

INSPECTION REPORT

BABINGTON COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique reference number: 120294

Principal: Mrs J E A Smith

Lead inspector: W Keast

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th November 2003

Inspection number: 258557

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	916
School address:	Strasbourg Drive Beaumont Leys Leicester
Postcode:	LE4 0SZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Kirby
Date of previous inspection:	12 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

Babington Community Technology College is an urban comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16. With 916 students, it is of average size. The college has technology college status and has recently been successful in renewing its Investor in People award. Students come from both the local area and across the city, and their attainment on entry to the college is well below average. Students come from areas with significant social and economic deprivation; the proportion of students entitled to a free school meal (50 percent) is well above average. More than one-third of students are from ethnic minority backgrounds. A high proportion (31 per cent) of students has English as an additional language and 45 of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of students with special educational needs and those whose needs have received a statement are both well above average. These needs are mainly related to specific learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students (32 per cent) who enter, or leave the college, other than at the beginning or end of the year is well above average and this is a barrier to improving standards. The college is recognised as a *School facing Challenging Circumstances*.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9053	V Phillips	Lay inspector	
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18178	I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics
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30749	H Boyle	Team inspector	History Citizenship
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	8
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	20
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	39

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Babington Community Technology College is an effective and improving college that provides good value for money. Good teaching and learning results in all groups of students in the college achieving well. The leadership of the principal is very good and leadership and management of other key staff are good. The curriculum meets the needs of students very well.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good, leading to students learning and achieving well.
- Results are well below national average and the high mobility of students is a significant barrier to raising standards.
- Students are very well cared for and receive very good guidance and advice.
- Good provision is made for all students with their very different educational needs or different levels of attainment.
- Very good leadership provides a shared sense of purpose in enabling all students to achieve as fully as they can.
- Poor literacy skills, and the irregular attendance of a significant minority, adversely effect the raising of standards.

The current college is significantly different from the one previously inspected. As the result of consecutive local authority reviews, it has been amalgamated with a failing college and lost its sixth form. Within this context, the college has more than successfully resolved all but one of the key issues identified in the previous inspection while maintaining its strength in student care. Results in the end of Year 9 tests have fallen but the number of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) has increased significantly. **Progress since the last inspection has been good.**

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	E*	E	E	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students achieve well. Test results at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were in the lowest five per cent of schools and well below average for similar schools. Results in English, mathematics and science were similar though fewer students gained the higher levels in English. Comparisons with national statistics, however, are of limited value because they take no account of the significant difference between the students starting in Year 7 and reaching Year 9. Current standards in Year 9 are well below average but students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C increased significantly in 2003, due in part to a sensible choice of course, and was well above the average for similar schools. Current standards in Year 11 are below average but students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. Earlier staffing problems have resulted in a fall in standards in art in Years 9 and 11.

Students' personal qualities, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. The college has worked very hard to develop these from a low standard on entry. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality remain poor, despite significant improvement, as some families still fail to ensure that their children attend regularly and arrive on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a good quality of education.

Teaching is consistently good across the college and leads to students learning and achieving well. Lessons are well planned and support staff are used particularly effectively in helping students to learn. Relationships are good and classes are well managed. Very occasionally teaching was unsatisfactory because the work was not appropriate for students leading to poorer behaviour and lack of progress. Marking clearly tells students how well their work relates to National Curriculum levels or examination grades. Teachers' comments give clear guidance as to how students can improve their work. Not all teachers use strategies for improving students' literacy skills with sufficient consistency and rigour. Students at an early stage of learning English are effectively brought in to mainstream classes as soon as possible and students are taught well in the POD, a unit for those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The curriculum meets the wide range of students' learning needs very well. Courses have been chosen and opportunities planned to maximise students' chances of success. Extra-curricular provision gives a good range of enhancement and support. Accommodation and resources for learning are good. Students are particularly well supported and guided through regular and careful monitoring of their behaviour and progress. The college has worked strenuously to build productive, satisfactory links with parents, in spite of a limited response from many of them. Links with the community and other schools are good and support students' achievement effectively.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management in the college are good, with the leadership of the principal being very good. The governance of the college is good. The shared sense of purpose within the college has a clear focus on raising achievement. Management at all levels is effective. Effective monitoring leads to good work in promoting the development of teaching. Students' progress is monitored very well. Finances are well managed and the college applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents have very positive views of the work of the college and its high expectations and strong support of their children's achievements, whatever their background circumstances. As a result, different groups of parents, including those of students with special educational needs or special talents, or at an early stage of learning English feel equally positive about the welcome and help offered. They are particularly pleased with the way that the college keeps in touch with them to reassure them that their children have settled in well and are making progress, as well as to let them know promptly about any problems. Students think that the college offers them good opportunities to learn and to achieve personal and academic success because of the encouragement and support offered. They can find someone to talk to when they have a problem and feel that staff deal well with matters such as bullying and racism, which are not allowed to develop into serious issues as a result. They are clear that the longer students stay in the college the more they come to appreciate its values, the fact that staff want the best for them and that the focus is on encouraging them to believe in themselves and to want to achieve all they can.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the college should do to improve are:

- Maintain the focus and work of the current college improvement plan on improving attendance.
- Ensure a rigorous and consistent development of students' literacy skills by all teachers.
- Achieve greater consistency in classroom practice of: (i) the use of the three-part lesson, using starter activities which link to the main learning activities, (ii) using assessment information to best match work to student need and (iii) helping the class teacher with more ways to support students with EAL when, due to funding restrictions, support staff are not available.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Results in national examinations are **well below average** and are very low in the end of Year 9 tests. Examination results are well above those gained by similar schools. Current standards in Year 9 are well below average and in Year 11 are below average. Nevertheless, students of all abilities and with differing needs are achieving well in relation to their previous attainment. Students' language and literacy skills are well below average, their competency in mathematics is below average and in information and communication technology (ICT) is average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving standards in Year 11 examinations due, in part, to a sensible choice of course.
- Good achievement by students with differing needs and abilities in most subjects, although there is underachievement in art.
- The negative impact on achievement of the large numbers of students who join or leave during the year.
- The restriction on standards due to students' low literacy skills.

Commentary

1. The very high movement of students into and out of the college during any school year not only has an impact on standards but also makes comparison with national benchmarks insecure. For example, when comparing the college GCSE results with similar schools, that is schools in which pupils had similar attainment in the end of Year 9 national tests, the students whose GCSE results are being used are not the same as those who gained the Year 9 results. Similarly, when considering an individual student's progress from Year 7 or 9 to GCSE results, using nationally held data for that student, no account is taken of the disruption in that student's education caused when a high proportion of the students have changed school at least once. This context needs bearing in mind when considering year group standards and achievement over time.

2. Attainment on entry to the college is well below average. Nationally, approximately three-quarters of pupils reach Level 4 in English. The college only has information for about two-thirds of its current Year 7 students and of these, less than two-thirds have reached Level 4. Those for whom the college does not have data either were not tested or have come into the country recently, often with English as an additional language (EAL). In the current Years 10 and 11, approximately half the students joined in Year 7 and of these, two-thirds were below Level 4. Throughout the college, students' language and literacy competence remains well below average and this restricts the standards which students can reach, particularly when assessment relies heavily on the written word. Technology college status has resulted in a significant increase in the availability and use of computers. Students enjoy using computers to support their learning and improve the presentation of their work and their competence is average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.5 (27.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	27.2 (28.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	25.7 (27.1)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 190 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. In 2003, results in the national testing at the end of Year 9 were in the lowest 5 per cent of schools nationally. They were well below the average of similar schools, either based on earlier attainment or eligibility for free school meals. There was little difference between English, mathematics and science except that a greater proportion of students reached Level 6 in science and mathematics. The college did not reach the targets it had set. An analysis of the results those students whose assessments at the end of Year 7 are available (60 per cent) shows that they made above average progress and achieved well. Results have fallen over the last six years but have been steady for the last three. Over the same period, the nature of the intake has changed markedly.

