level and AVCE courses but many achieve well to gain grades more than commensurate with their abilities. Overall students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not the first language of the home, make good progress. There is a good range of academic courses but provision for vocational subjects is more limited.

**Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students of all abilities achieve well.
- Personal development and relationships are very good.
- Students are well supported and given good guidance.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.

**What could be improved**

- The range and status of vocational courses is not good enough.
- The sixth form does not provide for religious education as required by law.

*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
English Literature	<b>Good.</b> Very good teaching and learning help students make very good progress when discussing texts. Examination results and standards are average. This represents good achievement.
Maths	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good for both AS and A2 levels. Students achieve well and their standards are above those found nationally because they are supported by very good assessment arrangements.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Knowledgeable teachers provide good lessons in an environment that is of high quality. Students of all abilities therefore achieve well.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Students benefit from a well structured course that is well taught. All learn well because of good individual help and support.
Information Technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are below average. Nevertheless sound teaching ensures satisfactory learning so that students achieve as they should.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching enables students to achieve well in spite of unsatisfactory accommodation.
PE	<b>Good.</b> The students enjoy a well-planned and well-resourced programme of study. Teaching is good.
Design Technology	<b>Good.</b> Students are achieving well because they are well taught by teachers who have high expectations and plan lessons well.
Art	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well as a result of good individual guidance that allows them to develop a personal style.
French	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and good curricular opportunities enable students to achieve their full potential.
Business Education	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and skilful setting of challenging targets enable students to achieve as they should. Results are in line with national standards.
Economics	<b>Good.</b> Well structured and confident teaching enables students to achieve their potential. Results are at the national average.
Media Studies	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well above average standards and develop good learning habits because of their very positive attitudes to the subject and good teaching
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Good well planned teaching stemming from very good subject knowledge leads to good learning and to attainment which is above average overall.

Work was sampled in other subjects. Teaching was good overall in these subjects; for example, in history teachers have good specialist knowledge, which enables students to produce work of a good standard.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance for students in the sixth form are very good so that students feel well supported and very few fail to complete the courses upon which they embark. Procedures for monitoring attainment and progress are very good. The quality of advice and guidance given is good. Students with special educational needs are enabled to make good progress because of the good support they are given.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership and management provided for the sixth form by the relatively newly appointed co-ordinator and his assistant are very good. He has a clearly articulated view that the primary focus must be on raising standards and ensuring that each student achieves as well as possible. Excellent arrangements are in place for developing form tutors and other key staff to see that these aims are realised. Good and very good leadership of subject departments supports and enhances the provision made for the students.

## 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"><li>• their course suits them</li><li>• They were given clear accurate helpful information about courses</li><li>• The school helped them settle into the sixth form</li><li>• They are well taught and challenged to do their best</li><li>• They are helped to study independently</li><li>• Teachers are accessible if they are in difficulties</li><li>• They enjoy being in the sixth form.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advice about what they should be studying in the sixth could be more helpful.</li><li>• Year 12 students do not feel sufficiently well advised about future careers</li><li>• They feel that they lack a range of activities other than their immediate studies</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with the students' positive views. Year 12 students had not yet started the careers part of their guidance and support programme when they responded to the questionnaire from which most of these issues arise. Well over four students in five in Year 13 think that provision of careers advice is good or better. The inspectors do not agree that the level of advice provided about courses is inadequate but the school is also reviewing induction procedures for the sixth form to strengthen current arrangements. Extra curricular provision in the sixth form is at least as good as that in most schools and better than is found in many.

## 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?**

1. When students enter the High School in Year 7, overall, they have levels of attainment below average although that of the current Year 7 is around average. In 2002 statutory tests at the end of Year 9, students attained above average overall. Although there has been some underachievement by boys, results indicate that this is less pronounced and, in 2002, their attainment was average when compared nationally whereas that of girls fell below average at this level. Compared with schools with a similar context, results were average, overall. Over time results are above the national trend. In 2002, at the end of Year 11, students' average point scores were above average. When compared with the students' prior attainment at the ends of Years 6 and 9, results were mainly well above average. Comparison with schools of a similar context indicates that point scores were below average. Over time results are broadly in line with the national trend. Overall, the standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. At all levels students' achievements are good.

2. At Year 9, standards in work seen in English are well above average. Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment. Most make very good gains in the organisation and accuracy of their writing and their use of extended vocabulary. At Year 11, standards are above average. This is very good achievement in relation to their below average standards in 1999 statutory tests. There are strong gains in well organised writing about literature that contains many references to the text.

3. Standards in literacy are well above average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Overall the students make very good progress in improving their skills especially in writing. Most are comfortable writing at length and have reliable standards of paragraphing and spelling. Reading and research skills are effective. Speaking and listening skills are well above average with extended and well-reasoned oral contributions evident in many lessons. The teaching of the English department makes a positive contribution to the development of literacy skills but most subjects also communicate high expectations to the students about the standards of their literacy.

4. Students achieve very well in mathematics between the ages of 11 and 14, in the High School where their attainment rises from average to well above average. Number work improves markedly. Between ages 14 and 16 achievement is good and attainment rises from below average to average. High attainers have a good understanding of basic trigonometry.

5. Numerical skills are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. In design technology, measuring and weighing skills are effective and students show that they can apply spatial ideas through drawing in two and three dimensions. In business education, students show good skills drawing block, line, best-fit graphs and manipulating formulae in spreadsheets.

6. In science, the standards of students' work seen at the age of 14 and age 16 are in line with the national average. Students particularly enjoy practical work and most are mindful of safety issues. All students are able to talk confidently about their work and can explain scientific technical language and concepts. Girls and boys work equally well. By the age of 16, able students are able to make hypotheses, design experiments, carry out investigations, analyse results, draw appropriate conclusions, evaluate their work and suggest improvements. Given that students enter the school at age 11 with attainment below the national average, their achievements by the ages of 14 and 16 are good.

7. Attainment in art and design, in the work seen, is below average at age 14 and remains below average at the age of 16. There are strengths in ceramics and in studies that incorporate the influences of artists with direct observation. Achievement is good. Attainment and achievement in design and technology for work seen is above expected levels. There is good achievement especially in the project preparation and the presentation of folder work.

8. Attainment in geography in work seen is average. Overall, by the end of Year 9, it is above expectations and students can give explanations for different physical processes and show understanding of how human processes can impact upon these. Progress is good. In Years 10 and 11 each year is different because geography is an option and this is reflected in results year on year. Attainment in the work seen in the current Year 11 is in line with expectations. This shows good progress from being below expectations on entry to Year 10. Students can explain the factors leading to industrial location and how these change with time. They show a good understanding of the causes and effects of urban regeneration and can explain how different processes interact and how choices make an impact on different processes. In history the standards in the work seen are above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Their achievements are good.

9. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 in ICT are in line with national averages but represent a narrow range of skills and knowledge. Skills on entry are variable but towards the lower end of attainment. By the end of Year 9, they are able to demonstrate skills in word processing, the use of spreadsheets, publishing and the use of the internet. They make good progress. In Years 10 to 11, attainment is satisfactory but within a narrow range of skills and understanding. Students make progress building on the skills previously learned by end of Year 9. The use of computers to support teaching in other subjects is unsatisfactory. There were few instances of computers being used in other subjects. However, teachers were confident to use computers in science, business studies, geography and music lessons and this was seen to be effective. Inspectors also observed computers being used to good effect in mathematics lessons to support subject revision and to prepare materials for project work using the internet. There are very few opportunities to apply their skills in other areas of the curriculum and this affects the strength and depth of coverage of ICT skills.

10. Attainment in business is average. Files show a clear understanding of business situations and markets. Students show an increasing awareness of factors external to markets, including national and international, political and economic factors. They use ICT to good effect in assignments, with Advanced Vocational Education Certificate (AVCE) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) students particularly proficient.

11. In modern foreign languages, students' standards in the work seen are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. Their achievements are good.

12. Standards of work seen in physical education in Years 7 to 9 are above average. On entry students are able to demonstrate simple skills with reasonable control. By the end of the Year 9 they are able to demonstrate good ball handling skills. Progress is good. At the end of Year 11, attainment is in line with expectations. Where the teaching is clearly focused, students make good progress and are able to apply their skills effectively whilst involved in a game.

13. In the work seen in religious education, attainment is in line with agreed syllabus expectations at end of Year 9 and with GCSE expectations at end of Year 11. Students' work shows progress in learning about the values and the practices of believers of various religious traditions. Over time students' understanding of how faith affects living develops and they become increasingly aware of how aspects of religious belief might inform their own thinking, attitudes and behaviour.



14. The college makes very good provision for the students with special educational needs, and this is reflected in their good progress. The number of students identified as having additional learning needs is below the national average. However, the number of students with statements of special educational needs is slightly above average.

### **Sixth form**

15. Students attain standards which are below the national average in their examination courses, overall. Point scores have dipped over the last three years and in 2002 were similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. They were slightly lower than those in 2001 which were below the national average. In 2002, scores were highest in physical education, physics, history, French and English literature and lowest in ICT, geography, art, English language and design. Girls' scores were higher than boys in 2001 and 2000 but the reverse was true in 1999. In 2001, the average point score for both boys and girls was close to the national average.

16. In the subjects which were a focus for the inspection, current standards in mathematics, biology, chemistry, business, economics, physical education, geography, psychology and French are above national norms in every case. In design technology, art, media studies and English literature they are in line with national standards. Only in information and communication technology are they below national levels of expectation. Students are achieving in line with expectations in design technology. In all other subject areas their achievement is good.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

17. The majority of students interviewed during the inspection are positive about the college and say that they enjoy coming. They make every effort to be punctual and follow the college's dress code. There are many examples of students holding doors open and treating visitors with respect. They are helpful, polite and take pleasure in talking about their college. Most show a regard for the building by keeping classrooms and public areas tidy. The litter issue highlighted in the last inspection has been addressed largely due to the hard work of maintenance staff and provision of more rubbish bins. However, some students continue to drop litter in the shopping centre.

18. Students' attitudes to learning remain good overall. Whilst in almost all lessons behaviour is at least satisfactory, often it is very good and sometimes excellent. Those in the High school behave better than those in the Upper school. Where lessons are well planned, students listen quietly, answer teachers' questions with confidence and are keen to contribute. An example was seen in a Year 11 English lesson when students were preparing for an examination. They were developing the skills needed to answer questions based on a number of non-fiction texts. Their behaviour was excellent; and they were attentive and highly responsive. As a result full use was made of the learning time and students made very good progress. Very occasionally students are less attentive and find excuses to chat and shout out.

19. Behaviour around college is good. Movement between lessons and at break times is well supervised by staff. All understand the college's requirements for movement in the corridors and on the stairs. These rules have been devised in order to reduce congestion at busy times. Entry to and exit from lessons is orderly. Students understand the rewards system of stickers and certificates and take pride in their achievements.

20. The atmosphere at break and mealtimes is happy and sociable. Students queue up in an orderly manner, collect their food from the serving counter and then sit with their friends. However there are a few instances of older students pushing into the queue. Many go outside for their breaks. They socialise well and behaviour is generally good. Entry to and exit from the college is orderly and behaviour on the buses excellent. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is low.

21. In lessons, students work very well either individually or in groups. As a result social interaction and collaborative skills develop well. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, students worked in pairs to explore the number of different ways they could express two words. They worked extremely well together, listening and supporting each other, quickly changing partners on the teachers' instructions and maintaining concentration very well. Later in the lesson they very effectively explored the idea of symbolism, again in pairs.

22. Through religious education students learn about a range of faiths. They show a good capacity for reflection and are respectful of the beliefs and values of others. Students think about those less fortunate than themselves and have raised considerable sums of money for charities. Recently, for example, the High school organised a charity walk and raised £1600 for the Rainbows hospice.

23. Development of students' initiative and personal responsibility is good. There are many opportunities for students to assume responsibility in college. They do so well and with enthusiasm. Examples are helping in the Library, at open evenings and representing their tutor group on the college council. Students are beginning to develop good independent learning skills. In Year 7 they learn to organise their books, get to the correct classroom on time and keep their home college diaries. As they get older, they take on increasing independent research. However in lessons there are few examples of students selecting their own resources. Good use of the library is made for independent research. The diaries provide an excellent means for students to develop organisational skills. At present these are used effectively in the High School, but less so in the Upper School.

24. Students' relationships with each other and between students and staff are excellent; the college functions as a very supportive community. Relationships are based on mutual respect and loyalty. No incidents of harassment were observed, but students and parents report that some bullying does exist. If instances do occur, most students feel happy enough to speak to staff and the problem is usually resolved. Students from ethnic minorities, or with special needs and disabilities, are very well included.

25. Attendance rates are good overall, but better in the High school than in the Upper school. As a result of temporary road works, some buses arrive late. However, the majority of students are punctual. Lessons start on time and full use is made of the college day.

## **Sixth form**

26. The majority of students are enthusiastic about their sixth form. Most students interviewed during the inspection said that they liked college. Attendance rates, which are good, would seem to confirm this. The college regularly surveys students and acts on their responses. A recent survey highlighted concerns by students in several areas. However discussions with students now do not reflect these views. Many are extremely enthusiastic. They praise the Head of Sixth Form and say he leads a very good team. Students do, however, feel that the setting of homework, assessment of their work and advice about how to improve is dependent upon individual teachers 'Some are better than others'. They particularly enjoy the enrichment activities. As found in the main college, students are very friendly to visitors and talk with enthusiasm about their work.

27. Attitudes to learning are almost always good and often very good. Students are motivated well, listen quietly and are confident to answer and ask questions. They work well both individually and in pairs. As a result very good social and collaborative skills are being developed.

28. Students socialise well with those in the main college. They also enjoy the privilege of spending time in their designated rest area. Relationships are very good. 'Everyone in the sixth form is such good friends'. There are many examples of students engaging visitors in conversation and showing a genuine interest in others.

29. By the time they leave, students have developed good independent learning skills and show high levels of initiative and responsibility. This prepares them well for adult life. When given the opportunity, they take on responsibilities willingly and carry them out with eagerness. Examples are representing their tutor group on the Sixth Form Council, running the Young Enterprise group, acting as mentors to some Year 8 students and undertaking voluntary work in the community. The Sixth Form Council gives students the opportunity to make tangible changes to their college. This, for example, has resulted in a pool table, can machine and dart board being installed in their rest area. Currently Year 13 is planning and organising the Leavers' Ball and Leavers' Year Books. With progression through the sixth form, they take increasing responsibility for their own learning. They show a high level of independence and willingness to undertake additional work. Good use is made of the library and ICT resources, but not all use their organisers sufficiently well to plan their work.

30. Relationships with each other and between students and staff are very good. As a result students are willing to convey any concerns to a member of staff; problems are generally resolved. Students find that their tutors are helpful and offer good advice, especially in the one to one review and target meetings. Students from ethnic minorities or with special needs are extremely well included; all have an equal chance to succeed.

31. As in the main college, few students arrive late for lessons and so the college day starts on time.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

32. Teaching and learning are good overall and marginally better in the sixth form. In a high proportion of lessons they are very good or better. Consistent good teaching reflected in good learning ensures that students receive cumulatively a very good education. Only a very small number of lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers have a very good understanding of their subjects and this is supported by up-to-date knowledge of educational developments. In a lesson on ceramics, the teacher's exceptional knowledge enabled very good learning to take place. The teacher set clear timescales and impressed upon students the urgency of deadlines encouraging a sense of purpose. The teacher was able to give very specific advice on how to approach their project. In a geography lesson on the classification of movement, the teacher's good understanding and enthusiasm for the subject engaged all students and encouraged their individual contribution and learning. The national strategy to improve numeracy has been taken on board by the mathematics department. There are very good examples of its implementation which are leading to markedly rising standards in mathematics. However, the teaching of numeracy is not sufficiently developed in other subjects; this is an important area for improvement. The literacy strategy is being well used in English. An example, in a lower set, indicates that useful techniques are being exploited and are enhanced by individual learning tasks of a high quality. Literacy techniques are more developed in other subjects.

33. Students respond well to challenge. They met this in science when the teacher used very good questioning techniques which encouraged students' scientific thinking for example they were asked to imagine the environmental conditions of several habitats. In mathematics, students were made to think for themselves; they are regularly tested using statutory test questions and are very aware of their National Curriculum levels.

34. Learning is enhanced by the good use of resources. In drama, for example the excellent use of the facilities enabled very effective dramatic performances. Down lighting and music encouraged concentration and led seamlessly to a sequence of individuals short monologues.

35. Teachers plan their lessons well and explain the aims of the lesson to students. In German, the teacher taught a well planned extra lesson after school when revision and development of vocabulary combined with a variety of activities, including paired work, enabled students to enjoy the experience whilst being interested and diligent. Those who required extra challenge were provided with extension material that both reinforced and developed their knowledge. Usually the objectives of lessons are reviewed at the end of the lesson. Lessons are well organised and purposeful. In dance, the teacher identified the types of actions to be included in the students' dance as a useful resource for the content of their motif. This occurred prior to the active part of the lesson and provided the students with a very good initiation to the main part.

36. In an English lesson in Year 11, students were encouraged to identify their preferred learning style. The teacher helped learning by offering different approaches to reflect these styles. Some students responded best to a visual interpretation of the understanding to be imparted. Others responded more readily to aural stimulation or the chance to explore the lesson material using other stimuli. Teachers' expectations are high and improved examination results reflect this. In a Year 8 history lesson, students were challenged to determine criteria that needed to be researched in connection with the execution of Charles 1. Students had to work hard to reach the required standard but were well supported by four different sources of evidence including a video. Students' intellectual effort was promoted as well as their interest and concentration.

37. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, control of the class is usually an issue and results in a drop of pace. In these lessons, wasted time also inhibits students' learning. Occasionally, teachers spoon-feed students and this does not make the best use of time, for example, they might give out apparatus when this could be done easily by the students.

38. The deliberate improvement of reading skills is the least effective area of literacy development. In geography there is some very effective practice. Teachers explicitly require the students to use higher order skills such as skimming, scanning and reading between the lines. Some good practice was also observed in ICT which involved reading for instructions and on screen problem solving. In business studies, teachers provide good guidance on sources but not reading methods. In history, the use of techniques such as storyboarding also enhances the development of reading. Year 7 students had good opportunities to read aloud when studying Henry II and Thomas A Beckett. Otherwise the explicit development of reading tends not to feature prominently enough in subjects.

39. Overall the development of writing skills is good. In business studies teachers provide good models of the sort of writing the students need to emulate: business letters, reports and presentations. Use of writing frames provides effective help in science, religious education and history. In geography writing frames are underused but teachers give good guidance in note taking techniques. In German, Year 8 students' understanding of the structure of

language was enhanced by an effective role play. In design and technology and ICT the students receive good guidance on how to structure their written evaluations.

40. In the learning support area, individuals and small groups of students receive effective extra tuition in English, mathematics and sometimes other subjects such as French or science. Speech and language sessions provide for students with communication difficulties and where necessary, special arrangements are made with examination boards for extra time or assistance with handwriting. The withdrawal of students for extra tuition is carefully monitored and organised on a rota system which ensures that they do not regularly miss the same lessons. They make good progress in these sessions and receive good support in main lessons, which enables them to fully access the college curriculum. They make good use of computers to improve their spelling and mathematics and for word processing their stories and letters. Some students also follow a tape assisted reading programme (TARP), and the college provides walkman cassette players, story-tapes and books, which they use at home. All students receive the greater part of their education in main classes, which is in line with the college's educational inclusion policy. In other subject areas, teaching and support staff make good use of the students' individual education plans, for example, by providing extra vocabulary or simplified work sheets. The needs of students with specific difficulties such as Asperger's and Downs syndromes or cerebral palsy are exceptionally well met by learning assistants, which is reflected in the students' achievements. For example, no student is restricted from following the National Curriculum and all gain accreditation through the General Certificate of Secondary Education in Year 11. Several continue their studies into the sixth form.

### **Sixth form**

41. Teaching in the sixth form is good, overall and in a high proportion of lessons it is very good or better. Students' learning mirrors teaching; they receive a very good education when considered in the light of their whole college experience. Teachers' expectations are high and their preparation of lessons is good. They have a good understanding of their subjects and can teach complex issues with understanding and expertise. Students learn as a result of these qualities. Many students have struggled to reach the standards required to take A level and often enter the sixth form with minimal qualifications. Teachers, therefore, have to teach particularly well to enable such students to achieve. They do this successfully. The highest grades are not always achievable by some students but teachers persevere and enable these students to achieve pass grades. An example of excellent teaching was seen in English when the teacher strongly focussed on empowering students to do well by emphasising a "can do" ethos. The class was fully engaged even with techniques they found difficult when developing writing skills. In a physical education lesson in Year 13, students had previously prepared a power point presentation which they presented to the group. The students had made good use of the internet to research sport in different countries; they learned independently but when necessary referred to their teacher whose subject knowledge was very good.

42. Students learn how to research and prepare for practical investigations in PSE. Here they have opportunities to experience sensible group co-operation and develop a very good independent working ethos. However, on occasions teachers could be more pro-active in developing individual initiative. In media studies, students rapidly develop critical and analytical skills whilst learning to understand the importance of historical social and cultural contexts. The teacher's very good knowledge of the individuals in the group encourages interest and laughter as personal preferences regarding film genres are explored.

43. In the sixth form, students with learning difficulties learn effectively and achieve well.

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

44. The curriculum is good overall. It offers a good range of learning opportunities. Although it offers breadth, the balance requires refinement. In particular to the time allocated to the study of ICT. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but the balance of time affects information and communication technology and religious education, allowing only 2 per cent of curriculum time to each subject. As these are taught in a carousel arrangement, 50 per cent of students are not following the subject in lessons immediately prior to examinations. Very good provision for special educational needs, very good extra-curricular provision and contributions from the community are features.

45. The college provides a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of its students in Years 7 to 9. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, students receive weekly lessons in dance and drama as well as personal, social and health education. Discrete lessons in information and communications technology (ICT) are also provided in Years 7 and 9, but not in Year 8. Students have the opportunity to study a second language in their own time during lunchtime and in one after college session.

46. In Years 10 and 11 there is a broad range of compulsory subjects in the curriculum. Students all follow courses in mathematics, English, science, ICT, religious education, a modern foreign language, technology and humanities. Students make choices about the addition of optional subjects to the list of core subjects. They have the opportunity to study two languages at GCSE. There is a strong inclusive ethos, which provides options to cater for students of all abilities and to ensure support is available in class to allow students to follow the options of their choice. At the end of Year 9 students make choices within the option system. They have a choice of subject within technology and within arts. This gives a wide range of academic subjects and ensures balance. All students study humanities GCSE; they also have the opportunity to study history and geography as an option. The range of academic subjects offered includes business studies, which proves to be very popular, PE and a second language. All students follow a personal, social and health education course and religious education.

47. The curriculum does not fully meet requirements in that ICT, not being taught in Year 8, does not meet all requirements of the programme of study. Similarly in Years 10 and 11, where ICT only has 2 per cent of curriculum time and students follow a key skills course, National Curriculum requirements are not met. ICT is not an integral part of all subjects and students are not provided with the opportunity to use and develop ICT capabilities in context in subjects. There is a need to monitor the use of information and communication technology across all subjects of the curriculum to ensure that requirements are met.

48. The college is making very good teaching and curriculum arrangements for students who enter the college with below average standards in reading and/or writing. The co-ordinator of special educational needs and her team carefully identify students needing additional help. These students subsequently receive additional teaching using the literacy progress units introduced under the National Literacy Strategy. During a lesson taught by a well-trained teaching assistant, students made good progress in understanding ambiguity in texts.

49. The overall development of literacy in subjects is good. Only in art, mathematics and science is only satisfactory.

50. The college has placed a strong emphasis on the development of key vocabulary in lessons and this was a prominent feature in most lessons. The procedures in religious

education were typical of many subjects where the careful introduction of key terms enhanced the students' understanding of important concepts, for example pertaining to world faiths. In history, students with special educational needs receive notably good support through the use of specially produced word sheets that also help to improve word recognition and spelling.

51. The effectiveness of the college's strategies for the development of literacy skills is good. With the advent of the National Literacy Strategy the college has developed a systematic programme of improving literacy provision by explicitly focusing on issues such as planning, drafting, proof reading, key terms, writing frames and clarity of purposes for writing. The impact on learning is good. One reason for this is that the college's efforts to raise the teachers' awareness of the importance of literacy in teaching and learning predated the Strategy so a lot of important foundation work had already been completed. Provision has been guided by a policy which is now being updated in light of recent developments. The overall guidance of developments is shared by the special educational needs coordinator and the coordinator for the Key Stage 3 Strategy. There is a clear set of appropriate objectives and the effectiveness of college based training and policies are monitored by the college. The library provides a good source of learning materials and its use is increasing both in lesson time and in the students' personal borrowing. There has been a significant increase in the borrowing rates of boys. Subjects take the opportunity to update library stock and the librarian provides good guidance to students on how to use the library for research purposes. The use of the library to promote effective research skills is not a whole college literacy aim. This is an area that warrants further exploration.

52. The teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is unsatisfactory. Some preparatory work has been done towards the introduction of a whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy skills, but the school does not yet have an agreed policy for teaching numeracy. This means that subject departments lack a common approach in their teaching and therefore the students' learning is less effective than it should be. There are some isolated examples of good work. In media studies the students are given the opportunity to analyse statistics for divorce rates and in geography there is substantial use of graphical and statistical techniques as well as ratio and proportion in scaling from maps. Most subjects, however, do not have a departmental policy and have not identified opportunities for teaching number skills or how to approach them. Even in science, there is very little evidence of number work being specifically taught.

53. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Requirements are met for health and sex education and raising awareness about drugs. Topics are dealt with at appropriate stages and include study skills and coping with difficult situations, including bullying. Good use is made of visitors to the college, with visitors from the police and local magistrates adding to students' moral and social education; and the NHS contributing to health and sex education within the programme. Responsibility toward others is fostered. Teachers take their duties in teaching PSHE seriously. The programme provides students with a good work related education that begins in Year 7 and continues throughout the college to include work experience in Year 11.

54. The number of after-college buses travelling to a range of destinations makes the attendance at extra-curricular activities difficult. Nevertheless, much is provided. The extra curricular activities are regularly audited and are presented to students each new term.

55. Drama and the dance are well represented. Out-of-college music is very evident and is supported by links with feeder primary schools. Physical education and games clubs cater for many students. During the lunchtime and after college there are clubs provided for students by many of the subject departments. These include academic clubs such as the

ones observed in the High School designed to allow study of a second language for students who wish to study two languages in Years 10 and 11. There are also subject clubs that are run at this time to allow students to catch up on any work, as well as clubs designed to increase students' interest in subjects.

56. Equality of opportunity is assured by the provision of lifts to the first floor and to the library to ensure wheelchair access. The college meets students' additional needs in the classroom wherever possible thereby ensuring their access to the full curriculum. Teachers plan with regard to students' individual education plans and work well with learning support assistants.

57. The community contributes very well to students' education. There are contributions to PSHE from police, NHS, and other agencies. Local commerce and industry contribute to the work experience programme and separately to the careers education programme. It also contributes much to business education and design. There are useful links to Charnwood wildlife trust in association with a wetlands environment created and protected adjacent to the college site. Students work with charities in association with local branches of national charities.

58. The links with feeder primary schools are strong, and in addition to the induction programme in Year 7 there are visits by and to Year 6 classes. Links with the local high school, Roundhill, are strong. Students who attend Roundhill High School from Years 7 to 9 transfer to Wreake Valley Community College in Year 10. There is another induction programme in Year 10 and teachers from Wreake Valley Community College work with Teachers from Roundhill on moderation of marking and common teaching topics to ensure continuity on transfer. Links are maintained with similar colleges to enable students to transfer post 16 should they wish to do so.

59. The cultivation of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The college has given this high priority; a detailed policy has been developed, staff training undertaken and all departments are in the process of identifying their contribution in schemes of work and lesson planning. Provision and delivery are monitored and areas for improvement identified. This coherent whole college approach enables students to develop and make very good progress in these areas as they move through the college.

60. Provision for students' spiritual development is good. Teachers value students, their questions, work and contributions to the college and wider community. Several departments support students' spiritual development particularly well, for example religious education makes an important contribution through reflection on religious beliefs, values and attitudes and consideration of their relevance to students' own living. In physical education, students have opportunities to demonstrate expressive and creative qualities through dance and in drama through role-play and improvisation, feelings and family communications are explored. In English students explore concepts such as faithfulness and betrayal within relationships and in history students produce moving work on the Berlin wall and the effects of war. Students express amazement at the powers of calculation using a spreadsheet in ICT and are awestruck by their visit to the local football stadium in geography, which also encourages reflection on natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Assemblies follow a weekly theme and although they do not include any meaningful act of worship, students are given opportunities for reflection, for example in comparing their lot with that of underprivileged children and those imprisoned unjustly. Creation of a more appropriate atmosphere, for example through the use of music and opportunities for students to participate actively should be considered. Opportunities for spiritual development are identified in the Tutorial programme and there is an expectation that tutors will discuss the 'thought for the day' based



on the weekly theme with tutor groups. The provision and quality of the activity are variable and ongoing monitoring is necessary to secure entitlement and continued improvement.

61. Cultivation of students' moral development is very good and, as they move through the college, students' awareness of right and wrong and of the values and principles upon which morality is based increases. The college's behaviour policy is underpinned by four key principles, including providing equality of opportunity and supporting students' in developing a personal value framework. Values such as honesty, trust, respect and fairness translate into practice across the whole college and the merit system rewards positive attitudes such as hard work and good attendance. Teachers are good role models and students learn to respect those who are, think and behave differently from themselves socially, culturally and religiously. A secure learning climate is established within which students feel safe to offer their own opinions as they explore for example the rights and wrongs of war and boxing in English and the issue of abortion in religious education. The exploration of aspects of morality is integral to the teaching of drama and moral issues are raised in geography through a trade game and studying the pros and cons of tourism. Students gain a sense of fair play through physical education and accept refereeing decisions very well. Posters raise issues of moral responsibility such as responses to the treatment of Jews by the Nazis and these make students think.

62. Students' social development is very good and opportunities for them to develop through taking responsibility and showing initiative are enshrined in the aims and values of the college. Subjects such as business studies provide particular experiences through 'young enterprise' and, in textiles, students work in defined roles to produce artefacts. The wide range of extra-curricular provision, which includes college productions, musical concerts and sports activities attracts many students and supports their social development very effectively. In college productions for example the importance of those behind the scenes and on stage working together as a team is learned. Students are given opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example as monitors and prefects of various kinds, through the college council whose elected members represent students' views and by representing the college at bullying conferences and the Leicester colleges' parliament. Students' support charities and become involved in national events such as Comic Relief, the serious nature of which is explored effectively through tutorial work and assemblies in the preceding week. Throughout college life there is a concern to develop students' social skills, raise their awareness of society and its values and stress the importance of each individual contributing to the wider community.

63. Cultural development is very good. Within the curriculum for example in history through study of sexism and morals, in religious education through studying Christian traditions and through work with writers and artists in residence, students gain an understanding of Britain's cultural heritage. Some subject areas consider the diversity of culture and religious belief within their curriculum for example religious education, PSHE, and humanities. Others study specific cultures or aspects of them, for example studies of particular countries such as Kenya and Japan in geography and of Indian imagery through applying Mendhi body art to products in textiles. Students are introduced to a wide range of cultural and multi-cultural expression through study of a wide range of genre and texts in English and of Aboriginal, Japanese, African and Indian traditions in art and design and in music and dance through the performance of a visiting dance animateur from South-East Asia. Students also learn much about other cultures through extra-curricular activities and visits for example to local museums, the Tate galleries in London, residential and field study trips and the annual trip to France. The whole college adopts a multi-cultural focus at times of important religious events such as Diwali, Ramadan and Eid and Chinese New Year and these key times serve to extend and enrich students' cultural experience considerably.

## **Sixth Form**

64. The sixth form curriculum is good; it offers a wide range of academic subjects to build on and develop students' experiences in the main college. The sixth form curriculum does not at present offer a suitable course for Religious education. Vocational education is underdeveloped and the only vocational courses currently on offer to students are an intermediate GNVQ and an AVCE, both in business studies.

65. The provision for special educational needs in the sixth form is very good. A small number of post-16 students have additional and specific learning needs. These are very well met, enabling them to fully access the curriculum and participate on equal terms with their peers. They make good academic and personal progress. Where necessary, students are provided with laptop computers for taking notes and completing their work. Special arrangements are made with examination boards for extra time or assistance with writing. Experienced and trained learning support assistants give very good levels of support in lessons. In some cases, students receive extra literacy and numeracy with Year 11 students as part of a catch-up programme of study.

66. Extra curricular activities are provided for the sixth form, as they are for the main college. Good use is made of links to the community element of the college to provide a base for the sixth form. Students also benefit from being able to supplement their work in college with evening classes and other community college courses.

67. The college provides well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the post 16 phase. Provision is included in the college's overall policy and students make good progress in these areas during their time in the sixth form. Religious education does not meet statutory requirements but the principal is leading a working group to address the issue. Many subjects do contribute effectively to these aspects of students' personal development in a variety of ways; for example in English, students study the spiritual aspects of Blake's poetry. In media studies issues such as race, culture, ethnicity, family and tradition and the media portrayal of race and women are explored through textual study. In art and design, expressive personal paintings use text and images to explore concepts of identity and self-image. In psychology students show good understanding of the ethics underpinning research methodology when studying the effects of violence and understanding that violence is perceived differently according to cultural context. An assembly on human rights using an artefact of the Amnesty International symbol was very powerful and explored issues such as rights, justice, and how we regard people of other nationalities and religious faith traditions. In the sixth form, students have and take many opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example through mentoring younger students including some with learning difficulties, coaching younger students in PE, representing the college in the community and participating in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Many students are involved in voluntary and community work of various kinds including Charnwood Wildlife and Millennium Volunteers and those pursuing studies in modern foreign languages have the opportunity of a work experience placement in France.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

68. The previous inspection found that the new pastoral system was effectively building on an existing caring ethos; this is now well established and is very effective. The level of support, guidance and encouragement the college provides helps students to make good progress.

69. The staff and governors make every effort to ensure that students work in a clean and safe environment. Health and Safety procedures, including equipment checks, risk

assessments and systems for the administration of first aid and child protection, are implemented well. Appropriate security measures have been installed. A suitable number of staff or lunch time supervisors oversee breaks and mealtimes.

70. The behaviour and personal development of students is very closely monitored through a system of report cards, attendance records and rewards. Personal development, together with academic progress, is reviewed each term. Very good use of tutor time and interviews enables the college to keep track of students' successes and shortcomings. Form tutors take primary responsibility for the pastoral care of students with the Heads of Year providing very good back up. Long serving staff know their students well and are extremely sensitive to their differing needs. As a result they take a close interest in students' personal progress. This is helped by the fact that most parents feel confident to pass on their concerns. Students are encouraged to talk to tutors or other members of staff if they have a worry. They say 'you can go to any teacher and you know they will help'. When instances of bullying or harassment are reported, they are generally handled effectively. At present the college is reviewing systems for eliminating harassment. Some students are currently attending City Bullying Workshops with a view to developing the 'Trust In Me' scheme. The college nurse is available for those students who require help. She also plays a major part in delivering the Personal, Social and Health Education programme.

71. Provision for the inclusion of all students in this college is very good; the college recognises the importance of this. Specific responsibility for this area has been allocated to one of the Senior Management Team. There is detailed analysis of progress and behaviour so that barriers to learning are identified and addressed. Staff value each student equally and make every effort to ensure that they all have a fair deal. As a result none are disadvantaged by their race, gender, ability or background. The college shows a very good awareness of different groups of students. A thorough system for identifying both the more able and underachievers ensures that all are well supported. A very good mentoring scheme enables Year 8 students to be supported by sixth formers. The mentors, who have been specially trained, carry out their work with meticulous care and sensitivity; as a result both sets of students benefit. At present there is one student for whom English is a second language. Ethnic minority students are very well integrated and there are no signs of racial tension. Students at risk of exclusion or returning from exclusion are particularly carefully monitored and supported. The college is fully accessible for wheelchairs so disabled students and visitors can gain access to classrooms, the library, theatre and departments.

72. Students are encouraged to take on a wide range of responsibilities in college. These include representing their tutor group on the college council, or helping in the library and on open evenings. They are also encouraged to use the library and ICT equipment. However there are fewer opportunities, such as selecting their own resources, for students to develop independent learning skills within the classroom. Organisers are provided for students to record homework and achievements. These are well used in the High School but less consistently in the Upper School. As a result they do not sufficiently impact on development of organisational skills.

73. Students are very well supported in their transfer into and out of this college. Very close links with both the feeder primary schools and the colleges have been established. The Head of Year 7 follows an extremely detailed induction programme. This includes regular visits to the primaries and close liaison with their staff. Students make a number of visits before transfer. Placement in tutor groups is carefully planned. Their first day at High School is dedicated to special events enabling students to become familiar with their peers, tutor and the college. A similarly thorough induction system takes place for students moving into the Upper School, many of whom are joining at this point. Their induction is aimed at

helping the existing and new students to integrate well. Both these programmes have been carefully thought out and students say although it was 'scary at first' they settled in quickly.

74. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Office staff meticulously record late arrivals and absences. A First Day Call system ensures that any unauthorised or condoned absences are identified quickly and followed up immediately. The College receives good support from the Education Welfare Officer. These procedures are effective in maintaining good levels of attendance. Awards are given each month to the best attending tutor group and to individuals each term. Registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session; a print out is circulated every month. This enables staff to identify particular groups of students or individuals whose attendance is poor. Taking the register in each lesson enables staff to keep track of all students and therefore spot truancy quickly.

75. Assessment of students' academic performance in the college is very good. Teachers assess students' progress informally on a day-to-day basis, and set regular formal tests to measure the progress they have made. Careful records are kept of individual progress and these, together with the results of standardised tests at the end of Years 6 and 9, are used to analyse academic potential. Teachers then set targets with the students and progress is monitored at regular review meetings. Records are regularly up-dated and further information, including nationally produced performance data, is added to give a very full picture of each student's potential. Students appreciate the support they are given and all students, from the least to the most able, can get a sense of achievement from reaching their target. At important stages in a student's college career, such as tests and assessments at the end of Year 9, and GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the assessment information is used to encourage them to realise their potential.

76. Consultation evenings are held where parents and their children can discuss progress with the teachers. Written reports are also sent to parents which give a detailed analysis of their child's progress and the ways in which s/he can improve further.

77. The college has developed a very large database on students' academic achievement and analyses it in a variety of ways. These include analysis according to ethnicity, gender, subjects, year groups and the actual progress made by individual students measured against their expected progress. This enables departments and individual teachers not only to review their work, but also to plan for the future in an informed way. Developments are still being explored in this area and not all departments are confident to use the information fully, but the system is still well-advanced. The assessment system is very comprehensive and is a valuable tool in helping to raise standards.

## **Sixth form**

78. As in the main college, students are provided with good care and support. The level of help, guidance and encouragement the college gives its students has a positive impact upon their progress.