4. The current standards in Year 9 are well below average overall. They are well below average in English and science but are a little higher in mathematics. Standards are highest in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. However, students are achieving well in most subjects. Their achievement is satisfactory in design and technology, French and history. They are underachieving in art where staffing instability has meant that their practical skills are not as high as they should be.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	35 (23)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	71 (69)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	24 (22)	32.3 (34.7)

There were 178 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The comparisons in the summary are based upon the average total point score that students gained. The indicators above are all well below average, except the proportion of students gaining at least one pass is below average. In comparison with similar schools the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C was well above average. This proportion has more than doubled in the last two years. An above average proportion gained at least one pass and the average point score for the best eight subjects was above average. The proportion gaining five or more grades A* to G was average for similar schools. One reason for the significant increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more of the higher grades was the introduction of an intermediate GNVQ examination. Students with EAL do well in examinations in their home languages and are well represented among those gaining five or more grades A* to C. Over the last six years, the trend in results has been unchanging whereas, nationally, there has been a gradual rise. However, results in the last three years have been rising more rapidly than nationally, due mainly to the improving attainment of boys. The college significantly exceeded its targets which had been predicted from students' earlier results in Year 9 testing. Analysis of the GCSE results of those students whose end of Year 9 test results are available (87 per cent) shows that they made above average progress.

6. Standards in Year 11 are, overall, below average but show that students continue to achieve well. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average. Only in art and geography do standards remain well below the average expected of students of this age. Again, staffing difficulties have led to underachievement in art.

7. The college has significant groups of students who have special educational needs, for whom English is an additional language, or who have been identified as talented or gifted. The provision made for each of these groups, and the support or challenge which they receive, ensures that they are also achieving well.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are **well below average**, which has an adverse effect on the achievement of those who are late or miss a high number of lessons. The attitudes and behaviour of students of all backgrounds and abilities are satisfactory in general and support achievement reasonably well. As a result of the college's very good efforts to foster students' personal and social skills, qualities such as spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, reach a satisfactory level of development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In some cases, parents make little effort to ensure that their children come to college regularly and on time which means that such students struggle to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The college makes very good efforts to reduce absence rates and recent improvement has contributed to better progress and improved GCSE results overall.
- The college has very clear codes of conduct and works constantly to raise standards of behaviour, reduce exclusions and eliminate bullying.
- The college promotes racial harmony and relationships well, which, with a very firm drive to raise the self-belief of all students, regardless of background, results in a growing sense of community.
- Enough students have well developed work habits and ambition to ensure that the disruptive actions of the few who are not interested in learning rarely spoil other people's chances of success.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0 (5.2)	School data	4.7 (9.9)
National data	7.2 (7.8)	National data	1.1 (1.2)

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

8. With its rigorous checks on absence, the college has tried very hard to raise attendance levels, which were closer to national averages in 2002-3 than in the past. Moves in and out of the area result in rapid changes to the college roll, which adds to the challenge of keeping track of who is absent for whatever reason and who has left. Some families still fail to ensure that their children attend regularly and arrive on time, which has an adverse effect on the progress these students make. All staff involved with attendance, including the education welfare officer, go the extra mile to encourage students to keep absences to a minimum, while working with families and spelling out the implications of too many missed lessons. Families who have responded well to the college's efforts to work with them to improve patterns of attendance, have seen their children make great strides with their learning, which has contributed to the college's much improved GCSE examination results.

9. Time is wasted waiting for students to come into college and to get to lessons because punctuality is poor. Many registration periods are used for extended social chat partly because there are not enough students present for tutors to use the time more productively. Movement around the site is difficult because of bottlenecks. A few students dawdle on their way to classes. When lessons do not start promptly, teachers sometimes lose the opportunity to review the main points at the end, which is particularly unhelpful for students who find it difficult to recall key information.

10. A significant proportion of students responds well to the college's considerable efforts to develop their personal qualities. Enough students work hard and behave well, because they recognise that the staff are determined to give them the chance to do something worthwhile with their lives, to limit the impact of the few who do not care about their work. Students are very clear

about the high standards of effort and behaviour expected, even if they are not always able to live up to them. They recognise that racism and bullying are not tolerated in college and usually leave conflicts and local feuds at the college gate. Occasionally, these spill over into college life, triggering exclusion for unacceptable behaviour. In practice, exclusion rates have fallen as a result of the college's very clear, firm approach to misconduct.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	524	70	8
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	30	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	18	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	33	9	2
Asian or Asian British – Indian	106	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	2	1
Black or Black British – African	124	16	2
Black or Black British – any other Black background	3	3	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	2	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