79. The Assistant Principal in charge of the sixth form provides a very high degree of supportive leadership to staff and students alike. A well thought out induction day programme, including tutorials and key activities, ensures students become familiar with the College systems and expectations. In the words of one new student 'The College made it very easy to settle into routines'. A system of reviews, targets and tutorials, means that all students are supported well. Those, who are experiencing problems, are quickly identified 'often before you know yourself'. Tutors meet with each student individually to discuss their review and help set targets. The importance of choosing the correct subjects is

acknowledged. The ALIS point score system, together with teacher and tutor consultation, ensures students chose subjects that are well matched to their abilities and aims. Tutors work with the same students throughout their time in the sixth form. This continuity enables tutors to understand their students well and be very sensitive to differing needs.

80. Careers guidance is well planned and includes support from the Connexions service. In the Library and ICT students have access to a good range of careers literature. Students are guided to make sensible choices on leaving college whether it is for a gap year, further education or vocational courses. To this end, Year 12 students are taking part in the Leicestershire Progression Accord and Year 13 a leaver's package.

81. Most students are confident that they can rely on strong and sensitive support from the college when personal problems arise. In the words of one student 'the teachers are there for you'.

82. The College effectively achieves its aim to encourage students to 'acquire the key skills and knowledge necessary to be active, confident and responsible members of a rapidly changing society'. Students take on a wide range of responsibilities both within the college and in the wider community. Particularly impressive is the Sixth Form Council, whereby students learn the importance of delegation and organisational skills, as well as an understanding of the democratic process.

83. Assessment in the sixth form is very good and builds on the procedures embedded in the Main College. By the time they reach the age of sixteen, students know a great deal about their academic ability and are used to working towards challenging targets. At the beginning of Year 12, each student starts to work towards a "target minimum grade" for each subject being studied. The grade is determined by the previous standards they have reached and is reviewed regularly with subject teachers and tutors. Additional performance data is incorporated as soon as it becomes available, to give an even fuller picture of student expectations.

84. As in the Main College, there are consultation evenings where progress is reviewed with both parents and students, and detailed, written reports which explain the nature of the course being followed and what is needed to succeed.

85. By the time students join the sixth form, there is a very comprehensive, sophisticated record of individual progress which departments are able to use for review and future planning. Some departments are more aware of its scope than others and are more confident and skilled in its use, but it has already become established as a reliable way of helping to raise standards. In the sixth form, assessment continues play a key part in raising standards.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

86. This College has maintained the good links it had established with parents at the last inspection. The high regard in which it is held by parents is demonstrated by the fact that it is over subscribed. Evidence from the questionnaire and pre-inspection meeting parents are mostly supportive of its work. They say their children like college and are making good progress and that the college expects students to work hard. They feel that the college is encouraging their child to become mature and responsible.

87. However, a significant minority of parents has some concerns. These parents feel that the college does not work closely with them or keep them well informed about their own child's progress. They are also concerned about the range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors do not support these views. Inspectors find that the information parents receive and the range of out of college activities is very good. A smaller number is concerned about the standards of behaviour and quantity and consistency of homework. Inspectors find that behaviour is good and the college is developing new strategies for detecting and handling oppressive behaviour. However the use of homework is inconsistent.

88. Following the last inspection parents did not support the 'Friends of Wreake Valley' and so at present there is no parents group. However, a number play an active part in the life of the College and so have good impact on its work. Some are happy to help with visits and a number work in college. The Principal recognises the importance of parental involvement and so, through regular surveys, makes every effort to seek their views. Responses from parents, though small in number, are helpful and have enabled the college to review some of its practices. Attendance at most of the parent's evenings is now good and those who do not attend are offered alternative appointments.

89. The college works hard to keep parents informed. Helpful written information such as the prospectus, Newsletters and letters to parents keeps them up to date with what is going on in college. The Principal makes every effort let parents know about changes in staffing and calendar events. Parents are welcome in college. They feel comfortable to approach the staff and Tutors contact parents by telephone or letter if they have a concern. A copy of each child's review is sent to parents and so they know how well their child is progressing. End of year reports about student's progress are informative and useful. These comply with statutory requirements. Important written information is sent by post in order to ensure that it is delivered. Specialist evenings are effective in keeping parents up to date with what their child is doing at college for example GCSE, target setting and literacy events and open evenings for new and prospective parents. Parents of students with special needs are kept very well informed. A college website is ready to be launched. The college is constantly reviewing its procedures in order to ensure that parents for whom English is not their first language are fully involved and informed.

90. Students' organisers, which could provide an effective channel for home/college communication, are effectively used in the High school but less so in the Upper school. As a result are of limited value for these students.

## **HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?**

91. The Principal is an excellent leader and combined with her senior staff share a very clear direction. Other managers support this and are generally very effective in their posts. Their main focus is on raising standards whether they be of attainment or behaviour. In this, they are keen to involve all and have a clear consultation structure to allow this. Their main priorities are spelled out in the development plan. They try hard to ensure continuity in children's education from Years 5 to 19 so work very closely with feeder schools. They identify common ground. The college's aims have evolved and developed and precede all college policies. Staff have ownership of the aims as does the college council. The strategic plan includes appropriate priorities and targets. They are constantly under review. The college involves parents, staff, students, governors and local education authority by the use of questionnaires to establish priorities which are pursued through Investors in People and performance management. Examination targets are realistic but challenging. The college's shared commitment to succeed is underpinned by its consultative framework, its equality of value with respect of staff and students. The only area where this commitment is unclear is in that of parents although the college does arrange special evenings, questionnaires and newsletters to try to bring parents into the consultation process.

92. The governing body is very good. It is well led. The committee structure is linked to the strategic plan, each governor knowing his or her link area.

93. Overall, the provision of teaching and support staff is generally good with many good features, notably in the core subjects and performing arts. The best feature of the school's staffing procedures is the outstanding quality of performance management policies and practices applied to teaching staff which go far beyond statutory requirements. The implementation and development of these, at first by the senior management team and now shared with heads of department, heads of year and other senior staff, have formed major planks of the college's significant improvement since the last inspection.

94. Staffing levels and expertise are good for students with learning difficulties. Support staff have specific training, which enables them to lead sessions such as in speech and language or literacy. The college accommodation caters well for those with mobility restrictions. Lifts and ramps ensure access to all parts of the building, and there is very good emergency evacuation equipment for less mobile individuals. The college fully meets the requirements of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Resources are good overall. The college library has a special needs corner furnished with age and ability appropriate books, some with large and simplified texts.

95. Financial control is good. The deficit is reducing in line with the expectations of the local educational authority. Best value is sought effectively by use of tendering and quality. Consultation amongst all involved with the college is strong. The school has simple, effective systems with which to manage its budget and these enable teachers to concentrate on their work. Mundane tasks are taken away from heads of departments. The finance committee keeps strong control (governors from each committee send a representative to Finance Committee). The principal and governors are kept well informed. A new appointment is to be made to implement an expansive vision for effective use of ICT. Specific grants used correctly and the outcomes match objectives.

96. The number of students on roll in the college has gradually increased since the last inspection, although the size of the rooms remains spacious and adequate for many areas of the curriculum. The quality of the accommodation in modern languages and physical education is very good and good in design and technology, expressive arts and religious education. Where accommodation is of a very good standard there are suites of rooms that are light airy and well furnished. Classrooms organised in suites would benefit the geography and mathematics departments where rooms are scattered around the college and are having an adverse impact on standards. In physical education there are extensive fields with good indoor areas, good storage and office space.

97. Displays around the college and in classrooms are generally good and most parts of the college are in good decorative order. The buildings are well cared for, with a rolling decoration programme, efficiently managed by an effective development plan. The open plan classrooms in art and science are not conducive to quiet purposeful work as they also serve as a thoroughfare between rooms. Students actively help to keep the levels of litter down and graffiti on the site is not a problem. The dining room area has been modernised and now includes modern furniture.

98. Resources are satisfactory overall, better in mathematics, English, physical education, special educational needs, and design and technology. There is a good level of computer provision in science. There is limited access to computers for other subjects and for the teaching of ICT in Years 7 to 11.

## **Sixth form**

99. The management and leadership of the sixth form are very good. The governors are very keen to see the sixth form grow in size and provide better for a wider range of ability. They understand what needs to be done because they take a close interest and are very well briefed by the head and her senior managers.

100. The head of sixth was new to the post, but not the school, in August of last year. He, in common with the school's senior management and governors, is intent on raising students' attainment and has set about doing so with very good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the teachers' work as well as that of the students. The teaching of tutorial periods is observed and evaluated in the same way as other teaching. Very good arrangements for enabling students to see how well they are doing and set targets for improvement are very well supported by form tutors who receive regular and highly effective training. The sixth form tutors meet frequently to share views on how to do better. In every subject area departmental management is satisfactory or better and in almost all it is good.

101. Students' views are sought by questionnaire three or four times per year and through fortnightly meetings of the student council. The students' views are taken seriously. For example they are now allowed to use computer rooms and classrooms for private study more freely than before. They have contributed an added focus to the need to increase the provision of vocational pathways to the curriculum.

102. The use of funds for specific purposes is good, as it is elsewhere in the school, and the principles of best value are well applied. Money provided for the sixth form is spent on the sixth form with no cross subsidies into or from the main school.

103. In the sixth form students have good private study and common room facilities and classrooms are generally better because of the size of the groups, although in some rooms the furnishing needs to be replaced. The accommodation is good, with lifts and ramps providing access to all parts of the building. There are very good emergency evacuation procedures for students with restricted mobility.



## **WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

104. In order to improve further the standards achieved by students, governors, the principal and staff should seek to:

### **Improve standards in Information and Communication Technology by :-**

- Increasing the level of accommodation so that all year groups receive a full entitlement and all other subjects have access to computers.
- Increasing the level of resources available for ICT to provide GCSE courses at Years 10 and 11, full coverage for Years 7 to 9 and access for other subjects.
- Developing a whole college syllabus for the application of ICT skills through other subjects, the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Establishing the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum in terms of monitoring and assessment of coverage.
- Raising the standards achieved by age 14 and age 16, ensuring that all students receive their entitlement.
- Providing a robust system of assessment and monitoring, tracking of individual students' progress and attainment to inform teaching and planning.

Paragraphs 47, 98, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195

### **Build upon the good practice in mathematics to extend the development of better numeracy in all subjects by**

- Agreeing a whole college policy for the teaching of numeracy.
- Establishing a consistency of approach across subjects.

Paragraph 52

### **Improve the arrangement of accommodation so that departments are suited and staff do not need to move all over the college from lesson to lesson.**

Paragraphs 96, 126, 176

### **Sixth form**

- (1) **Review the range of vocational subjects on offer with a view to making better provision for students for whom advanced level courses are not well suited.**

Paragraph 64

- (2) **Comply with the requirement to offer Religious Education to sixth form students.**

Paragraph 64

## PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	151
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		119

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	13	44	63	28	2	1	0
Percentage	9	29	41	19	1	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	14	32	8	0	0	0
Percentage	4	25	57	14	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number observed in either the main college or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [ ] – [ ] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]*

### Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	1072	215
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	87	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	26	5
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	152	7

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	239

Students mobility in the last college year	No of students
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Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	28

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
College data	7.5
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
College data	1.1
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	59	59	118

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	40	46
	Girls	52	37	42
	Total	98	77	88
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	83 (55)	65 (59)	75 (68)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	75 (68)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	47 (23)	44 (34)	40 (32)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	38	44
	Girls	38	35	39
	Total	79	73	83
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	68(51)	63(68)	72(65)
	National	67(65)	70(68)	67(64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	24(29)	41(43)	30(22)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	141	152	293

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	64	133	135
	Girls	98	144	148
	Total	162	277	283
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	55 (49)	95 (96)	97 (97)
	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 students	College	41.5
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2001	21	44	65

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	13.6	15.4	14.8	4.0	6.0	5.0
National	16.9	17.7	17.4	5.3	5.6	5.5

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	17	88
	National		76

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
975	33	7
2		
9		
6		
0		
7		
12		
234		
3		
0		
7		
5		
0		
1	1	
1		
0		
25	2	

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y 13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72.35
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.41

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	682

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	27.19
Key Stage 4	26.50

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	3232312
Total expenditure	3209552
Expenditure per students	2557
Balance brought forward from previous year	-95000
Balance carried forward to next year	-72240

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	13.3
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	19.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1287

Number of questionnaires returned

372

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	36	53	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in college.	43	51	4	1	1
Behaviour in the college is good.	22	60	10	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	56	14	3	3
The teaching is good.	27	63	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	18	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	48	42	5	2	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	2	1	1
The college works closely with parents.	25	50	16	3	6
The college is well led and managed.	34	53	3	2	8
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	54	6	2	3
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	44	10	6	16



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

### ENGLISH

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching and learning
- The students have very good attitudes and work hard
- The teaching and learning of English literature are very strong
- The department is very well led and managed. Self evaluation and high expectations are strong features of the leadership and management.

#### **What could be improved**

- Students' knowledge and understanding of the level and grade criteria so they are more precisely informed about how to reach even higher standards

106. Students enter the college with broadly average standards. In the 2002 national tests for fourteen year olds results were well above average when compared with all colleges and when compared with colleges that take students from similar backgrounds. Results were also well above average when compared with students with similar prior attainment. More than four out of five attained at least the expected Level five and nearly half gained the higher level of six or better. The results represented very good achievement and were a significant improvement on the consistently below average results of the previous three years. Boys' results, in particular, improved significantly: they were more than one whole level higher than in previous years. The students did better in English than in science and mathematics.

107. In the 2002 GCSE English examination the proportion at A\*-C was in line with the average for all colleges but below average for colleges with students from similar backgrounds. However, the proportion gaining grade C or better was significantly better than would have been expected given the students' earlier results. Even so the students tended to do better in their other subjects. Girls did much better than boys: the boy/girl difference at grades A\*-C was twice the national average. The 2002 results matched the 2000 results but were higher than in 2001.

108. In GCSE literature the proportion at A\*-C was significantly above the national average. Despite the boys' well above average performance the girls did even better with some outstanding results: more than ninety percent gained grades A\*-C. Both boys and girls did significantly better in literature than in most of their other subjects. Their overall achievement was very good. The 2002 results were significantly better than the above average results of 2000 and the average results of 2001.

109. Standards in Year 9 are well above average, matching the results of the 2002 national tests. Achievement is very good in relation to the students' average standards on entering the college. About four out of five students write with the accuracy, paragraphing and control associated with average standards. More significantly, over half write with the quality of accuracy and range of vocabulary associated with higher levels and do so in a range of written contexts. For example, the ability to use vocabulary to engage a reader's interest was evident in narrative writing, in lively argumentative writing on whether college students should take part-time work, and in clear explanatory writing when responding to questions about fiction and non fiction. Those who are below average have weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and clear expression. Nevertheless, despite errors, most of these students

successfully used powerful vocabulary and phrasing in a descriptive writing activity and effectively held the attention of both reader and listener. Reading skills are well above average with many students making and supporting their personal responses to 'Henry V' through good use of quotations and comments. More significantly, many also analysed the impact of Henry's language on the audience and on his men in the Agincourt speech. Speaking and listening skills are above average with students in all attainment groups making thoughtful and well-expressed contributions.

110. Standards in Year 11 are above average. This is very good achievement in relation to the same students' below average results at the end of Year 9. Students have made very good progress in improving their essay and course work assignment skills. Folder after folder provided clear evidence of well-organised extended writing. Higher attainers write with the highest standards of accuracy and a range of cogent vocabulary and sentence structures which compels the reader's attention. Their perceptive comments achieved a successful analysis of the themes, tempo and rhythm of 'The Lady of Shalott' and the 'Mort d'Arthur'. Most students achieve very well in their response to literature because they effectively apply their knowledge and understanding of a text to the requirements of any assignment title. The writing of middle attaining students does not have the flair and consistent accuracy of higher attainers but most reach average standards. Some of these students make too many errors in their writing to be assured of reaching standards associated with grade C. However, only a few students make the basic errors associated with well below average standards. When responding to a text lower attainers are less secure in commenting on language but explain with clarity the main features of a text such as the nature of the relationship between George and Lennie in 'Of Mice and men'. As in Year 9 standards of speaking and listening are well above average.

111. Students with special educational needs make very good progress because of teaching that effectively focuses on methods that take their needs into consideration. Additional staffing, both teaching and non teaching, results in well-targeted individual support. Year 8 students made excellent progress because of their teacher's outstanding classroom management of individual and independent learning. Students from ethnic minorities also achieve very well across the attainment range and participate fully in class discussions. The provision for the development of numeracy and ICT is satisfactory. The department has formulated a good policy to support the development of numeracy.

112. Teaching and learning are very good overall and occasionally excellent. The department comprises a strong team of specialist teachers who have high expectations of themselves as professionals and of the students as learners. Consequently lessons are well-planned, full of busy activities that are based on clear learning objectives. This results in the students working hard and at a fast pace. The sharp focus on learning objectives results in the students making very good progress in the specific skills of the subject such as the organisation of their writing and the breadth and depth of their response to all types of texts. This success motivates the students to achieve higher standards. Relationships with the students are also very good and the students respond very well with very good attitudes and behaviour. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy was apparent in many lessons, not only in the clarity of learning purposes but also in the clear emphasis on demonstrating good examples to guide the students' work. The work of the department reflects a very thoughtful approach to teaching and learning styles. A combination of powerful visual images, rigorously managed group work and a reflective whole class review enabled lower attaining Year 11 students to make very good progress on understanding poems from their GCSE anthology. Marking is thorough with some use of the very good practice of setting clear improvement targets. Students are knowledgeable about their levels and grades but tend not to be secure about the criteria associated with each level or grade so they cannot articulate precisely what

they need to do to improve. Most lessons did not give enough time for an effective closing review of what had been learnt.

113. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department and her team have effectively evaluated their provision in conjunction with the principal. Consequently a lot of effective planning underpins the allocation of teachers to groups, the development of schemes of work and teaching methods, the distribution of responsibilities within the department, the use of resources and the target setting based on the students' earlier results. Targets are ambitious and reflect the department's high aspirations. Students made sound progress at the time of the previous inspection and teaching was sound. Teaching and progress are now very good representing very good improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average.
- The mathematics department is fully staffed with well qualified teachers and is very well led.
- Students behave well and work hard.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good

### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of information and communication technology as a tool for teaching and learning is underdeveloped
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory

115. Standards of work seen during the inspection are higher than the national average in Years 7 to 9 and average for students in Years 10 and 11. Achievement in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 or in Year 10 is good in each case. The students achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work and are well taught.

116. The students who are in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well. When they join the school their skills and understanding in mathematics are slightly below the national average. Results in the national tests for fourteen year olds for 2002 are in line with the national average for all schools and well below those for students in similar schools with boys performing less well than girls. Over time improvement has been above the national trend.

117. Up to the age of 14, students' mathematical skills show very good improvement. Students currently in year nine are performing well above national norms. Recent examinations to national standards show that well over four students in five are performing at level five and three in five at level six. The work of higher attaining students in Year 9 shows that they can use the angle properties of triangles and quadrilaterals to solve problems. They can manipulate algebraic formulae including simple fractions. They can calculate an estimated mean from a set of grouped data. Middle attainers can solve straightforward linear equations with whole number coefficients. They can add fractions by writing them with a common denominator. They can draw reasonably accurately using a ruler, compasses and a protractor. The lower attaining can construct and interpret line graphs, draw up tally charts and use them to construct bar charts. Their basic arithmetic is secure including that

associated with money and time. Most recognise basic percentages, such as 15 out of twenty is 75 per cent, but some make mistakes calculating percentages of a quantity.

118. GCSE results for 2002 are in line with national averages for students scoring between A\* and C showing well above average improvement for the students from their results in national tests two years earlier. Mathematics results at GCSE are not as good as those for other subjects in the school and boys do slightly less well than girls. Results have been improving year on year.

119. The standard of work for students aged over fourteen as seen during the inspection is still in line with that attained nationally. Just over half of those currently in Year 11 are on course for the higher grades of A\*, A, B or C at GCSE. Higher attaining students show good interpretation of graphs of different functions including quadratic, cubic and reciprocal. Middle attainers can read distance and time of travel from a travel graph and recognise that speed is found by dividing distance over time. They do not, however, always convert this into standard units such as kilometres per hour. They can calculate the circumference of a bicycle wheel given its diameter. They can solve simple problems using algebraic equations. Those who find mathematics most difficult, produce very careful investigations and begin to use algebra as a language to describe developing patterns. Some make errors in the use of directed numbers but some produce accurate arithmetic with numbers to two or more places of decimals.

120. Students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. Good classroom support by teachers' assistants is a strong feature contributing to the progress that is made. Especially valuable support is provided for every aspect of the teachers' work by a teaching assistant specifically allocated to the mathematics department.

121. Improvement since the last inspection in the Mathematics department has been good. Teaching is better. Standards have risen.

122. The teaching observed during the inspection was good throughout the school. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good. In these years the impact of implementation of the national numeracy strategy is particularly effective. Lessons often begin with a short sharp session of mental arithmetic related to the main topic to be considered and proceed at very good pace so that students enjoy their mathematics and are enthusiastic to learn. The use of a plenary session for reflection and review at the end of each lesson is, so far, less well developed but is receiving close attention in departmental planning and development work. Levels of expectation and pace are almost universally good or better. Most teachers plan lessons effectively and manage the students well so that no time is wasted. Students are given a variety of activities so that their interest and work rate are maintained at a good level. Students' behaviour in lessons is good. In almost every lesson seen the students' attitudes to their work and their behaviour were good, very good, or excellent. This good behaviour stems from students responding well to good teaching. Relationships in the classroom are good. The quality of these relationships does much to contribute to the students' progress.

123. During a maternity leave, the school has done well to continue to staff lessons effectively using in some cases teachers from other disciplines. This gave rise to the one lesson seen in which teaching and learning were less than satisfactory and where the level of challenge and pace was not high enough. The students lost interest and did not learn as they ought. In an excellent Year 7 lesson taught by a non specialist students were enabled to improve their understanding of numbers and place value and make the first steps to understanding algebra exceptionally well by active involvement in their learning. At the start of the lesson they had to decide how to make the biggest number they could from numbers

drawn from a pack of cards in order. They competed with each other enthusiastically learning most effectively as they did so. They then enacted a scene in which they were waiters in a café taking complicated orders for which they had to use coding. The lesson concluded with a useful review of what had been learned and what they had found easier or harder.

124. Teachers mark the students' test and examination work carefully. There is some very good practice within the department for work done in class and homework too. In addition to indicating whether the work is right or not some teachers comment fully on how it might be improved making good use of the school's reward system to motivate the students to do better. The impact of the national literacy strategy is to be seen in word lists which are on the walls in classrooms. These are not always used as effectively as they might be. The departmental policy for marking spelling and grammar mistakes is implemented in some but not all cases.

125. Opportunities for students to enhance their understanding of mathematics by using computers are planned into schemes of work. The department has a set of graphical calculators which are used at every level. Computers are used to study shapes and transformations, to assist in investigations of sequences of numbers and solving equations and to draw graphs and charts. In general, however, the use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning is still not sufficiently developed.

126. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are six classrooms dedicated to the teaching of mathematics. This is insufficient to house eight teaching groups at once as is required by current timetabling and setting arrangements. What is worse is that the rooms are on different floors and at some distance from each other. This means that communication is more difficult than it need be. It also impairs the provision of extra support should any teacher need it.

127. Departmental leadership is very good. There are very effective arrangements for improving teaching performance based on regular monitoring and performance review. The head of department is an experienced and talented teacher who enjoys the support and respect of both colleagues and students. She is well organised and provides an excellent focus on improving teaching and learning for a team of teachers who are both dedicated and well qualified.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Assessment procedures are good;
- Good support for the newly qualified teacher;
- Good relationships with the students;
- Standards are above average at both key stages;
- Using data to identify and remedy underachievement

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work should provide more guidance to support teaching and learning;
- Use of ICT as a tool to improve teaching and learning in science;
- Accommodation and resources;
- The amount of technician support;

all schools and well above the average for similar schools. For the last 3 years up to 2002 results were average and have improved so that they are now above the national average for

all schools. This year results are expected to have improved further. Over the last 3 years there has been a marked improvement in boys' performance, so that by 2002 their attainment is well above the national average for boys and higher than the girls. There has been a steady improvement in girls' performance so that by 2002 they were in line with the national average for girls.

130. Results in 2002 for science were better than those in Mathematics but not as high as in English. Achievement overall is good because students achieve better results in science that might be expected based on their attainment at age 11. As girls' attainment on entry is slightly lower than the boys', girls and boys achievement are both good. Girls and boys are expected to perform better this year.

131. Standards at GCSE are well above the national average. The majority of students achieve the higher GCSE grades. Overall results have increased over the last 3 years. Students achieved GCSE results in 2002 above what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9. At the end of Year 11, results in 2002 show that standards in science were better than those in English and mathematics. Students achieved better results that might have been expected based on their performance in National Tests at age 14. Coursework marks and test results indicate that the current Year 11 will achieve GCSE results broadly similar to last year. Achievement continues to be good for girls. Boys did less well than girls in 2002 but their achievement is satisfactory.

132. A minority of students has below average literacy and numeracy skills, which inhibit their attainment in this subject particularly in achieving the highest level/grades. Their written explanations of scientific principles are often superficial. However, in answering questions in class, the majority of students can explain scientific words and concepts with confidence. A significant number of students has difficulty with calculations, which are required for both their terminal examination and their coursework. Generally students have satisfactory levels of recall and understanding of work carried out the previous year.

133. Gifted and talented students have been identified but the department makes insufficient provision for their needs. The department has identified this as an area for development.

134. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress particularly when the teacher and support assistant work well together. Most teachers use the technical language of the subject well and improve the students' literacy skills by the use of key words. It is important, however, that all teachers correct these words when they are spelt incorrectly. Students' standards in ICT are satisfactory but opportunities to use computers and data logging equipment have been limited. Standards in ICT will improve when the science computer suite is used to support planned science activities. The highest attaining students should achieve high marks in their coursework as there is evidence of a good deal of specific support by their teachers. These students can use equations, design and carry out experiments to investigate their hypotheses, analyse results, draw appropriate conclusions, evaluate their work and suggest improvements.

135. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In more than half of the lessons the teaching was better than satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for students of different ages.

136. Relevant homework is sometimes set. Homework is not readily identified in exercise books and is an area for development in the department. Teachers do not give students sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills by setting open-ended research projects.

137. Teachers generally have good relationships with their students and consequently in the classroom most students get down to their work as should be expected. In most lessons teachers organise the students well in the classroom so that most have every opportunity to learn. For every lesson teachers plan clear objectives, but some teachers do not make these objectives clear to the students. Some teachers do not use a wide enough range of resources and methods to make their lessons more interesting, and in these lessons students' behaviour can deteriorate. The quality of students' work indicates that their attitudes to high academic achievement are good. In more than fifty per cent of lessons the attitudes and behaviour of students was good or better. Students work well together carrying out experiments. Generally they move responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment. Students follow their teachers' instructions to wear safety glasses and consequently work safely. Behaviour is mostly good. Students generally have respect for others, which they demonstrate by putting up their hands to answer questions. Sometimes students spoil otherwise worthwhile answers by calling out. They have good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher most students are courteous and polite.

138. Teachers do not always mark students' work regularly. The quality of marking is variable particularly in respect of the use of scientifically supportive comments. The reports to parents are satisfactory. Teachers identify the grades/levels that students are working at; most students understand their targets and what they need to do to improve.

139. Overall, students' learning is good. Year 7 students made very good progress when making hypotheses about habitats. In this lesson the teacher gave the students the opportunity to use microscopes to improve their skills in identifying pond life. Students learnt satisfactorily about forces in a Year 9 lesson. Students were given the opportunity to improve their understanding of moments by constructing a baby's mobile. When finding out how metals react with oxygen, Year 10 students learnt well. The teacher gave the students very clear instructions for the practical work that enabled all students to observe and understand that some metals are more reactive than others, and to give good explanations for their conclusions. Importantly teachers adapt their teaching carefully to the ability of their students. Year 10 students were given the opportunity to improve their ICT skills by sequencing geological information to present a rock cycle. In a Year 11 lesson with the most able, students learnt well the concept of inherited disease. The teacher used a good range of questions to challenge these high attaining students. From these examples it is clear that most teachers can use a range of methods and resources with confidence to maintain students' interest. Presently the schemes of work do not contain sufficient guidance for teachers to use the range of methods possible, and to use time effectively, so that students can be sufficiently engaged in all lessons. Revising schemes of work for students aged 11 to 14, to take account of the national strategy, and to include literacy, numeracy, risk assessments, ICT opportunities and SMSC are a current development priority in the department.

140. Assessment procedures are good. Most students have good knowledge of the current level/grade at which they are working. The department has made some use of this assessment information to guide curriculum planning. The modular GCSE course, with frequent tests, is a good match for students' needs, and teachers have sufficient experience of running the course successfully.

141. The head of department provides good leadership of science and has already identified areas for development. The head of department sets high expectations of student behaviour and academic performance, and there is a good focus on standards and addressing underachievement. The technician team is efficient, supportive, and makes an

important contribution to the work of the department. The department will be in a better position to deliver the ICT requirements of the science curriculum if it is planned for in the schemes of work. More use of ICT is necessary to add to the quality of both teaching and learning.

142. Insufficient equipment restricts the opportunities for practical work for most groups. Whilst the preparation area is large, it is poorly designed so that there is not enough working space. The department gives attention to health and safety. Brief written risk assessments exist for some experiments. In all schemes of work it is necessary to identify risk assessments, ICT, and opportunities for literacy, numeracy and SMSC. In teachers' planning the risk assessments should vary with the particular group of students carrying out the work.

143. Improvements have been made since the last inspection. Assessment, record keeping, work targeted to students' abilities, and the provision of textbooks for Years 10 and 11 are now much better. However the time available to science in these years is still short, and this restricts opportunities for practical work.

## ART AND DESIGN

144. Overall, the provision for art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- The very good knowledge and understanding of the subject held by the well established and experienced team.
- The very good provision for ceramics.

### Areas for improvement

- Clarify students' levels of attainment on entry in Year 7 and by Year 9 to aid the accurate tracking of achievement.
- Identify gifted and talented students in all year groups and provide appropriate challenge and enrichment.
- Increase opportunities to use ICT as a creative tool.

145. The standards attained in art and design, by Year 9 are below average. However, this represents good achievement over Years 7 to 9 from well below average standards of attainment on entry. All groups of students achieve well though those showing a particular talent for art are not sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential. Ceramics is a strength with good development of skills over the three years resulting in well crafted and decorated vessels. Drawing and painting skills are more variable and are notably weak where lower attaining students draw from imagination. Year 9 students show good awareness of shape and confidence of line in creating designs based on the paintings of Patrick Caulfield from their own carefully observed still life drawings. In Years 10 and 11, the standards seen in art and design are below average. Students' achievement at this age is good. Their attainment by Year 9 was well below average having been adversely affected by a previous timetable arrangement that provided limited time and a lack of continuity. GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average but continued a very positive trend from an extremely low level four years ago. Girls attain higher than boys with almost twice as many gaining the higher A\* to C grades. A wide range of attainment is evident in the work seen. The quality of the finished artworks is often in line with expectations but the preparatory studies show insufficient depth or progression. Attainment is higher where students combine direct observation with techniques learned from the study of artists' work as in some very good pictures based on the cubist paintings of Juan Gris. Weaker work results from an over reliance on copying from books and photographs, and from repeating images for no clear purpose. Standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are satisfactory overall



but teachers make good use of art vocabulary in all lessons. There are insufficient opportunities for students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to develop their vocabulary through presentations and discussions of their own and others' work. Numeracy and ICT are adequately taught as required but ICT is under used as an artistic tool and this inhibits creativity.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in one third of the lessons seen. The very experienced staff share a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Excellent demonstrations of techniques and processes are very well matched to students' age and previous experience giving students the confidence to apply them in their own work. Teachers give good advice to effectively meet the needs of individual students including additional time and support for students with special needs. Learning support assistants are sensitive and unobtrusive in helping their charges. Specific support sheets and strategies are devised to aid the progress of students with special needs and lower attaining students but there are few planned extension activities to challenge the talented and higher attaining students. Good use is made of completed art work in displays and as examples though opportunities are missed for discussing and evaluating the qualities of the works. Materials, equipment and resources for lessons are very well prepared in advance allowing full use of the time available. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. Where lessons are well structured and delivered at a good pace students respond well, working with energy and enthusiasm. In GCSE projects lasting several weeks, a small number of students displays a casual attitude and works with little urgency until prompted by the teacher.

147. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities in Years 10 and 11 for students to explore the intangible through their personal projects in illustration and fantasy art. Their cultural development is supported through the study of a very good range of artists in relation to their work.

148. The department offers a good range of basic drawing and painting materials and techniques and provision for ceramics is very good. There are insufficient resources for printmaking, three dimensional work and ICT and the large class sizes restrict development in these areas. The use of sketchbooks is inconsistent and requires further development. Procedures for recording assessments of students' work are very thorough, particularly for GCSE students. Baseline assessments of students entering the college in Year 7 are not based on the full range of national curriculum criteria and are therefore insecure. The existing folio of exemplar work requires further development to show a range of national curriculum levels to standardise assessments at Year 9. The department makes insufficient use of art and design data to track achievement and guide future planning across Years 7 to 11.

149. Leadership and management of art and design are good. The very knowledgeable and experienced teachers are working well together with a common aim. A relatively new strand of line management within the design faculty is proving effective in gaining a fresh overview of the department's direction and introducing new strategies. Accommodation is satisfactory. The four studios constitute a good working area but the open plan arrangement leads to frequent disturbance from neighbouring groups and students passing through. Resources are adequate to meet a basic curriculum, though there are shortages in some areas and much of the book stock and equipment is ageing.

150. Improvement since the last inspection is good. A consistent time allocation has replaced the previous carousel arrangement. Annual gallery visits have been introduced and the range of materials used has been broadened.

## BUSINESS

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching
- Very good learning

### **Areas for improvement**

- The provision of a staff base room

152. GCSE business studies is offered in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results for 2002 were below national averages for A\* to C and for A\* to G. In response to this situation the college has implemented a vigorous action plan that has brought structural changes in staffing and a defined policy of recruitment and teaching for lower and higher tier pathways. These measures are already having positive effect, with work seen now indicating improvement in standards in both year groups. The relative performance of boys and girls in GCSE examinations is in line with national proportions

153. The course attracts a large number of students from a wide ability range. The vast majority of them are now performing at levels that are in accord with their potential. All students have a good knowledge and understanding of business terminology, methods and models. In both years they work well with their peers, showing respect for the ideas of others and using these insights constructively. Year 10 students have already established a good understanding of modern business structures and of the surrounding environments. They work well together in small team activity. In two Year 10 classes on personnel practice they worked together to produce well structured job and person specifications for use in subsequent activities. Students make good progress over time and in a Year 11 class, students again worked together in sensible and mature manner, using analytic skills to examine product differentiation. In both years, the use of information technology is widespread and is particularly effectively used in the production of assignments. In Year 10 there are some outstanding examples of this, and by Year 11 the vast majority of current students are using word processing, spreadsheets and graphic illustration to produce reports that are close to, or already at, commercial business standards. A significant minority make good use of the mathematical formula function of MS Excel. Students in Year 11 use the programme of visits to industry to produce data subsequently used in assessed work. At present, students do not have the opportunity to participate in schemes like Young Enterprise, and this could be an area for further enhancement of studies.

154. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is uniformly good. Several consistent key strengths contribute positively to student learning. Teachers prepare well. They produce linked series of high quality work sheets and specimen documents that are models of good business practice which students are encouraged to emulate. This ensures that students' assignments and reports are regularly produced using industry standard layout, with fonts, spacing, margins and illustrations accurately presented. Teachers carefully develop literacy skills, particularly through the precise oral and written use of business language. Through the frequent use of exercises that ask for brief business reports, students are encouraged to respond in clear short sentences, both oral and written. Key words are displayed throughout the accommodation, reinforcing the effectiveness of the teaching. Teachers pay consistent and regular attention to marking and to reviewing student files. The detailed marking contains clear suggestions to the individual as to how to improve performance. Teachers know their students well and use assessment and related data to assist students develop high and achievable targets for improvement. They frequently use their own direct knowledge of the

world of work to enliven presentations and students respond well to this strategy. In all classes, teachers arrange activity so that they have time to offer support to individuals on specific aspects of their learning. This helps students of all levels of ability to make good progress and to achieve their potential. Overall, students are well motivated. They take pride in their work, especially their assignments and portfolios and are happy to accept further challenge

155. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work well together and regularly share their experience of concerning individuals and cohorts to revise and improve strategies. Courses are well documented, students' programmes of study are well organised, Overall, staffing is very good. It benefits considerably from the energetic teamwork and also from the planned use of the commercial experience of several members of the department. However, the opportunities for teamwork would be enhanced considerably by the provision of a staff base room. The curriculum is good, offering good opportunities for students to relate local activity not only to their own studies but to national patterns. The availability and use of information technology resources is good.

## **Citizenship**

156. Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- The subject manager has identified where citizenship may also be taught in other subjects.
- The students' election to the college council promotes the notion of citizenship.
- The subject provides good reinforcement to the students' social, moral and personal development.

### **Areas for development**

- There are currently no specific schemes of work for citizenship.
- There is little written evidence of the subject in students' work.

157. Although there is little evidence of written work in citizenship, in lesson observations and in the daily life of the college all students make good gains in their knowledge of citizenship. For example, they consider topical issues such as the plight of refugees and consider the feelings of those less fortunate than themselves. In one excellent lesson, they drew parallels between the build up to the current war situation with Iraq and the causes of the World War II. They participate in fund-raising activities and work as a team to organise parents' evenings and other college events. They democratically elect college council representatives, who are conscientious in fulfilling their duties. For example, they canvass their classmates for agenda issues, which are discussed at regular and well-organised and minuted meetings.

158. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Although there are currently no schemes of work, tutorial lessons in personal and social education are planned to cover a range of topical issues from how to activate the brain to encourage more effective learning to looking at family lifestyles in modern society or looking at budgeting and the pros and cons of bank loans. Citizenship is further promoted well in other subject areas and is an integral part of the college's provision for moral, social and cultural development programme. Representatives from local industries and banks visit the college for question and answer sessions or mock interviews, which further promote aspects of citizenship.

159. The subject manager has made a good start towards establishing citizenship in the college. He has conducted an audit of all subjects to identify what is being covered and where further modules of work might be best included. He has also sought the views of students, and plans are now in place to develop citizenship projects together with an appropriate bank of resources and community links.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### **Strengths:**

- Standards are above average
- The leadership and management of design technology is good
- Teaching is good
- There is effective promotion of literacy skills
- There is good extra-curricular provision
- Good standards of sketching and drawing skills communicate progress through the design process well
- The standard of display in the department is excellent

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The use of ICT particularly for recording work and for computer-aided design
- The setting of time targets in the GCSE courses to ensure that students do not leave coursework to the very last minute

161. In the 2002 teacher assessments undertaken by students at the end of Year 9, teachers awarded National Curriculum Levels that were above national averages. Evidence derived from the inspection reflects these assessments. Standards seen during the inspection were overall above national expectations.