11. Students get on together reasonably well as a result of the college's considerable efforts to promote tolerance and understanding. The college has a clear and growing sense of community within which all students are valued, whatever their background and abilities. They take pride in themselves, their college and what staff do on their behalf. This was shown by the unsolicited offering of a message for the college bulletin by a student, towards the end of the inspection, reminiscent of the college prayer; *“Thank you for your strength and patience to persevere. I know it has been an anxious week but we did it, we proved everyone wrong who thought we wouldn't do it, so I would just like to say thank you for having faith in yourself and in the college”*. Although students join the college with a much narrower range of personal and social skills than usual for their age group, the very good work done by staff to develop students' personal qualities ensures that by Year 11, students have a sound understanding of right and wrong. Although they are still reluctant to use initiative and take on responsibilities, their self-awareness and respect for others and their different cultural traditions, are also much improved and at an acceptable level.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

This is **good**. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. The curriculum meets the needs of younger students well and those of older students very well. These learning opportunities are well supported by a good extra-curricular programme. Students are cared for and guided very well. Links with parents are sound and with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Teaching and learning

Good teaching throughout the college leads to students learning and achieving well. Lessons are well planned and support staff are particularly effective in helping students to learn. Relationships are good and classes are well managed. Very occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory because the work was not appropriate for students, leading to poorer behaviour and lack of progress. Teachers' marking and assessment of students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in all years, in nearly all subjects, leads to good learning and achievement.
- Teachers and support staff working together to be most effective in helping all students to achieve.
- Well-planned lessons which mainly follow the recommendations of the national key stage 3 strategy.
- Well-managed lessons in which students respond well to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour and work.
- Homework is not always used to best effect to raise standards and not all teachers use strategies to develop students' literacy skills with sufficient consistency or rigour.
- Good use of assessment so that students know the level at which they are working and how to improve.
- Good assessment practice and procedures for students with special educational needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	21 (16%)	65 (49%)	39 (30%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

12. Within the overall good teaching there were some differences between subjects. Teaching in art and history, and in French and design and technology in Years 7 to 9 was satisfactory. Teaching in music was very good.

13. A clear strength of teaching is the close co-operation between teachers and support staff to provide the support that a high proportion of students need to help them to learn or to ensure that their behaviour does not interrupt the learning of others. Teachers and support staff know their students well and are able respond to individual students at an appropriate level. Most teachers make good use of the targets of students with special educational needs, within their individual education plans (IEPs), to plan appropriately for them to access learning using modified materials, different activities or extra support. This helps all students to achieve well.

14. Lessons are well planned. Many lessons have the common structure of a focused starter activity, to get students quickly into the lesson, a main learning activity and a plenary session in which the learning outcomes of the lesson are identified and reinforced. It is common practice in the college to share with students what it is expected that they will learn during the lesson. This helps students to recognise their learning and to identify where they may still have problems. As a result they achieve well. The strategy loses some of its impact when the starter activity is unrelated to the main learning activity. When students do not all arrive punctually, then it is the important plenary session which is most often omitted.

15. In most lessons teachers plan the work into smaller units, often with a different activity. In the best lessons, these activities are timed, there is a sense of urgency and the lesson moves at a brisk pace. This engages students' interest so that they concentrate, work hard and learn and achieve well. In nearly all lessons students are managed well. The atmosphere is orderly and students quickly settle to their work. Students respond positively to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and work.

16. The marking of students' work is good and clearly related to National Curriculum levels or examination grades. Progress is monitored twice a term and reviews, which involve the students, identify targets for the following review. Students are very aware of the levels at which they are working and most know what they need to do to improve their standards further. Teachers have a great deal of centrally collated assessment data available for each of the students they teach. Generally they use this well to make sure that the tasks they give students to do relate to their needs. Occasionally, however, this information was not so well used so that tasks are either too difficult or not challenging enough. In either case, these students did not then make as much progress as they could and teaching was unsatisfactory.

17. Homework is generally used satisfactorily to support the learning that has taken place during the lesson. The assignments in the newer GNVQ courses are enjoyed by students who spend considerable time working more independently and out of lesson time. By contrast, not all subjects use homework as fully as they might and do not ensure that work set is actually completed.

18. The teaching and learning of students who are being supported by the POD, a unit for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, are good overall. The teachers and teaching assistants know the students and their personal difficulties very well and are therefore able to plan appropriate lessons in accordance with their action plans and schemes of work from the subject departments. They have clear routines and high expectations for behaviour and use short-term withdrawal very effectively to avoid disruption. The teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together to defuse any behaviour which is likely to affect learning and as a result of this, the students have good attitudes to learning and most behave well in lessons. The teachers and teaching assistants make effective use of questioning and discussion in order to promote speaking and listening and raise self-esteem.

19. The very good schemes of work and resources for the induction programme result in students who are at an early stage of learning English rapidly gaining the confidence and communication skills required to enable them to participate, with support, in some practical areas of the curriculum. Good lesson planning leads to most teachers using a good range of strategies to support students with EAL, helping them to achieve well. The college provides more support staff for students with EAL than the funding it receives pays for. Nevertheless, the number of such students is so great that support is not available in all the lessons where it is needed. Teachers in some of the lessons lack a sufficiently wide range of effective strategies.

20. That work has been done to promote ways in which teaching can support the development of students' literacy skills is evident from subject documentation, word walls of subject specific vocabulary and the use of writing frames to guide students' writing. However, for many students their poor literacy skills hinder their attainment of higher standards across the curriculum. The current provision is satisfactory, but not all teachers use these strategies with sufficient consistency and rigour.

21. The college's assessment of the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) and the monitoring of their progress is good overall. The central, computer-based recording system for assessment data ensures that the progress of all students, including those with SEN, can be carefully monitored against National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and expected GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. From this data, it is clear that most students with SEN are making good progress in literacy and numeracy and against their specific targets in their IEPs. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) liaises very effectively with the feeder primary schools to ensure that the college staff is well aware of the potential difficulties which students with SEN might experience after admission.

22. All students are screened for reading and spelling when they enter the college and those causing concern, including those with statements of special educational needs, undertake additional assessment. All students on the special needs register have IEPs containing targets for literacy and numeracy, and relating to attitudes and personal development. Because targets are set in close collaboration with the students and their parents and carers, students are aware of their targets and are able to explain what they need to do to meet them.

23. The annual reviews of the progress of students with statements of special educational needs are very well organised and most parents and carers attend the review meetings because of the outstanding support the SENCO provides for them. However, subject reports contributing towards the annual reviews vary in quality and while most give information on the students' attitudes and effort, few provide information on their achievements in learning or on the progress towards meeting the targets in their IEPs.

The curriculum

The curriculum makes **very good** provision for the wide range of students' needs. Their education is supported and enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. The accommodation, learning resources and teachers meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths

- A curriculum which has been adapted to meet all students' needs.
- A range of different courses in years 10 and 11 to provide students with the greatest chances of success.
- Good extra-curricular opportunities which widen students' experiences and provide good support for learning.
- Provision for work-related learning is very good and is having a positive impact upon standards
- Good accommodation and learning resources to support teaching.

Commentary

24. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. All students in Years 7 to 9 have a common curriculum with each subject having an appropriate amount of teaching time. Students who have very poor English skills, for example EAL students, are appropriately disapplied from French to allow additional literacy work. A personal and social education (PSE) programme is developed well through a comprehensive programme of topics, including guidance on options at the end of Year 9.

25. In Years 10 and 11, all students have a very strong core curriculum which includes an ICT course and a course in religious education. Students may choose two additional subjects or an alternative, work-related curriculum. Subjects within the options depend completely on student choice so that there are years when too few students choose music or French, for example, for them to run. Different courses or examination opportunities within English, mathematics and science cater for differing needs and aspirations well. The PSE programme in these years is comprehensive and effectively covers aspects of careers education such as work placement, CV preparation, letters of application for jobs and career interviews. This programme prepares students well for subsequent stages of education.

26. Enrichment opportunities are provided by popular sporting activities, trips, visits such as the residential week for younger students, and musical activities in which, currently, participation is low. Many opportunities are provided, after college and in the holidays, for homework support, subject surgeries and, towards examination times, numerous revision classes. All these support student achievement well.

27. Students with EAL are encouraged to sit examinations in their home language and for some this needs additional classes, particularly in written aspects. The college is currently running a class in German, for a mixed age group of students, and another in Gujarati. Students with EAL who come with very poor skills in English follow an intensive literacy course to allow them to be moved into mainstream classes, with support, as soon as possible. This additional provision meets their needs well.