162. In the work seen, Year 9 students attain standards above national expectations. Their practical skills are good in all materials areas and they work safely and hygienically. They use a suitable range of tools and equipment. Students make good use of the Internet for research. They have sound awareness of industrial process when they learn about jigs and other ways of ensuring consistency and accuracy in making. They plan well for example when they produce a cake production schedule in food technology. The presentation of folders is very good. Students produce attractive, lively design folders that communicate their ideas and commentary on the process of design well. This is so in all materials areas. Students use sketching particularly well to generate their ideas for the solutions to the problems they are set.

163. In the 2002 examinations students in Year 11 gained grades that averaged out at around national averages. The relatively poor performance of boys in the range of design technology subjects depressed the overall percentage. These were exceptional results as over the three previous years, results were consistently just above national averages. This cohort was also awarded relatively low teacher assessments in design technology at age 14.

164. Year 11 students are attaining standards in work seen during the inspection that are above national expectations.

165. In Food Technology folders the areas of knowledge and understanding required by the syllabus is well presented. Students complete good dietary analyses. There is good disassembly of existing products to contribute to research findings. Practical skills are good.

166. Standards in Graphic Products are above national expectations. Students make good card models set in modelled environments. As in all other subjects they take pride in producing quality outcomes. There is good use of ICT to generate, modify images and to produce coursework.

167. Resistant Materials students produce good practical outcomes in their lighting project. Their folders show a good understanding of the properties of materials, when they consider what materials are suited to external or internal installations. Their research draws on a wide range of influences including Eastern religions. They use a range of tools and equipment well and accurately work from plans.

168. Textiles students produce good records of production that include risk assessments and quality assurance procedures. Their research is well planned and executed. They produce quality outcomes in projects to make toiletry bags or artefacts for a redesigned room of their choice using a good range of techniques. In all materials areas there is good sketching to design. There is little computer-aided design work.

169. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and are effective in imparting this to their students. This gives clear direction to students' learning. They give clear introductions that set out what students have to do. They give effective feedback as students work though in Years 10 and 11 there is need to tighten up target setting specifically to set time targets relating to coursework assignments. Sessions at the end of lessons generally sum up what progress has been made thus helping to motivate students. The teaching of basic skills is good in all areas and this has a direct and positive effect on the quality of work produced. The workshop technician makes an important contribution in this area as he is able to draw on a wide range of expertise. Planning is good and includes clear support for students with learning difficulties. Relationships are generally good and this leads to safe and orderly working conditions. Teachers have high expectations of their students both in terms of their behaviour and what they can achieve. This is particularly evident in a very well devised and challenging textiles project in Year 9 where students are given responsibility and freedom in teams to produce artefacts based on Indian patterns. In this project there is very good use of ICT. Students use software that teaches industrial techniques and the use of the Internet to research and create their designs. Students concentrate well and all including those with learning difficulties make good progress in the majority of lessons. Teachers give up a significant amount of their free time to a good range of after college activities such as the completion of coursework. This helps to strengthen relationships as well as reinforcing achievement.

170. Teachers promote literacy well. This helps to advance students' learning through improving their understanding of the subject. Question and answer sessions are effective in extending understanding. The prior identification of key words and the careful introduction of their meaning, lead to greater understanding of key concepts.

171. Leadership in the department is good. The head of department has a realistic and constructive approach to the running of the department. He has identified the problems that confront the department. Technician support makes a significant contribution to the work of the department.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### **Strengths**

- Teachers' knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject
- Assessment, including the sharing of information with students
- Target setting based on information gathered and shared
- Leadership provides clear direction and plan for development of the subject

### **Areas for Development**

- Further develop the use of ICT with mathematical modelling, using spreadsheets
- Further develop the use of academic targets to include the highest level descriptors
- Accommodation: lessons taught outside the specialist classrooms lack the resources provided by this room

173. At the end of Year 9 students' standards of attainment are above national expectations. As attainment on entry is in line with national expectations, they are therefore making good progress. There has been a steady improvement in attainment in the last three years. Evidence from work seen during the inspection confirms this attainment and shows students, especially those with special educational needs, are making good progress. Students in Year 7 develop geographical skills with map interpretation. They also display good knowledge of place and an ability to describe and offer simple explanations of how the water cycle works. In Year 8, the students are able to explain how people react to the threat of earthquakes and how their decisions affect the outcome of such hazards. Lower attaining students describe and account for the cause and effects of these disasters. Students use ICT to assist with research, using Internet sites. Literacy skills are developed in lessons, with students using new geographical vocabulary in context and learning to use extended writing in assessment topics.

174. The percentage of students achieving A\* - C grades was slightly below national expectations. The percentage achieving A\* - G grades at GCSE in 2002 was above national expectations and represents a fall from 2001, but was considerably above the previous year. Results fluctuate depending on the students' prior attainment. As all students follow humanities GCSE, few students who opt to study geography to GCSE and attainment on entry to the course varies year on year. Students make at least satisfactory progress. Year 11 students, whose attainment was below expectations at the end of Year 9, could explain the factors associated with industrial location in the United Kingdom and how these have changed through time. Evidence from the inspection confirms this progress. Year 10 students, whose attainment was in line with expectations at the end of Year 9, were seen to have a good understanding of the causes and effects of urban problems that result in urban regeneration. Students of all abilities including those for whom English is an additional language and those with learning difficulties have made good progress.

175. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Much are very good or excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good knowledge of the examination system. They communicate this well to their students. Their teaching of basic skills is good and helps students to develop literacy, numeracy and basic geography skills. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages students' intellectual and creative effort in lessons and students are rewarded for their efforts with praise and merit stickers. There is good pace in learning. Lesson planning pays specific attention both to students with special educational needs and to the needs of higher attaining students. Work is differentiated to ensure all students make

progress. There are regular assessment exercises. These are marked to National Curriculum levels. Students are aware of their current level and of what they need to do to achieve higher levels. Students' attainment is tracked and appropriate targets are set. GCSE grade criteria are shared with students for assessment topics and GCSE course work. Where teaching was wanting, albeit satisfactory, students were not enthused by the teacher who adopted a more didactic and less confident approach, as a result of which students attitudes and behaviour were more challenging. Mostly, students' attitudes to the subject are good. Their teachers' enthusiasm is contagious. There are good relationships and students work together well when asked to do so and they help each other appropriately. Behaviour in lessons is good and a positive working environment is generated in classrooms.

176. The department is well led and is given clear educational direction. Teachers are well matched to the courses they teach. Teaching is monitored and evaluated by senior managers. The head of department regularly monitors the teaching of most teachers. As teachers contribute to the teaching in humanities, departmental meetings devoted to geography, although regular, are not as frequent as would be desired and although informal daily contact is well used to manage the day-to-day running of the department. This includes ensuring contribution to the students' development and use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Although only research skills are developed at present there is scope for the development of mathematical modelling within spreadsheets. Resources for teaching are plentiful within the department and good use is made of the Internet to research for project work. Good use is made of field studies that are linked to topics studied in the classroom. The Geography room provides a good learning environment with good, relevant wall display, but one room devoted to the subject is insufficient. Much of the teaching seen was in lessons away from the humanities suite of rooms, which means teachers' time is used inefficiently as resources have to be carried around the college for geography lessons. Resources to support teaching are available in the department and in the library. The librarian provides resources to support the various topics studied. Further resources are loaned from the teachers' centre.

177. Since the previous inspection there have been improvements to the quality of teaching and to attainment at the end of Year 9. Recruitment to the course in Year 10 is still low.

## HISTORY

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

### **Strengths**

- The consistently good quality of teaching is reflected in the students' achievements.
- The very good assessment procedures are used well to inform planning.
- Literacy skills and the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well promoted.
- The department is very well managed.

### **Areas for development**

- The department should continue its drive towards raising standards.
- The use of computers to support learning is underdeveloped.
- The students learning would benefit from more hands-on artefacts and historical visits.

179. History is taught as a discrete subject and through integrated humanities in all years. The results of the 2002 General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations for history indicate that the number of A\*-C grades gained by 16 year-olds was below the national average, with girls achieving significantly more A\*-C grades than boys. However, the results represent a slight improvement on previous years.

180. In lesson observations and from an analysis of the students' work, High school students make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of historical events. By the age of 14, most are in line with national averages. The attainment of higher achieving students is above this level, while lower attainment by students with additional educational needs is mostly linked to weak literacy skills. Nevertheless, they achieve well, particularly in oral sessions. For example, in Year 7 they have a good understanding of the conflict between Henry II and Thomas Becket, and clearly explain Henry's grief after Becket's murder. Although handwriting and spelling skills are varied, students take care with their presentation. Year 8 students use famous works of art alongside sketches and cartoons to study 'Images of History', deciding on whether these are primary or secondary historical sources, which also develops their cultural awareness. By the end of Year 9, they have a clear understanding of everyday life under the Tudors and Stuarts, and there are good examples of independent writing on notable Elizabethan characters in Year 8 or the Luddite Riots in Year 9. By the age of 14 they engage in animated debates on the rights of women in the early twentieth century, and they examine the build up to war in 1914.

181. Those students who choose to study history in Years 10 and 11 make good progress towards their examination. Their work is well presented with some very good time-lines, and sketches, showing, for example, the attitude of world powers towards Germany at the end of World War 1 or the events leading to the Russian Revolution of 1917. They take care with their spelling and grammar. Higher achieving students in Year 11 complete very good work on the United States involvement in Vietnam, and there is evidence that they use the Internet well to aid their research. Their note-taking skills improve and inform their essays, which are hand drafted and re-drafted using word-processors.

182. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, and sometimes very good or excellent. Well-planned and structured lessons are lively and fun, and teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. The students' basic literacy skills are well met during lessons through story-board planners, subject vocabularies, reading aloud and good attention to handwriting and spelling. In all lessons, the students spiritual, moral, social and cultural



development is boosted, such as in Year 9, where students gasped in horror as they reflected on the writings of a wartime survivor who wished his own parents dead so that he could have their food ration. Teachers and classroom assistants cater well for lower achievers by preparing simplified worksheets or through in-class support. However provision for higher achievers is inconsistent. The teachers' high expectations and good students' management ensure that no time is wasted and maximum learning takes place. Effectively targeted question and answer sessions at the end of lessons promote the students' awareness of their learning, and this is further supported by linked homework tasks. However, the use of computers is limited, and relies on students using their personal resources. The quality of marking and monitoring the students' progress is very good, with constructive and helpful comments, which indicate that teachers have a good knowledge of students' abilities. The results of end-of-topic testing are matched by year group against National Curriculum levels of attainment or examination grades. A particularly good feature of this assessment is that a copy of the marking sheet is returned to the students with guiding comments and shows what the current grade covers. Thus students are fully aware of the extent of their learning and what they must do to improve.

183. History is very well managed and led. The subject leader's monitoring programme has identified areas for improvement, which have been built into the departmental development plan. For example, the imbalance between boys and girls, highlighted in the 2002 examinations, has been addressed by changing to a more realistic General Certificate of Secondary Education course, which is successfully reducing the gender imbalance. Teaching is regularly observed in order to maintain standards. Departmental documentation is very good, as are the procedures and practice of assessment. Staffing is good, with all teachers being subject specialists. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and attractively decorated with the students' work and motivating posters. However, where there are large classes of 30 or more students, there is too little space, and this restricts the movement of staff around the room during lessons. Resources are satisfactory. There is a good range of historical fact and reference books in the college library, and a good range of video material to support history. However, there are few hands-on artefacts to reinforce learning and little use is made of local historical sites or museums.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in class work and in answering routine questions, and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured with a range of activities which effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- When working in groups, students share ideas freely and work well together.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The level of accommodation and resources available for the subject.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum.
- The management and coordination of ICT across the curriculum.
- Standards achieved at age 14 and age 16.
- The use of assessment to inform teaching and planning.

185. The focus was on both information communication technology as a discreet subject and the use of information communication technology across the curriculum.

186. The assessment of attainment at age 14 shows that standards are below the national standard. The review of students work indicates that standards are average but within a narrow range of activities. In lessons students demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with processing text and images, presenting information and handling data. They can also access the internet and use this to carry out research and download images. Students have limited opportunities to develop their skills in ICT lessons and to apply these skills in other subjects. The aspects of sensing, control and computer aided design are not covered. At present there are no discreet ICT lessons in Year 8.

187. At age 16 students' attainment in information technology is assessed through Key Skills and the majority of students achieve the expected standard for the course. No indication is given to students of the National Curriculum level achieved. Students are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desk top publishing, use of data base, using spreadsheets to simulate business practice, they can also use the internet for research. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. In business studies lessons they use computers to simulate business practice. Computers are also used in other subjects, particularly in music, history, geography, mathematics and science. These subjects extend students skills in the use of computers. For the majority of students there are too few opportunities to apply their skills in other subjects. The higher attaining students understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete.

188. Students make good progress in their knowledge and application of a narrow range of skills in, information technology. There are too few opportunities for students to use computers and practice these skills in other subjects, which would help their progress. In both key stages the majority of students make progress through a range of opportunities to develop aspects of desk top publishing, spreadsheets, database, word processing and the use of the internet. Their progress in other strands specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study, is unsatisfactory as insufficient attention is paid to the aspects of computer aided drawing, measurement and control.

189. In specialist lessons the quality of teaching and learning are good. These lessons are planned well and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear objectives are set for students of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates students and maintains their interest. Relationships are good and the skilled support given to students in their work quickly builds their confidence. There are good introductions to lessons which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help students understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of students are well met and their designing and making skills are sufficiently developed. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In lessons there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages students to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of the lesson is sufficiently focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the students. Students have good attitudes to the subject and behave well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which students enjoy as their confidence grows. Students turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-

operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.

190. There has been an improvement in access since the last inspection but the number of computers available is still below that expected nationally. Students' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are not sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is good. There are opportunities for students to use computers during the lunch time and at other times when students can develop their computer skills and have access to the internet. At present the college's provision does not fully cover the programmes of study.

191. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The college has a clear vision and direction which will lead to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements including the introduction of a half course in GCSE for all students and the teaching of ICT for all students ages 11 to 14. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of all staff. There is insufficient monitoring of ICT across the curriculum. The college has identified appropriate priorities and is taking the necessary action and review of progress towards them. There is a scheme of work to assist teachers planning and a department handbook to outline clearly the policies, aims and objectives of the department. A development plan has been produced identifying key areas for improvement but does not include explicit objectives for raising standards. Curriculum time is well below that expected. At present there is no discreet teaching of ICT in Year 8. No reference is made to National Curriculum levels achieved by students at age 16. The assessment of student attainment and progress is not used effectively to inform teachers planning.

192. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, the size and number of rooms is inadequate for the number of students being taught. There is a lack of resources for newer technologies for teaching, interactive white board and LCD projectors.

193. The number of computers available is below what might be expected nationally, most of the equipment is up to date. The computers available are used effectively.

194. Management and co ordination of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is no tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of information technology. An audit of the use of ICT across the curriculum has been carried out, but at present there is no specific policy for ICT across the curriculum.

195. At present students' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network. The opportunities for the consistent application and development of computers is not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated across the curriculum, however, to achieve full coherence and progression. At present students have too few opportunities to use computers because teachers' planning for the use of computers in lessons is variable. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection of the numbers of computers available but the provision is still below the national average. .

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The standards in French, which are above the national averages for students aged sixteen.
- All students study at least one foreign language to the age of sixteen and have the option of studying two.
- A cohesive team of well-qualified teachers.
- A well-equipped and well-resourced suite of rooms which sets the tone for quality learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Achievement in German where students often do not realise their potential.
- The further development of strategies to promote independent learning.
- The further development of ICT.
- Greater use of the college's data to actively raise standards further.

197. Students begin their study of French in Year 7 and by the end of Year 9 their average attainment is broadly in line with the national average for similar colleges. Standards have been reasonably constant for the past three years. A number of students can choose to study German in addition to French in Years 8 and 9.

198. All students study a modern foreign language to the age of sixteen. By the age of sixteen, students studying French are gaining examination results at the higher grades of A\*-C which are above the national averages. In German, students gain results at the higher grades which are in line with national averages. Very few students in either language gain the very highest grades of A\* and A. Over the full range of grades A\*-G, however, students consistently perform above national averages in both languages. The number of students choosing to study two languages in Years 10 and 11 is not large, but nevertheless, this year nineteen students in Year 10 and thirteen students in Year 11 have chosen to continue to study both French and German.

199. Achievement at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 is good in French. At the end of Year 11 the majority of students studying French, regardless of ability, are performing in line with expectations and many are performing well above. In German, however, students can often perform below expectations and do not, therefore, always realise their potential.

200. Standards of work seen reflect a similar pattern. In Year 7, students were able to describe the location of items in a house using prepositions. In Year 8 they were able to talk at greater length about countries and nationalities using adjectives correctly. In Year 9 they were confident in using the verbs "to be" and "to have" in a variety of situations of their own choosing. In a Year 8 German lesson, students were confident in expressing their likes and dislikes over food. In Years 10 and 11, in both languages, students were able to describe past events, the more able students using language with an increasing level of sophistication. Less able students were well-supported and were able to succeed at their own level. In both languages, the skills of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening were all being acquired. There was little evidence of the use of ICT.

201. In lessons seen, the teaching was always at least satisfactory and nearly three quarters of it was either good or very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and lessons are based on detailed schemes of work. Presentation is always lively and

incorporates a variety of activities, including games, which not only keep the students' attention but also reinforce learning. Overhead projector transparencies, authentic speakers on tape and pair work are also used successfully to promote learning. In one very good lesson, students were given the tools to develop their own learning and to work more independently. Relationships between teachers and students are usually relaxed and set a positive tone for learning. Teachers are skilled in knowing when to use the foreign language and when to use English; consequently the use of the foreign language does not become a barrier to communication. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers indicate what they should do to improve further. Students learn well because of the good quality teaching. Although they do not find languages easy, they are interested and able to succeed at their own level. The majority are eager to learn and take a pride in their work. However they are not always fully involved in their own learning, which can lead to their becoming restless, and they would benefit from being able to work more independently and creatively. Visits to France in Years 7 and 8 enhance learning.

202. The good teaching and achievements of the students result from the good leadership and management of the department. The members of the department discuss methodology and teaching materials and are very supportive of each other. Indeed, during the absence of a key member of staff, they were working flexibly and providing materials and advice for the supply teacher to ensure that the possible adverse effect on student progress was kept to a minimum. However, there is the potential to raise standards further by using the college's data on student performance in a more focussed way.

203. The suite of rooms for modern languages has a positive impact on learning, setting a quality tone for every lesson. Rooms are well-equipped with tape-recorders, white boards and overhead projectors enabling the teachers to have instant access to a variety of resources during a lesson. Good quality text books and dictionaries are available in sufficient numbers to enhance student learning. The use of display both in the classrooms and adjacent corridors is excellent. Departmental documentation is comprehensive and student-centred.

204. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. New text books have been purchased and the visits abroad introduced in Years 7 and 8 have helped make the study of French more meaningful and authentic. ICT has been written into the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 but this still needs to be used more effectively.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The very significant improvement of standards across the board and particularly at GCSE.
- The impact of the teacher's specialist subject knowledge in Years 10 and 11.
- The very considerably improved planning of the curriculum.

### Areas for Improvement

- Development of baseline assessments in Years 7 and 10.

206. Standards seen in class music lessons in Years 7 to 9 vary very widely in the range poor to very good, reflecting the comparably wide range of ability and understanding of students on entry to Year 7 or Year 10. Overall, standards on entry in Year 7 appear very low

for the majority of students. The detailed schemes of work contain tasks early in the Year 7 course that seek to remedy this disparity and students are properly challenged to improve rapidly. However, these considerable efforts remain insufficient in music to enable *all* students to be in line with expectations at the end of Year 9. Standards of achievement and progress are carefully checked and are securely linked to increasingly clearly established criteria for assessment. These help to establish an understanding of students needs although they do not yet form a standardised assessment on entry. The hard work of students and teacher are traceable both in the work scrutinised as well as work seen in class.