28. GNVQ courses have been successfully introduced in Years 10 and 11 in science, ICT and business education. Students respond well to both the vocational aspect and the assignment-based nature of these courses. Results at the end of Year 11 in 2003 show students achieved significantly better than would be expected from their earlier attainment. The good alternative curriculum provision, linked with a local college, provides course tasters for a selected group of potentially disaffected students, and accredited courses for others. Students enjoy the courses, which are well structured and lead to good skills development, and remain in the education system.

29. Students with visual impairments access the whole-college curriculum very well because of well-focused support and the provision of materials in large print or in Braille. ICT is effectively used by them and to support their learning. While students are in the POD, they follow schemes of work from their mainstream teachers, concentrating on literacy, numeracy and life skills. Students in Year 8 undertake some vocational skills and the course in motor engineering has already reduced anti-social behaviour. Students may also undertake personal counselling, designed to increase their self-esteem. The aim is to support their learning and to modify their behaviour so that they may be re-admitted to mainstream classes. This has already been successfully achieved with the Year 7 students who were admitted at the start of the term.

30. Students with special educational needs are well provided for. They are generally taught in smaller groups with well-trained support staff. Students' IEPs have clear information for parents in addition to the targets. Targets are measurable, with dates by which they are to be achieved. IEPs provide enough guidance for teachers to know how they can help students reach their targets. The college has identified a proportion of each year group as talented or gifted students. Their particular needs are well met through teaching in higher-attaining groups, early entry in mathematics and English literature examinations, additional subjects such as Spanish being available in extra-curricular activities, and a good programme of additional master-classes, visits and activities available out of college hours.

31. The accommodation for most subjects is good with attractive classrooms grouped into subject areas. Learning resources are generally good. All classrooms have a computer connected to the college intranet which allows immediate access to the information, both of an administrative and subject based nature, which is stored centrally. All areas now have at least one interactive whiteboard and staff are rapidly developing their effective use of this new resource. Despite a rapid increase in the number of computers available, some subjects like art, religious education and music, find difficulty in gaining access when they need it. Music does not have the necessary provision for students to be able to use computers for composing. Staffing is satisfactory. The college has had great difficulty in recruiting staff for some specific posts and this has resulted in instability in the teams, in for example art and design and technology, that has had an adverse effect on standards. In art and geography, a significant proportion of the teaching is by teachers who do not have specialist qualification in the subject, resulting in a weakness in teaching of subject skills. The provision of support staff to meet the learning needs of students and to support subject teaching is good.

Care, guidance and support

The college ensures the students' care, welfare, health and safety very well. **Very good** guidance and advice is provided as a result of the careful monitoring which is undertaken and the college seeks to involve students well.

Main strengths

- Almost all students feel there is an adult at college who they can trust; form tutors play the key role in overseeing students' achievement, dealing with any problems and difficulties very well.
- Very good arrangements help students settle into the college.
- Students are involved well in the life of the college and the college council is effective.
- Students are involved in setting their targets, and these dialogues are used as an opportunity for providing academic advice and guidance.
- Students receive very good advice for choosing the subjects they want to study in years 10 and 11 and planning their destinations when they leave the college.

Commentary

32. Students feel safe and secure, and know that adults in the college make their needs a high priority. The arrangements to ensure the college complies with local child protection requirements when necessary, are very good. The college identifies students' issues quickly and acts promptly to remedy the situation. In response to its challenging circumstances, where it faces a wide range of needs, the college has developed a diversity of strategies to deal with problems enabling staff to be firmly focused upon learning and achievement. A well-organised counselling service, which students can request or to which, with their agreement, they can be referred by college staff, makes a very good contribution to their care and welfare. Although the college has good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of its students, and through the curriculum encourages healthy and safe living, it has not yet fully developed this into its PSE programme, for example through the teaching of issues such as healthy eating.

33. Students joining the college in Year 7 have the benefit of very good procedures to help them settle in. A large number of students join during the course of the year and very good arrangements ensure that the transition is as easy as possible, including the use of a 'buddy' system to help new students make friends at the college. Students' achievements and their personal development are monitored very well and they are provided with advice and guidance from within college and externally. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve in all their subjects. They are involved in the setting of their targets and consequently take their achievements seriously. Good documentation supports the impartial advice from the local Connexions Service that helps students choose the subjects they want to study in Years 10 and 11. As they progress through the college, older students are provided with advice, guidance and experiences that will enable them to make choices and improve their prospects when they leave the college.

34. The college council meets regularly and students see the position of council representative as important. Time is provided within PSE for students to consult with their peers, so that issues can be raised and taken to the council for discussion, and to report back on the outcomes. The council is beginning to influence decisions made at the college, for example in determining the criteria for awarding the college prize at the end of term. Although the college listens to students, their views are not yet influencing a sufficiently wide range of issues. However, the students feel happy with the extent of their influence at present.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college has worked strenuously to build productive, **satisfactory** links with parents, in spite of a limited response from many of them. Links with the community and other schools are **good** and support students' achievement effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very happy with the quality of education their children receive and are beginning to work with the college more readily in support of their children's progress.
- Attendance at college review days and at meetings to review progress of students with special educational needs is very good, which is a sound basis for co-operation to raise standards.
- Very good informal contact based on frequent calls to share news of students' achievements and difficulties ensures that parents know how their children are getting on.
- Links with the community and other schools benefit students and help to raise their aspirations.
- The contribution of parents as a whole to students' learning and achievement is unsatisfactory as a sizeable minority does not ensure that children attend regularly and take their studies seriously.

Commentary

35. The college is well aware of the hardships and difficulties facing many of its families and does its level best to work with all its parents in support of the education and achievement of each child. It has pioneered a system of calls from tutors to keep families up to date with how students are doing, including messages to reassure newcomers that their child is settling in well. The main

focus is to keep in touch with parents so they get used to hearing good news, instead of the bad news often associated with calls from college. As a result, parents have a lot of confidence that the college is on the right track and their children are getting a very good deal. They are becoming more involved with their children's learning, with some volunteering to help with reading and others taking courses offered to help them develop their own skills so they can keep up to date with what students learn.

36. Parents of students with EAL are fully involved in the induction process for their children. The support given to parents and carers of students who are in the POD is outstanding. They are able to visit the POD at any time and the staff make extensive home visits in order to discuss concerns. The SENCO provides practical counselling and training to parents and carers in behaviour management. However, too many parents still take less interest in their children's education than is needed to ensure that they learn as much as they can. Parents' willingness to attend meetings to review children's progress is a significant step towards to the college's goal of forging good working relationships to raise standards. It recognises that formal written information for parents, including reports, needs to be improved so that it is easier to read and reflects students' achievements in a lively, but straightforward way.

37. The college's specialist status means that it is expected to develop good links with its community, including other local schools, which they are quick to acknowledge and praise. It has ensured that its own students benefit from the wider range of courses and visits available that result from such links and from funding such as that for *Excellence in Cities*. For example, able students have had the chance to visit Nottingham and Oxford Universities to encourage them to consider applying for a university place in due course and all Year 11 had the chance to visit the *Walkers Stadium* for a career options forum. Many students of all ages, abilities and ethnic background have mentors who work with them, coax them and give individual help to ensure that they achieve as well as they can with their studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The principal provides **very good** leadership within the college, well supported by the good leadership of others in key positions. Management at all levels is effective. Governance of the college is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are enthusiastic, supportive and bring valuable local knowledge which has a significant impact on the development of the college but they need more information to help them relate the college's performance to national standards.
- The vision and very good leadership and management of the principal, strongly supported by the leadership team, are increasingly effective in raising standards. Heads of department share and support the vision for improvement.
- Very good planning is successfully moving the college forward.
- Very effective approaches to the induction and training of staff despite difficulty in recruiting in some areas.
- Good management of the provision for students who are visually impaired, have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, which helps them achieve well.
- Systems for monitoring and reviewing teaching, the achievement of students and the work of the college are very good but some inconsistency in classroom practice remains.

Commentary

38. Governors are very supportive of the college and their strong local knowledge provides the college with essential information. In partnership with the principal and senior staff, they shape the direction of the college. They get involved in the college, frequently dealing directly with parents. As

a result, they have good practical knowledge of the effect of the colleges' actions in raising standards. Encouraging governors to visit and take part in lessons provides a very good direct insight into the daily operation of the college and is welcomed by the governors. Detailed reports from the principal provide them with comprehensive information about aims, planning and outcomes but they need further information to ensure that they understand the college strengths and weaknesses relative to national standards. The governing body has ensured that the college meets all statutory requirements.