207. In Year 10 this college's students are joined by new entrants to the college from Roundhill to form a single combined set of GCSE students. As in Year 7, the prior attainment, commitment and experience are again very variable. Detailed schemes of work relating to the syllabus quickly make clear the high expectations of both the exam board and this teacher. Again, very hard work on the part of both teacher and students elicits positive responses and good learning which is sometimes very good indeed. After a somewhat slow start students make good progress that enables them to achieve well in the examination. There has been very significant improvement in standards across the board since the last inspection, most notably in raising in only two years GCSE results by 20 points, bringing them from the very low standard of 47 per cent A\* to C in 2000, to 67 per cent A\* to C in 2002. The outlook for current GCSE students is comparably good.

208. Teaching and learning are good. The impact of the teacher's specialist subject knowledge, care for her students' success and high expectations is particularly evident in Years 10 and 11. The very considerably improved planning of the curriculum and its schemes of work for both Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is carefully monitored and evaluated. Planning for progression as well as development planning over long time (which were both serious weaknesses in 1997) are now clear, both in the documentation and in the work seen. The teacher and department are keen to establish the baseline assessment in both Years 7 and 10 building upon the good standards of on-going assessment of students seen in class. There are plans to relate assessment criteria more directly to the national curriculum levels of attainment from music. Whilst it is acknowledged that there yet remain significant areas for improvement, the college may take pride in the rapid progress made in music in a relatively short space of time.

209. Approximately 40 students (3.5 per cent of the college population) take a variety of instrumental lessons, including guitar, brass, woodwind, percussion and keyboard/piano lessons provided by specialist teachers from Leicestershire Arts Service or privately engaged by the school. Some of these students take public examinations in which they gain creditable results which should properly be included in the annual report to governors and parents, in common with the results of other recognised public examinations. All these and more take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which lead to occasional concerts in college and other performances of a good standard heard in recordings.

210. The leadership and management of music within the performing arts is secure and improving as the teacher in charge works increasingly closely with her colleagues in performing arts and growing team of visiting instrumental teachers.

## Performing arts

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results have improved exceptionally well, especially in drama and music in recent years.
- Very good leadership and management provide inspiring role models to a well-bonded team.

### Areas for improvement

- Consolidate and continue to develop the improving achievements consistently throughout the department.
- Establish assessments at the two main entry points to the College in Years 7 and 10.
- Improve curriculum time at all stages and post-16 together with the related staffing, accommodation and resource requirements consistent with the college's ambitions to achieve specialist status as a Performing Arts College.

212. At age 14, the levels currently achieved are broadly in line with national expectations in music and well above national expectations in dance and drama.

213. Standards seen in class lessons in Years 7 to 9 vary very widely in the range poor to very good reflecting the comparably wide range of ability, understanding and experience of students on entry in Years 7 and 10.

214. In Years 10 and 11 options schemes provide GCSE courses in the performing arts in which both subject-discrete and generic skills, abilities, knowledge and understanding continue to be developed. The courses are very well planned. For example, in all four courses in Years 10 and 11 classes there is clear evidence of creating, composing, performing, listening, observing and evaluating skills seen to be applied in abundance and, most rewardingly, particularly impressive work was seen from several students with learning difficulties.

215. Numbers of students taking GCSE courses have varied considerably but are now steady in music and increasing in the other performing arts. Standards in music and drama have risen exceptionally. Music has progressed from a low 47 per cent A\* to C grades in the year 2000 to 67 per cent A\* to C grades in the year 2002, in line with national expectations. Drama attained only 50 per cent A\* to C grades in the year 2000 but 84.6 per cent A\* to C grades in the year 2002 — an outstanding achievement, far above national expectations.

216. Standards of achievement and progress are carefully monitored, securely linked to increasingly clearly established criteria for assessment. These help to establish an understanding of students needs although they do not form a standardised baseline assessment on entry. However, these strategies to raise standards which are pursued and applied in class lessons are constrained by a timetable which affords at most only 80 per cent of the time ordinarily expected. The carousel time-tabling of dance and drama in Years 7 to 9 is similarly restricting.

217. Performing arts support students with learning difficulties although only two support teachers were seen. Particularly good work was seen in a Year 11 class and the individual work of some GCSE candidates. Students demonstrate the department's commitment to equal opportunities of access. Similarly, good progress is seen in a range of extra-curricular

activities, where students of all abilities gain the opportunity to excel. Such progress is a great credit to the department of which they may be justifiably proud. In general the performing arts department makes an enormous contribution to the ethos of the college, especially in its range of developing extra-curricular activities.

218. Students' attitudes, behaviour and responsiveness in performing arts classes are only very occasionally less than satisfactory and often very good. Most students get on with the task in hand, well aware of their teachers' high expectations, be they in terms of ethos, organisation or the artistic aspects of the work. Consequently, the challenges presented by caring and committed teachers inspire good or very good responses from students. There is a clear pattern of very good learning as students become accustomed to the high expectations made clear through very good teaching. The commitment and conviction of very well qualified staff dedicated to the support of their students is very good and carries them forward where others might be deterred or simply give up. Very good and excellent teaching in performing arts is a strength of the college: never less than satisfactory, it is commonly good and consistently very good. It is characterised by carefully controlled energy, commitment and dynamism; constantly sharing learning objectives with students and testing that they are met; by monitoring work in progress and regularly reviewing and assessing students finished work. Work is very carefully planned, prepared and presented to cater for a variety of needs and is consequently well received. The commitment of students which these qualities of teaching inspire is evident in students' focus upon work and their growing facility, reflecting the broad and substantial experience of the staff. The work of the head of department for performing arts in giving a very clear lead in this commitment is very good. Teachers have very high expectations of good attitudes, behaviour and other interpersonal skills which promote good social and moral education whilst the diversity of origins, styles and periods of music and the arts seen and heard secures considerable cultural experience.

219. The present range of assessment patterns is encouraging but could be substantially improved with more rigorous application of the very sharply focused criteria now recommended. This is especially important in establishing secure baseline assessments on entry in Year 7 (not yet done) and in clearly establishing students' progress by the end of Year 9. Monitoring of students' progress in individual classes is generally good in performing arts. Currently, many students in Years 7 to 9 are not really aware of their own standing in terms of attainment or progress when making important choices. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is much more reliable and support students' progress in their courses.

220. Very many good qualities are seen in this very well-led department. There is a good spirit of partnership and purpose amongst both the full-time staff, visiting instrumental teachers and others which promote the sharing of ideas, their regular review and a consistency (without conformity) of approach, e.g. expectations of very high standards of behaviour, demeanour and productivity; good models given to students by the very high standards which staff set for themselves. These features should give staff confidence to work more collaboratively with other departments in ways which may offer opportunities for resolving some of the difficulties of curriculum balance. However, there is on entry in either Year 7 or Year 10 some lack of rigour in the criterion referencing and self-evaluation of both students and staff to ensure the match of aims and outcomes, especially in terms of added value. Performance Management in terms of class observations by the senior management team and within the department is outstanding, very well conducted and reported.

221. Many students contribute to a wide range of artistic activities both in college and in the surrounding community. Participation rates in college activities are good and there is a good range of LEA and privately run groups in which students of the college have the opportunity to take part.



222. There is only one full-time class teacher for each of music, dance and drama. There are eight visiting instrumental teachers. In relation to the curriculum demands, this is just adequate for present needs but may prove insufficient to meet the college's potential. Whilst the qualifications, experience and expertise are presently very good or excellent they need continuing development and support if they are to be sustained.

## **EXPRESSIVE ARTS (GCSE)**

### **Strengths**

- This non-statutory course fulfils the needs of a significant number of students;
- Teaching is very good in a number of ways.
- Very good progress in learning.
- The quality of student/teacher and student/student relationships is very good, showing care and consideration for each others' contributions and value of each others' work and opinions.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Development of baseline assessment in Year 10 on entry, the better to judge, monitor and evaluate the evident added value.

224. This non-statutory GCSE course is offered as an option, beginning in Year 10. It is therefore a new experience both for students already in this college and those entering the college in Year 10 from Roundhills. It clearly fulfils the needs of a significant number of students, currently 28 candidates in the present Year 11 cohort.

225. The very good standards of the best work seen across the ability range are due to the careful attention given by the teacher to very detailed planning and presentation of lessons. These support all students across a very wide range of abilities within the group. Well-graduated learning objectives are made clear to all the students at the beginning of each unit of work and reinforced in the lesson where progress is carefully monitored on an individual basis. Marking is particularly detailed, sensitively supportive and positive in its recommendations for improvement.

226. Teaching is very good. The teacher's very well developed specialist knowledge, skills and experience combine with very high expectations to provide a very effective working environment in a variety of different classrooms. Under the teacher's expert direction, students encounter a very rich, culturally diverse range and variety of art-works: of different media, styles and periods. Both teacher and students explore the various impacts of these upon them, examining in detail the several factors that contribute to the effect of the art-works studied: the media used; the resources involved; the skills applied by either the creator or the presenter of the work; the genre or style; the structure, form, motifs and techniques involved. Students are highly motivated and clearly enjoy their work. Their attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### **Strengths**

- The quality and range of teaching strategies used to promote independence, leadership and a greater understanding of sporting activities;
- The leadership and management of the department promotes high standards and clear educational direction through curriculum policies and guidelines;
- Curriculum planning, learning resources and examination procedures;
- The extra curricular activities programme allowing students to attain high standards.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Further development of the assessment procedures and the involvement of students in their own assessment;
- Strategies to identify students attainment on entry and the more effective tracking of students throughout the college.

228. There is no data available relating to the level of attainment of students in physical education when they enter the college. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in 2002, show that 77 per cent of students have attained level five or above, which is broadly in line with the national average. Evidence from the inspection indicates that by the time students reach Year 9, attainment is above national levels of expectation. GCSE physical education results show that 55 per cent of students gain A\* to C grades which is also in line with the national average. There is no teacher assessment data available at the end of Year 11. Evidence from the inspection indicates that attainment at the end of Year 11 is in line with national levels of expectation. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

229. Students make good progress as they move from Years 7 to 9. In Year 7 the attainment of students in gymnastic activities is in line with national averages, with some students being able to refine, repeat and perform extended, complex sequences with both continuity and flow. As students move through the college the standard of games playing ability, in rugby in particular, are above national expectations. In rugby, students are able to work together successfully, and very effectively create a 'maul' during game situations. Students are also able to adopt the role of coach, during these lessons, demonstrating very high levels of communication and leadership skills. In Year 10 students do not make the same amount of progress as in previous years. However, during Year 11 students once again make good progress in practical activities, such as netball and volleyball. As a result of the different teaching strategies used, students are able to work independently during skill practice activities, providing very good support and guidance for others. They are able to demonstrate a good understanding of a variety of techniques involved in volleyball, developed as the result of peer group teaching activities, which also have very positive effects upon increasing students' independence and the raising of their self-esteem. During examination lessons students effectively enter into discussions and are able to relate these discussions effectively to a variety of sporting situations. Written work is of a satisfactory standard, with a variety of teaching strategies being adopted to promote learning and an effective marking policy in place. In extra curricular activities students are able to demonstrate very good levels of attainment in a variety of sports such as football and rugby.

230. Teaching in physical education, across both key stages is always good or very good, with the exception of two satisfactory lessons and one excellent lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and use this to provide students with a variety of challenging

activities. Their planning shows good progression and clearly identifies the learning objectives for the lesson. In the lessons that are of a satisfactory standard the choice of activities are either inappropriate or the progressions are too quick. The pace of teaching in lessons is good with students being given appropriate amounts of time to consolidate their learning and improve their skills. Students' learning is often reinforced through the effective review of learning objectives at the end of the lesson. Teachers also effectively apply appropriate strategies to relate to the different learning styles of the students and also make good use of question and answer techniques. Students are not however, involved in their own assessment during lessons or aware of their level of attainment. They often demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning, responding well to their teachers and peers. Students with special educational needs also learn and progress well.

231. The management of the department is very good with very effective use being made of the physical education technician. Departmental documentation, policies and guidelines provide very clear direction for curriculum development and effectively identify future targets. The examination procedures and programme are well organised and learning resources are of a very good quality. The variety of teaching styles and strategies employed to promote effective learning are effectively integrated and embedded into schemes of work. The provision for literacy is good, with the good use of key words, discussion and displays, however more needs to be done in the provision of planned strategies for the inclusion of numeracy in the physical education curriculum. The extra curricular provision provides extensive opportunities for all students to engage in a variety of activities, including inter tutor group and inter college competitions.

232. Since the last inspection the range of teaching styles and strategies has been modified, to provide better progression and more challenge. The statutory requirements of the national curriculum are being met more effectively and the development of gymnastic and other learning resources has improved.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Head of department's leadership, management, subject knowledge and capacity for hard work
- Quality of teaching, which has a positive impact on students' learning, attitudes and behaviour
- Ethos of the department; staff form an effective team with a sense of common purpose
- Quality of relationships between students and teachers
- Contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is very good
- The principal, who is very supportive of the subject and has provided the department with a base, stable staffing and additional funding

### Areas for development

- Continue to raise standards through developing assessment to monitor students' learning; use results to inform future teaching and learning and set targets for improvement
- Continue to improve teaching and learning to achieve a consistently good standard of teaching across the whole department
- Continue the development of materials for low attaining students, those with SEN and of extension activities for more able students
- Continue to develop the use of ICT and enrichment activities
- Retain if possible present staff to secure continuity and development of subject teaching experience

234. At the end of both key stages levels of attainment are in line with local and national expectations and are improving. A minority of students attains below expectations due to a combination of limited subject knowledge on entry to the college and underdeveloped literacy skills. Students make good progress and the present Year 11, the first cohort to take the GCSE short course, produced creditable results in their Year 10 assessments and trial examination. 85 per cent of students achieved at, above or within one level of Yellis predictions. Those who achieved below predictions were assiduously followed up individually and the majority has made demonstrable progress in the interim period. Carousel arrangements with ICT meant that some students received no teaching in religious education in the six weeks prior to the trial examination and this had a considerable impact on results.

235. At end of Year 11, students know that Christians have different viewpoints on social and moral issues, for example abortion and demonstrate understanding of pro-life and pro-choice arguments. In Year 11, they show understanding that believers' actions and attitudes are related to their faith, for example in giving to charities such as Muslim Aid. Year 9 students grasp the relationship of faith to living through study of the Ten Boom family's story and Year 7 students understand how Jesus reinforced his teaching about justice and equality through his actions, for example in encounters with Zacchaeus and the adulterous woman. Year 8 students show good knowledge of the Exodus and Passover when studying the Last Supper and are able to make connections between these events.

236. All teaching and learning are at least satisfactory; in two-thirds of lessons it is good or very good and on occasion excellent. Teaching is strength of the department; it has a positive impact on students' learning, progress, attitudes to and behaviour in the subject. In the best lessons a secure learning climate is established, detailed planning ensures good pace and the variety of strategies employed enables students of all abilities to make progress. Relationships are very good; students are well managed and respond positively to teachers' high expectations, for example in working to meet targets for improvement following assessments. Where teaching is satisfactory there are elements of good practice but the teaching methodology employed limits progress. On occasions teachers need to be more demanding of students' behaviour to ensure that appropriate levels of attention and application to work are maintained. The quality of learning reflects students' interest and response to the teaching. Students' learn best when they encounter issues and concepts in ways that engage them, challenge their thinking and allow opportunities for discussion with peers. Over time students' understanding deepens and they are able to make connections, for example between believers' faith and their value systems, attitudes and behaviour. Increasingly students know how well they are doing and are given guidance for improvement using attainment levels and targets. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory to good progress and extension tasks to challenge more able students need continued development. Students' have positive attitudes to the subject and in three-quarters of lessons their behaviour is good to excellent. Students show interest in the content, demonstrate a willingness to think and apply themselves to work conscientiously. They relate well to teachers and respond positively to high expectations of the quality of their work. Students collaborate well and respond willingly in a variety of learning situations. They demonstrate the capacity to reflect and are respectful of the beliefs and values of others. Students take responsibility for their learning when given opportunities; for example homework assignments involving research and increased opportunities for use of ICT in lessons could be developed.

237. Leadership and management of the department are very good. In the two years the head of department has been in post she has worked very hard to improve curricular provision, create an effective team and support non-specialist colleagues, all of which are having a positive impact teaching, learning and standards of attainment. The departmental

action plan is clearly focused on raising standards and identifies appropriate priorities for development. It would benefit from identification of evaluation procedures to assess the impact of developments on standards. The department would also benefit from an increase in curricular time in Years 10 and 11 to facilitate delivery of the exam syllabus and from a cessation of the carousel system which adversely affects the performance of those students who have ICT in the weeks preceding examinations in religious education.

238. Improvement since the last inspection is significant. All issues identified have been addressed effectively and the principal has demonstrated a clear commitment to improving provision in RE, which now needs to be extended to include post 16 students. The department clearly has the capacity to improve further under the guidance of the present head of department.

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

239. In the inspection, 14 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

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

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	42	62	82	24	15		1.51
Biology	36	67		22			
Chemistry	21	90		38			
Computer Studies	4	100	74	0	13	1.75	1.75
Geography	1	100	74	0	6	1.00	1.18
French	8	75		37.5	.		5.59
German	1	100	82	-	13	1.00	1.85

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	12	100	87	50	43	6.5	5.8
Biology	13	100	88	39	34	3.9	5.25
Chemistry	7	100	90	57	43	4.8	5.9
Physics	8	100	88	38	40	6.3	5.67
Full Design and Technology	11	89	91	11	30	5.1	5.38
Economics	4	100	36	100	89		5.52
Computer Studies	4	100	74	0	13	4.3	1.75
Sports/PE Studies	1	100	92	100	25	6.8	5.09
Art and Design	6	83	96	0	46	3.3	6.57
Geography	7	86	92	57	38	6.6	5.74
History	1	100	88	0	35		5.45
Sociology	22	100	87	36	34		5.30
English Literature	21	95	95	10	37	3.8	5.91
Communication Studies	17	94	93	59	31	6.8	5.53
French	3	100	89	33	38		5.59

German	5	40	91		40	0.8	5.81
General Studies	10	80	85	20	30	3.4	4.91

### ***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Business	17	88	n/a	44			

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

#### **Mathematics**

242. Overall, the quality of provision for mathematics in the sixth form is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good and promotes good learning by students.
- Achievement of students is supported by very good assessment procedures.
- Standards in A-level courses are above national averages.
- Text book resources are good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning.
- Initial guidance and support for some students starting courses in the sixth form.
- Further development of number work for the key skills element of the sixth form

243. The inspection covered the A-level course offered by the school which includes modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In addition, the re-sit GCSE course for those who did not gain grade C in Year 11 was also inspected. It was not possible to observe a scheduled lesson for higher attaining students who volunteer to take further mathematics during the period of the inspection but these students were present in observed lessons in Years 12 and 13. The school has focussed on the development of communication skills in the key skills qualification during the current school year. Foundations have been laid for the development of number skills but these require further development.

244. The mathematics department does well for its sixth-form students. Over recent years, they have gained results in line with or above national averages. In 2002 at A-level all students passed with the proportion of A and B grades above the national average. This represents good achievement, given the average standards of students when they start the course. Students who had taken the intermediate tier of GCSE in 2001 are predicted to reach high grades in 2003 A-level examinations. The take-up of mathematics by female is lower than male students in the current year but these proportions have varied from year to year and their results are similar. Minority ethnic students do well overall. In 2001, AS results were comparable with national averages but dropped below them in 2002. The department has

addressed this problem during the current year with appropriate advice to potential mathematics students and support during Year 12.

245. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders confirms the effectiveness of teaching in both Years 12 and 13. The overall quality of students' oral and written work is above national averages. Male and female students do equally well. They have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work in developing a topic - for example, when using calculus to deal with more complicated algebraic expressions and in dealing with past examination questions on trigonometrical expressions. In several lessons the students were able to use calculus and link this with algebraic work and graphical presentation. Similarly, vector methods in geometry are linked with the motion of objects in mechanics.

246. Students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics course in the sixth form often find the work difficult but their results in 2002 were in line with national averages for the higher grades A\* to C. Students considered past examination questions on right angled triangles and aspects of probability in an observed lesson. Weaknesses in prior knowledge on both these topics and a lack of commitment by a minority of students retarded learning.

247. Teaching is good overall. Students learn well on the AS and A-level courses because the teaching is good. It is carefully planned and lessons always have clear objectives. Teachers structure lessons well, keep up a fast pace and provide high levels of challenge. It is based on a secure knowledge of mathematics and how it is taught. Lessons start with an initial task to promote revision of previous work within a time limit. Students have the opportunity to work in pairs and they take the opportunity to do this constructively. In all lessons, students are highly motivated, work hard and are prepared to think for themselves. Students are prepared to ask questions of their teachers and to respond to teachers' questions. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students' work is marked on a regular basis with directions for further improvement. While some aspects of ICT work are available to students in mechanics and the use of graphic calculators, mathematics is aware that this aspect of work requires further development.

248. The teaching of the GCSE group is satisfactory and provides revision of examination questions. More attention should be given to impress on students the importance of this work.

249. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. Teachers are enthusiastic, committed to improvement and work well together. Classes have paired teachers and this ensures consistency of approach, good collaboration and monitoring of the teaching by the head of department. Assessment procedures are very good, students are aware of predicted grades and this has a good motivating effect on them.

## **Biology**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively which results in good learning.
- The teachers know their students well and they provide good support for students of all abilities.
- Students have good attitudes to their learning.

### **Areas for improvement**

- To use ICT fully in the collection, processing and interpretation of data and to model biological systems to predict outcomes of intervention and change.





251. In 2001 there was an improvement in A2 examination standards with the number of students achieving the highest grades (A – B) about the national average. Consistently more students than the national average achieve a pass grade (A – E). In the latest A2 examination there has been further improvement in the number of students achieving the highest grades. From the work seen in the current Year 13 the majority of students continue to work to standards that achieve the higher pass grades. This is an improvement since the last OFSTED inspection. Similar success is also reflected in the standards now achieved by students in the recently introduced AS Level examinations. Male and female students and students from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well but there are far fewer male students studying this subject.

252. Written work shows that students have a good command of all the elements of the course, ranging through cell biology, zoology and plant physiology. Their achievements are good. They can interpret data from field observations showing an in-depth understanding of the accuracy and relevance of the data gathered. They have good practical skills arising from a sound background of knowledge and prior experience. In Year 12 practical work, for example, the students skilfully design and set up experiments to investigate the rate of oxygen production on the exposure of a fixed volume of hydrogen peroxide to an increasing surface area of raw potato and hence the amount of catalysing enzyme present. In Year 13, for example, the students understand the use of Benedict's solution as a qualitative glucose indicator. Using this knowledge they can skilfully perform a quantitative titration, analyse the data for error and calculate the amount of glucose present in a solution.

253. The quality of teaching is good. It is the synergy between the teachers' skills and enthusiasm and the students' interest that leads to good learning and progress in this subject. Students of all abilities are well supported as individuals. Students complete their work with care and attention to accuracy and detail. They extend their learning through additional individual research. The quality of learning is also enhanced through the provision of a challenging practical experience. Very good teaching was seen in a Year 13 practical lesson on quantitative analysis. An enthusiastic and highly skilled teacher facilitated very effective learning through good preparation, clear guidance and good support while the students were engaged in their practical work.

254. The students are confident and motivated. They value the stimulating learning environment that adds to their quality of learning because they can interact with the teachers and other students to discuss issues of interest and further develop their understanding and appreciation of the subject. They believe that the quality of their learning is good and they are fully confident that it will enable them to achieve their ambitions.

255. There is a good scheme of work that ensures continuity and quality in learning as the students' progress through the course. However many opportunities are missed to improve the quality of learning through the use of ICT to directly monitor experiments, plot and interpret data and use computer modelling to predict the outcomes of change in biological systems. The students' work is monitored regularly and the standard of assessment and monitoring of the students' progress is very good. Helpful and supportive comments are given which enable the students to identify their weaknesses and improve further. The students feel that they are well informed about the progress they are making with their work. Support for continued learning out of formal lessons is good.

256. The head of faculty manages this subject to a good standard but the subject lacks the additional vitality that a specialist coordinator can bring to the quality of teaching at advanced level. However the teachers work well as a team to ensure continuity in learning. A team of technicians provide good support for learning through the maintenance and management of the more advanced equipment required for these courses.

## CHEMISTRY

257. The quality of provision in chemistry in the sixth form is **good**.

### Strengths

- The standard of teaching is good.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- Students are dedicated to their studies.
- Students of all abilities and interests are well supported.
- Thorough assessment and monitoring of students' progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Further Opportunities to use ICT fully in the collection, processing and interpretation of data.

258. Over the previous four years the standards achieved in A Level examinations have been variable with the number of students attaining the highest grades (A – B) and pass grades (A – E) at times falling below the national average. In 2001 the number of students achieving the highest grades was below the national average. The number of students achieving a pass grade was again below the national average. However in the latest A2 examinations, with a larger group, the number of students passing with the highest grades was above the national average and all the students achieved a pass grade. Similar success is also reflected in the standards now achieved by students in the recently introduced AS Level examinations.

259. From the work seen in the sixth form overall standards are above expectations and students' achieve well. In Year 13, the majority of students continue to work to a standard that is well within the requirements of the course and the grades achieved in 2002. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. There are more male than female students taking this course. Male students achieve better than female students. There is no difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds.

260. In Year 12, for example, students carry out test tube investigations of a variety of ionic reactions to identify the energy changes. They recognise exothermic and endothermic reactions and correctly interpret their observations using energy level diagrams. In Year 13, for example, the students understand oxidation numbers and how to use them to balance reduction – oxidation reactions. They have done this with potassium permanganate/ iron (2) sulphate reactions. Using this knowledge they can set up an experiment to determine how much iron is present in iron supplement tablets. They skilfully perform the titration and accurately complete the calculations.

261. The quality of teaching is good. Students of all abilities are well supported as individuals. Their work is completed with care and attention to accuracy and detail. Students extend their learning through additional individual research. Good teaching was seen in a Year 13 practical investigation. The lesson was prepared well and the teacher gave the students clear instructions and background information. This enabled them to work independently on their experiments and to gain the maximum knowledge and skills from their experience. The terminology describing the chemical processes was used effectively.

262. It is a combination of the students' dedication and interest and the pace, rigour and advanced preparation of the lessons that lead to good learning in this subject. The teachers know their subject well and they teach with enthusiasm and commitment. The teachers know

their students well and they all receive encouragement and support appropriate to their interests and abilities. Lessons are taught with sufficient depth to challenge and extend the learning of the highest attaining students. The students are motivated and involved with their studies. They work independently when required to do so to research their studies. They work very well together in practical sessions, supporting each other in their learning. The students value the stimulating learning environment that adds to their quality of learning because they can interact with the teachers and other students to discuss issues of interest and further develop their understanding and appreciation of the subject. They believe that the quality of their learning is good and they are fully confident that it will enable them to achieve their ambitions.

263. Theoretical elements of the course are taught well and to a good standard. The students' practical experience is good and further challenges their scientific thinking whilst developing their skills of experimental enquiry, data analysis and interpretation. Support for continued learning out of formal lessons is good. Analysis of their work reveals that ICT is not used fully to enhance the students' understanding, interpretation and presentation of data and to monitor experiments by direct sampling through sensors.

264. There is a good scheme of work that ensures continuity and quality in learning as the students' progress through the course. The students' work is marked regularly. There are frequent tests and the standard of assessment and monitoring of the students' progress is very good. Helpful and supportive comments are given which enable the students to identify their weaknesses and improve further.

265. The head of faculty leads this subject well. A team of technicians generally provide good support for learning through the maintenance and management of the more advanced equipment required for these courses. However an error during the inspection impeded the quality of learning in one practical lesson when the students were provided with the wrong reagent as a consequence of incorrect labelling.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **DESIGN TECHNOLOGY**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experiences.
- The level and commitment in teaching.
- The display of work is excellent.

#### **Areas for improvement.**

- The use of computers for recording of work and the use of computer aided design.

267. The department offers courses at AS and A level in product design and resistant materials. The numbers taking courses are appropriate and the option is popular in Years 12 and 13. Most of those who begin the AS course, complete the year and take the examination. The average point score shows that students achieve standards in line with national averages in 2001.

268. The standard of work seen during the inspection is good in Years 12 and 13. Students are achieving good standards in relation to predictions based on GCSE results when they came into Year 12. Students make good use of their research and investigation skills and their project folders show attention to detail in the presentation of detail. In lessons students demonstrate good levels of practical skills and can use tools, equipment and processes with confidence. Students produce good design folders and practical work to a high specification.

269. The standard of students work seen meets the demands of the course requirements. In the sessions observed, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In the lessons seen students drew well on their knowledge of design and meeting the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge and understanding well and apply it effectively.

270. Students learn very quickly. They make very rapid progress, concentrating hard and taking pride in producing high quality work under pressure. This results from teaching which is consistently very good. It has a high impact on students work and generates very good learning. Lessons are well planned and organised. They proceed at a good pace and students respond to the challenge when asked to produce high – quality work in the time available.

271. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experiences. In the practical lessons seen, students learnt skills and techniques of cutting, shaping, machining and joining different materials and fabrics. Their skills improved through practice. They rose to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. In the lessons time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion, this was seen in a lesson where they investigated the use and application of different manufacturing processes.

272. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching seen were clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers had a good knowledge of their subjects and used this well in questioning and the tasks set. The lessons provided opportunities for students to practice what had been discussed and their skills and techniques improved as the sessions progressed. In the lessons students had opportunities to carry out detailed research working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. The Teacher drew together their ideas and provided explanations. Students responded confidently to the activities. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it. Their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.

273. The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being very well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflected the course requirement and determined the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance through review, evaluation and assessment is well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused. There is a very good level of display of work in classrooms and the open areas around the department and this contributes considerably to student interest and the development of ideas. Better use needs to be made of the computers available in the department for the design and manufacture of projects.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

274. Overall, the quality of provision in business studies in the sixth form is **good**.

275. For present students' standards of work are above average and their achievements are good. From work seen, the vast majority of are performing at levels that are in accord with their potential. All students have a good knowledge and understanding of business terminology, methods and models. In a GNVQ Intermediate class on personal finance students show a clear and reasoned appreciation of relevant factors such as interest rates, benefits and accessibility. All work enthusiastically, with about half are working at the level of merit or distinction. Many students use the GNVQ as a progression route to the AVCE, where their knowledge and understanding develop well. They use the programme of visits to industry to produce data subsequently used in assessed work. A recent visit to the Peugeot car factory brought direct insights and observations by students into classes on the GNVQ and AVCE courses. In two Year 12 AVCE classes they used their practical knowledge of industry gained during a recent visit to the Peugeot car factory. They can distinguish clearly between ideas and practices of quality control and quality assurance. They also show a good understanding of the central concepts involved in market competitiveness. In a Year 13 class they use experience of the same industrial visit to develop and illustrate styles of leadership, including a good appreciation of comparative cultural factors. All students on both programmes have a good understanding of modern business structures and systems and of the surrounding environments. They have a good command of analogous vocabularies of social psychology and economics.

276. Students make good progress within and between courses. They are producing reports and assignments that are at or approaching a commercial standard. The students produce the reports using word processing, spreadsheets and graphic illustration. Often they pattern primary and secondary data skilfully through the use of MS Excel, using a variety of appropriate illustrative techniques. They progressively develop skills of working together. By the first year of AVCE, students work particularly well in small teams, and a Year 12 class in a brainstorming activity displayed their willingness to develop and learn from each other. Overall, students are well motivated. They take pride in their work, especially their assignments and portfolios and are happy to accept further challenge. Many of them participate in the Young Enterprise scheme which adds new dimensions and responsibilities to their programme of study overall.

277. The quality of teaching across the GNVQ and AVCE courses is uniformly good. Several consistent key strengths contribute positively to student learning. Teachers prepare well. They produce very good work sheets and specimen documents that are models of good business practice that students proceed to emulate. Expectations are high and challenges are carefully planned to be within the reach of individual students. A particular related strength is that several teachers use their extended knowledge of economics and social psychology to develop students' further understanding. For example, a Year 13 AVCE class encouraged students to think beyond a purely business analysis of the operational environment s of multinational companies. They were asked to consider deeper macro-economic concepts applicable to global trade and also to consider the influence that national cultures have on leadership roles.

278. Teachers consistently develop students' literacy skills through the precise use of business language and through the close attention paid to verbal and written expression. The detailed marking consistently contains clear suggestions as to how to improve performance.

279. Teachers know their students well and use assessment and related data to assist students develop high and achievable targets for improvement. This encourages students to prepare accurate and critical self assessments. There is a good amount of recent business experience in the departmental team. Frequently they use this direct knowledge of the world of work to enliven presentations and students respond well to this strategy.

280. Leadership and management is very good. Courses are well documented and students' programmes of study are well organised Teachers work well together and regularly share their experience of concerning individuals and cohorts to revise and improve strategies. The team regularly evaluates these strategies and general progress, but the process of development is hampered by lack of a defined baseroom for staff. Taken overall, the range of provision offers good opportunity for students to develop and progress.

## **ECONOMICS**

281. Overall the quality of provision in economics in the sixth form is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Students make good progress over time.
- The department is well led.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Raise standards above the national average.

282. The team decided to do a formal assessment of Economics, although this is extra to contractual agreements. Two classes were inspected and a small sample of student work assessed.

283. Economics is available as an A level course in Years 12 and 13. National comparisons for recent results are not available owing to the small number of students previously enrolled. However, in aggregate and from work seen current students are performing at the national average.

284. For present students, standards of work are good. From work seen students are performing at levels that are in accord with their potential. All students have a good knowledge and understanding of the distinctive terminology, methods and models of Economics. They have a good understanding of the structure and operation of the national and regional aspects of the UK economy, of the European Community and of the different types of economy to be observed in the developing world. In a Year 13 class 'Guess the Country' they use macro economic data and social and cultural indicators to determine and categorise economies. They are able to isolate the key differences in political structures and policies that influence the progress of various national economies. They work well together.

285. They make good progress over time with Year 12 students showing a clear understanding of business models, of markets, government and trans-national factors in national and world economic situations. By Year 13, students show a deeper understanding of complex concepts such as market failure and its causes. They readily understand the

range of factors influencing the labour market and can discuss the social, economic and cultural aspects of labour mobility. Most have developed at least good and sometimes very good information technology skills of presentation which go well beyond the formal requirements of the A level syllabus. Their use of MS Excel is often inventive, with students transferring economic data freely from websites to spreadsheets and graphs. They work well with their peers, showing respect for the ideas of others and use these insights constructively. Students are well motivated. They take pride in their work, especially their assignments and portfolios and are happy to accept further challenge

286. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers prepare well and consistently offer high levels of challenge to students. The detailed marking contains clear suggestions as to how to improve performance. Teachers know their students well and use assessment and related data to assist students develop high and achievable targets for improvement.

287. Leadership and management is very good. Teachers work well together and regularly share their experience of concerning individuals and cohorts to revise and improve strategies. Courses are well documented, students' programmes of study are well organised

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

288. Overall, the provision of IT in the sixth form is **satisfactory**

### **Strengths**

- Teaching staff are enthusiastic and conscientious.
- There is good teaching
- Students' attitudes are good
- IT at A level is attracting increasing numbers of students

### **Areas for improvement**

- Standards of attainment
- Entry requirements for the subject at AS level to make sure that students who enter have the capacity to at least pass
- The use of curriculum materials to promote independent learning
- Access to resources for information technology outside IT lessons

289. In 2002 examinations results were well below national averages. This was an exceptional year that bucked a trend of results over several years and was due to a misunderstanding by the department of the examination board's requirements. Since that time the college has consulted the examination board and the adviser from the local education authority, has changed the coursework and has provided a very good project support pack of materials that includes exemplars provided by the board. This response to the poor results is an appropriate response to the situation and evidence from the inspection indicates that examination coursework now conforms closely to the examination board's requirements and that students are making good progress in their courses.

290. In the classroom standards are below average. Students are making good progress as few have had the advantage of studying information technology in depth prior to enrolling



on the AS course. At the beginning and during courses teachers have to spend a lot of time teaching the basics of applications.

291. By Year 13 students are making good progress in areas of knowledge and understanding required by the syllabus. All students including those with special educational needs are also making good progress acquiring and applying spreadsheet and database skills to their projects. Their choices of local projects are varied and offer good challenge in system development.

292. Teaching in the sixth form is good. The small team has good subject knowledge that is shared with students effectively. Detailed planning leads to a well-structured course that complies well with the examination syllabus. There is good support for students in their choice of focus for projects that are based on local real life situations. These generally provide a good level of challenge. Teachers develop productive working relationships and give up a lot of their time to help students at lunchtime and after college. They use question and answer effectively to test and to extend learning. One particularly effective method is the posing of little problems as the lesson progresses. This engages interest as well as providing constant challenge.

293. The management of IT in the sixth form is satisfactory. The department has acquired a good range of good quality text books and the computers available in curriculum time are of sound quality. However, there is poor access for students to the machines out of this time to consolidate and reinforce learning. The department does not sufficiently promote the use of independent learning resources such as on line tutorials though teachers are developing good quality support materials that are available over the network. The induction of the newly qualified subject specialist has been effective and he is receiving good support.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

294. Overall, provision for physical education in the sixth form is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good.
- Attainment is good.
- Students work hard and behave well..

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Students are not given enough opportunities for extended writing.

295. Since the last inspection both AS and A2 physical education examinations have been introduced. Comparison between the schools' results and national data is difficult due to the size of the groups sitting the exams. Evidence from this inspection, however, indicates that the attainment of students in these two examination cohorts is good. Teachers provide students with very good learning opportunities. Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding during theory lessons. They are able, for instance, to describe the process and effects on the body of the partial pressure of gases and the pathway of gases around the body. They are also able to identify and describe to other students, during group presentations, the way in which sport has been developed in different countries during comparative studies.

296. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons very well. They also make good use of a range of teaching strategies to promote independent learning. The pace of teaching and the relationship of theory into the practical context are very well addressed. Overall the quality of the students' course work is good, with some research projects being produced as the result of the very effective use of ICT, although more opportunities need to be created for extended writing. The examination procedures and course organisation are very good including the procedures for setting individual targets and monitoring students' progress

297. The students' behaviour is always good. They are well organised and show positive attitudes towards one another. They focus their attention and sustain their efforts very well.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **ART**

298. Provision for art and design in the sixth form is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- The very good knowledge and understanding of the subject held by the well established and experienced teachers.
- The very good quality of individual guidance for students.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Raise the profile of art and design as an A level option and as a viable career route.
- Increase opportunities for students to present and evaluate their work.

299. Standards of attainment by Year 13 in the work seen are in line with expectations. Achievement is good with the majority of students improving on their performance at GCSE. 'A' level results over recent years have been generally below or well below average and variable due to the small numbers of students involved. Current work includes several good examples of large paintings showing a good sense of design and colour. Higher attainers achieve very well in exploring a good range of media and ideas that are well documented in their sketchbooks. Others are more restricted in the range and scale of their work and their supporting studies often show little progression in ideas.

300. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Relationships within the groups are constructive and students work well together in informal situations. Higher attainers benefit from the different teaching styles and expertise of the two teachers and are confident to select what they need to move forward. Others are more hesitant but none the less are willing to learn. By Year 13 all students show increasing independence in the development of their work and many are exploring emotive and challenging themes. Questions of image and identity are explored through studies of figures, both directly and through the works of artists, resulting in strong expressive paintings. Students' cultural development is promoted well through the wide range of artists' works that they encounter in their researches and through visits to local and London galleries. They enjoy their art and design work and the large majority plan to continue their studies in further or higher education.

301. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of art and design enabling them to support students across a wide range of aspects of the subject. The very good individual guidance given to students encourages their personal development through reflection in depth on topics of personal

interest. However there are insufficient opportunities for students to talk about their work in formal presentations to their peers. Individual discussions and reviews keep students well informed about how well they are doing and set appropriate targets. Teachers need to be aware that, despite regular collaborations, some students find their advice to be contradictory and do not have the confidence to question it. The students make creative use of a good range of basic materials and processes but provision for printmaking and digital art is very limited.

302. Leadership and management of art and design in the sixth form are good. The new line management within the design faculty is well placed to guide the development of art and design and build on the existing strengths of the department. The two teachers share a wealth of knowledge and experience that enables them to support students very effectively according to their individual interests and preferences. Opportunities for further professional development are limited by financial restraints and this is slowing the introduction of new media including ICT. The number of students choosing art and design as a sixth form subject is low, limiting the opportunities for students to learn from each other. The leadership should consider ways of promoting the subject as a viable career pathway through increased contact with artists and designers.

303. Improvement since the last inspection cannot be assessed due to insufficient reference in the previous report.

## **MEDIA STUDIES**

304. Overall, the provision for media studies in the sixth form is **good**

### **Strengths**

- Results in 2001 A-level examinations were well above average, although they fell slightly in 2002.
- Teaching by the specialist is very good and leads to very good learning.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject and this contributes to their achievement.
- The curriculum is very good and makes a particularly good contribution to students' personal development.
- The department is very well led and managed, particularly in the support for and monitoring of non-specialist staff.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The current staffing crisis means that students are being taught by non-specialists for a proportion of the time and this is affecting their progress.
- Some marking does not correct spelling and grammatical errors and does not focus clearly enough on how students can improve their work.

305. Media studies in the sixth form, is a relatively new subject and was first examined in 2001 when results were well above average. Girls performed better than boys and students achieved significantly better results than in their other subjects. Girls from an Asian heritage performed best of all. Results in 2002 fell slightly but this is partly because numbers increased, from 17 to 33 candidates, and students of a more varied attainment profile took the subject.

306. The attainment of students currently in the sixth form is broadly average but a significant proportion of students achieves well above average standards. GCSE results in

Year 11 are well above average but many of the highest attaining students leave to college to continue their studies elsewhere. Early work by Year 12 students tends to be descriptive but as students progress through the course they develop a good knowledge and understanding of the subject's technical terminology and good analytical and evaluative skills. These were shown in a Year 13 lesson when students used their knowledge of filmic techniques in their analysis and comparison of clips from the two versions of 'Psycho'. Students display very good knowledge of directors and the influences on them. They also develop a good understanding of the important role of the media and the way in which it reflects and manipulates the world around them. Most students have good standards of literacy and write fluently and confidently. However, some work by lower attaining students contains many spelling and grammatical errors, which are not always highlighted by their teachers. Students with special educational needs are given very good support and achieve well.

307. The quality of teaching overall is good although there is a wide variation between specialist and non-specialist teaching. Teaching observed during the inspection ranged from very good to satisfactory. The very good lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teacher and students which establishes a very good climate for learning. The teacher's subject knowledge is extensive and provides a firm basis for challenging and stimulating lessons. Discussions are lively and relevant to students' lives, which further engage their interest. There is good development of the skills which enable students to become discerning and discriminating consumers of the media. In all lessons, teachers aim to broaden and deepen students' own views and opinions. There are numerous references to other media texts and to the historical, social and cultural contexts in which they operate. When teaching is less effective, although still satisfactory, the teacher's relative insecurity with the subject content leads to too much teacher talk and limited opportunities for students to develop their own ideas and opinions. However, very good support by the head of department through clear planning, and very well prepared booklets and other resources ensures a good focus on the requirements of the examination and this underpins students' confidence. The marking of students' written work needs a more consistent approach. The best is very good, with continuous reference to assessment objectives and full comments identifying strengths and areas where students might improve. On the other hand, some marking was observed which corrects neither grammar nor the spelling of familiar or technical words. Students are not, in some pieces of work, shown how to improve and are given a false sense of security about standards. Students display very good attitudes towards the subject. They work hard and concentrate well. Students enjoy their lessons and contribute enthusiastically to discussions. They like the relevance and accessibility of the curriculum and the very practical nature of the course and recognise that it equips them well for life. They value the support of their teachers and the subject technician particularly when they were producing their music videos.

308. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department leads a large and mostly non-specialist team by his own commitment and very good teaching. He has built up very good contacts with the local community and this enables students to gain further practical experience and to be very good ambassadors for the college by making and editing videos for a range of local groups. He is supporting his team through the current crisis in staffing through training and by providing thorough schemes of work and unit booklets. He monitors the work of the department conscientiously and is maintaining standards. Two new specialists will take up appointments in September 2003 and this will be a major advance. Because of the rapid expansion of the subject, resources have been inadequate to truly keep pace with demand. A major problem is the pressure on the one editing suite which means that time is very limited for students to refine and improve practical projects, 40% of the total A-level marks, and this impedes further progress.

## **HUMANITIES**

309. Geography is the focus of the inspection. Inspectors also sampled history, citizenship and personal and social education. Standards in the sampled lessons seen are above average. Teaching and learning are good in citizenship and very good in personal and social education. In the history A Level examinations for 2002, the results were average. This is also an improvement because in 2001 there were too few entries in to make national comparisons, and in 2000, the results against national averages were well below average. At post-16, the students make good progress towards their advanced level examinations. The current Year 12 is currently awaiting the results of the *English History* section of their short course examination, taken six months ahead of time. By Year 13, they have a detailed knowledge of major 20<sup>th</sup> century events and there is good independent research into the rise of Fascism and Nazism. They develop informed opinions, using resources well to weigh the balance the evidence for exaggeration and bias before writing their well considered essays.

## GEOGRAPHY

310. The provision for geography in the sixth form is **good**

### Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject
- Assessment, the sharing of information with students
- Target setting based on information gathered and shared

### Areas for development

- Recruitment to courses in Year 12
- Further develop the use of ICT
- Consistency in teaching

311. In 2001 results at 'A' level above national expectations in terms of achievement at grades A-E. In 2002 all students again passed at A –E and the average point score was above national expectations. Evidence from the tracking of student performance shows that these students all made good progress in order to achieve these grades. Variation in the grades achieved each year can be related to students' prior attainment. Evidence from the inspection confirms these standards. Year 12 students demonstrated satisfactory knowledge and understanding of various theories about population migration. They have made good progress from GCSE. The retention of students from the A/S course to the A2 course is good, but group sizes in Year 12 are small. Year 13 students made good use of prior knowledge of weathering in classifying. Again, students have made good progress. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced with students gaining in knowledge of human and physical systems and using their understanding of these processes in geographical enquiry.

312. Overall, teaching is very good. Some is excellent and some is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and impart this well to their students. They also explain the requirements of the examination system so that students can understand what is expected of them and respond well. Students' work is marked regularly, to examination criteria and the interpretation of mark schemes is shared with them. Students are given valuable, detailed feedback, both verbally and in writing, to help them improve their work. Students' performance in the subject is monitored, based on previous examination results, analysed and used to inform and revise targets and work marked recently. Students have a very good attitude in lessons and relationships between teacher and students, and students and students are also very good. These factors combine to create good learning and ensure

students make good progress. Teaching incorporates a variety of learning styles. Students enjoy participating the activities presented and respond with enthusiasm. Group work is well used in lessons to develop research and presentation skills. Where teaching is excellent, lessons are particularly well planned with a good variety of activities and presented enthusiastically. Literacy and numeracy are developed in lessons, with students speaking and listening being well developed. Fieldwork is an important and integral part of the course and also helps develop numeracy, skills in presentation of data and contributes to their social development. Students use ICT to present their field and course work. Where teaching is less good a didactic approach is used, this does not encourage an enthusiastic response from students and it is only the good attitude of the students and their sustained concentration that ensures their learning continues.

313. The department is very well led. There is a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve. Students' performance is monitored and tracked to ensure they make the expected progress. The head of department cannot monitor the teaching of one other teacher who is paid on a higher scale, this aspect of monitoring and evaluation remains underdeveloped as it was at the last inspection. There are regular meetings for humanities and these are supplemented with informal daily contact to ensure the smooth running of the geography department. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, with one room that for the subject for the whole college, most lessons for sixth form geography are in rooms designated for the teaching of other subjects. These rooms are decorated to support other teaching, not geography. Resources provided are suitable for teaching A/S and A2 classes. However, the text resources in the college library are not suitable for the courses provided. Teachers staffing the courses are suitably qualified, but there is a lack of consistency in the quality of teaching provided.

314. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have been maintained, the most recent A/S results and retention of students into the A2 course show this is likely to continue. The number of students following the course remains low.

**PSYCHOLOGY** was the focus of the inspection. However, sociology was also sampled. In sociology, attainment was in line with expectations and teaching and learning were good.

## **PSYCHOLOGY**

315. Overall, provision in Psychology is **good**

### **Strengths**

- Good examination results overall
- Teaching which uses well-planned resources, and holds well the interest of students at different levels of attainment
- Concentration and commitment of students leading to good rates of learning

### **Areas for improvement**

- Opportunities for students at early stages of tackling new themes to answer questions and discuss ideas at length to develop independent thinking skills
- Specific advice given to students on their written work so that they know what they have to do in order to improve

316. The latest results in Psychology A-level exceed the national picture overall, and match it for the proportion of those obtaining higher grades (AB). The proportion of those attaining higher grades rose to its present level two years ago. Overall performance fell slightly from

the previous two years when all students passed the examination. Boy-girl comparisons are not valid, due to the small number of boys taking the subject

317. In work seen during the inspection, standards are satisfactory at A-S, and good at A-level. At both levels, girls do better than boys. A-S level students know well the importance of significant historical figures in the subject such as Freud and Piaget. They understand well the underlying principles for structuring research studies, such as the clarification of aims and key questions, the importance of selecting methodology, and know how to use results to draw out conclusions. Files show students acquiring a rapid grasp of key psychological concepts applied well to issues such as crime and education. They deploy good analytical skills, and in the later stages of tackling a topic, question independently the validity and bias of what they read. For instance, one student's commentary on research into the nature of obedience and conformity identified clearly the value of the project's findings, while probing the ethical basis of its methodology and cultural bias in its approach.

318. A-level students continue to consolidate and build their knowledge of key concepts well, and demonstrate good investigative skills in small-scale pieces of research of their own. In one lesson, they benefited from a good teacher-produced resource which enabled them to choose individual topics for research judiciously, while focussing upon their own interests. At the same time, they used their knowledge well to identify a suitable topic, plan a representative sample and outline procedures for obtaining data. They worked well in response to teacher encouragement and dialogue, which both challenged them to think further and build strongly their confidence in their own ability to work independently. Their writing style is assured and well organised. Lower-attaining students achieve well in response to carefully selected materials to match their levels of understanding, and higher-attaining students are well challenged by material, because it tests them intellectually and provokes their curiosity. Students with special educational needs make good progress, both in response to teaching which takes account of their requirements, and to the help of additional staff in the classroom.

319. Computers are used well to lay out and present work logically. Students make apt use of the Internet because they are given well-focussed guidance on how to save time by seeking information on the most relevant web sites. Library provision is adequate to promote independent study and background reading.

320. The quality of students' response is very good. Their attitudes to the subject are serious and committed, and they form a basis for good achievement. Students take considerable pride in their written work, which is well structured, and communicates well to the reader. Their well-maintained personal files of notes provide a valuable reference tool for them to reflect upon their own learning. When encouraged to do so, they share ideas sensibly together as they work, although they seldom answer questions aloud in extended phrases and sentences. The quality of teaching is good. It is very thorough in its coverage of psychological concepts and theories, using well-produced notes and resources, which help students to structure their understanding well. Both the materials used, and the well-chosen activities, hold students' interest beneficially while providing good stimuli for those with different levels of sophistication of understanding. Students are helped greatly by sensitive teacher prompting and coaching as they work, although more opportunities could be taken at early stages of new topics to draw out students' understanding by giving them chances to discuss and consider ideas independently at length. Teachers mark work thoroughly, explaining the basis of their assessment clearly. Nevertheless, in most cases, advice given to students on what they need to do in order to improve could be more specific if they are to derive maximum benefit.

321. The subject is well led. The course structure and lessons plans are regularly reviewed and improved to meet the interests and capabilities of the students. Systems to assess their progress are well thought through. This underpins the good teaching and good overall results.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **ENGLISH LITERATURE**

322. Overall, provision in English is **good**

#### **Strengths**

- The specialist knowledge and enthusiasm of the teachers
- Very hard working students who achieve well
- Very good development of personal and independent learning skills
- Strong monitoring of progress against targets

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The focus on improving the finer points of essay writing at this level

323. The combined English language and literature was also sampled. During an excellent lesson probing teaching led to the students making very effective progress on preparing for their text adaptation paper. Standards were above average.

324. Results in the 2001 'A' level examination were well below the national average and below those achieved in 2000. However, results improved significantly in 2002. National comparisons for 2002 are not available but the overall average grade in 2002 was in line with the national average for 2001 and close to the above average range. In the 2001, AS examination results were average but fell in 2002. The 2002 entry included some students whose GCSE results were well below the standard usually required to gain access to an advanced level course. Nevertheless, recruitment to the course is good and the department's very good approach to inclusion is confirmed by the high representation of students from ethnic minorities. These students are very positive about the course. Retention rates are generally good

325. Standards in Years 13 and 12 are broadly average. This represents good achievement given the students' below average standards at the start of the course as indicated by their overall GCSE grades. In terms of developing the confidence to discuss orally the themes and issues in texts the students are achieving very well. The students are also making very good progress in developing their independent learning skills to research, for example, the historical background to the First World War, making full use of book and electronic sources. .

326. In Years 13 and 12, the students' progress in developing the skills of essay writing is good but not as strong as the development of their oral response. In writing most students show the levels associated with average standards. Overall organisation and structure are good. Students have a secure understanding of the themes and issues of the texts such as Blake's bleak perceptions of eighteenth century London and the contrasting worlds of Rome and Egypt in 'Antony and Cleopatra'. Their writing is mainly controlled and technically accurate, although the small number of higher attaining students write with a notable sophistication of expression. Most make good references to the texts but only the higher attainers explore in detail the specific impact of form, structure and the writer's use of language on meaning. For overall standards to improve, more students need to develop a



sharper and more intense focus on the links between their textual references, the assignment's requirements and the writer's use of language. Higher attainers have also successfully developed a consistently evaluative style and tone in their writing: more need to emulate this.

327. The students have very positive attitudes to the course. Their behaviour is excellent. They speak warmly about the enthusiastic efforts of their teachers to provide individual support both in and out of lessons, referring to the focused mentoring they received for their individual course work as an example. The students take their work seriously but at the same time clearly enjoy English. As one said unprompted: 'I just love English'. Year 13 students prepared most conscientiously for a presentation on their First World War anthology: the presenter speaking with the confidence that good preparation brings and his audience listening closely and commenting appropriately. The students' comments and lesson observations confirmed very good relationships between teachers and students. Teaching and learning are very good leading to the students developing their confidence significantly and making very good progress in responding to the challenging texts they encounter. The teachers have very good specialist knowledge but also have very high expectations about the nature and quality of the students' work. Thus, Year 12 students studying 'The Glass Menagerie' were expected to prepare, present and analyse scenes from the text within a strict time limit. This followed a short starter activity in which the teacher's probing questions challenged each student and effectively stimulated each student's thinking. The confident and resourceful manner with which the students tackled the scene preparation confirmed the very good teaching they had received. The students enjoyed the challenge; they performed and analysed with enthusiasm. The teachers provide the students with good material to aid their understanding such as an in-house booklet giving valuable insights into the work of Blake. The use of the course's assessment objectives to clarify what the students need to achieve is also an effective strategy and one which the students themselves find helpful. Although the students make good progress in many aspects of essay organisation a sharper and continuous focus on the specific conventions of essay writing at this level is required, not only for course work but also examinations.

328. The course is well planned and effectively managed by a member of the department with post 16 responsibility. The teachers fully comply with the college's good assessment procedures to monitor progress against targets. Teachers support each other well in the development of materials and teaching and learning styles.

## Modern Foreign Languages

### FRENCH

329. Overall, the quality of provision in French is **good**

#### Strengths

- The potential of students is at least realised and often exceeded.
- The use of authentic, challenging resources.
- High quality staffing

#### Areas for Improvement

- Further develop the use of ICT
- Raise the profile of French to attract more students

comparison with national statistics is less meaningful. Currently there are two AS students in Year12 and five A2 students in Year 13. Students, however, usually achieve in line with expectations based on their previous examination performance, and often exceed those

expectations. Most students who begin to study French in Year 12, continue to study it in Year 13, and all students complete either their AS or A2 course.

331. Standards in the work seen are above expectations. Students have a positive approach to their studies and this is reflected in their interested attitude in lessons and the good quality of the work in their folders. Even when students are reticent to express opinions orally, they are able to write their ideas confidently. Their folders demonstrate that they take a pride in their work and the organisation in topics enables them to incorporate additional information over the two year period. Students expressed their enjoyment of French and clearly felt well-supported in their studies.

332. Although there is sometimes a disappointing uptake, the work experience visit to France helps raise the standard of those students who participate.

333. The quality of teaching is overall good. All lessons seen were either good or very good. Lessons were well-prepared, and demonstrated a good knowledge of the requirements of the examination course in addition to the accuracy and fluency of the French language. Challenging, authentic materials were used in such a way that students were not daunted by the complexities of the material, but rather were able to build up gradually to studying an article in its entirety. A variety of techniques, including taped material, maps and newspapers were used to both reinforce and develop students' knowledge. The potential of the use of ICT, however, needs to be developed further. Relationships between teacher and students were such that the students never felt threatened or exposed; consequently they were always willing to try something difficult and felt encouraged and supported in their endeavours. Work is marked constructively so that students are not only aware of the errors that they have made but also know what they must do to improve further.

334. Students learn well because of the good quality teaching. In a Year 13 lesson, students were beginning to feel confident enough to explore the nature of the European Union in French as well as extending their general knowledge. In a Year 12 lesson they were familiarising themselves with sophisticated "education" vocabulary in addition to analysing the French education system. Students in general are able to use language independently and creatively because they are actively involved in their learning.

335. Good leadership and management underpin the high quality of teaching and learning in French. Teachers are well-qualified, one is a French national and, in addition, an "assistante" is employed who enhances learning further. Resources are very good and include excellent dictionaries, authentic materials and overhead projectors and tape-recorders. These all have a very positive effect on learning. Each student has a "target minimum grade" and progress is carefully monitored to ensure that students are achieving at least their potential. The sixth form benefits from the same comprehensive, student-centred, departmental policies as the main college. No points were raised about the Sixth Form at the previous inspection.