39. The principal provides very good leadership and her vision for the future of the college is very clear. She is very well supported by an effective leadership team of senior staff. Staff and governors have the opportunity to bring their knowledge to help shape the vision. The energy and expertise of the principal provides the main driving force behind its implementation. Heads of subject and faculties share this vision and there is strong support across the staff for the objectives of the college. The result is a college with a very good ethos and with a staff committed to meeting the needs of individual students and raising standards. A good example is the care provided for students with English as an additional language. They are effectively inducted into the college and are given the support necessary to enable them to rapidly integrate with other students.

40. The college's aims are clear with an emphasis on raising student performance in all areas, and are focused on the academic, personal and social development of individual students. The process for planning college improvements is precise and links directly to these aims. Governors, managers and staff contribute to the process and this generates a feeling of ownership. Every opportunity is taken to access additional resources, and local and national initiatives are incorporated into a coherent plan. The fundamental challenge being how a resource can be most effectively used to remove or reduce barriers to learning. An innovative approach to focusing on raising individual and college standards is the principal's 'achievement wall' where each student is represented by a photo card. Cards are colour-coded to indicate examination outcomes predicted by earlier test results and are positioned to show current levels of attainment. This visual display clearly identifies individual and overall progress. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it has already had an effect on raising the performance of individual students who have seen the chart.

41. The college has had difficulty in recruiting in several areas and the instability in some subject areas has had a negative effect on standards. These difficulties in recruitment are being effectively managed through the appointment of some unqualified staff, whose contribution is increasingly effective as they progress through the very good induction, support and training schemes being organised by the college. The college has recently had its Investor in People status renewed in recognition of the quality of its work in the professional development of its staff. Staff are well supported by the effective leadership team.

42. Students' progress is monitored very regularly and both students and parents made aware of the outcomes. The individual target setting which results from this forms part of the drive to raise standards. The large amount of test information on each student is readily available and helps teachers to plan their work accordingly, but it is not used consistently across the college. Very good central monitoring of students by subject, gender, ethnic grouping and educational need identifies success and potential areas for further development. Teaching is formally monitored both by senior managers and heads of department and, together with the effective work of the teaching and learning group, this promotes improvement. Monitoring and training have not yet succeeded in ensuring that all teachers are consistent in their practice, for example the use of the three-part lesson.

43. The SENCO provides very good leadership in this important area of the college's work. She manages her teams of support teachers and teaching assistants well and works closely with the co-ordinator of the provision for students with EAL. Her support work with parents and carers of students in the POD is of a very high quality. While students are in the POD, good liaison with subject teachers helps to make sure that they follow a similar curriculum to other students. Wherever, and as soon as, possible students with very differing educational and behavioural needs are well-supported in mainstream classes so that they learn with their peers and achieve well.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2951548
Total expenditure	3042598
Expenditure per pupil	3275

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	486487
Balance carried forward to the next	395437

44. Financial management is prudent and effective, helped by the business manager being part of the senior management team. The use of specific funds is clearly identifiable. Available resources are well focused on planned developments. A comparatively large carry forward helps smooth the impact of student mobility by allowing stability in staffing levels. The college applies the principles of best value well.

A barrier to raising achievement

45. The college is recognised as a *School Facing Challenging Circumstances* in relation to the significant social and economic deprivation experienced by its students and the high proportions of students with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language. The college does not regard these as barriers to education and achievement. The barrier to raising achievement is the very high mobility of students: what might be called a *turbulence factor*. This has a direct impact upon the students involved because, with well-below average standards, their education is interrupted. It also has an adverse impact upon the college and other students because teachers are having to cope regularly with students arriving into their lessons with very different previous educational experiences. As teachers work hard to achieve the inclusion of new students, the time and energy it requires detracts from continuing education of the regular students. The turbulence factor creates its own turbulence.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students achieve well because teachers plan and conduct their lessons in a very logical way.
- Teachers manage their classes well, maintaining a pleasant working atmosphere.
- GCSE results are above the average of those gained in similar schools.
- Too few of the higher-attaining students reach the higher levels in the year 9 national curriculum tests.
- Homework is not always completed satisfactorily.
- Students' progress across all subjects is hindered by their low standard of literacy.

Commentary

Examination results

46. The test results of Year 9 students in 2002 were well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The results in 2003 were comparable with those in 2002. GCSE results in English language and English literature in 2002 were also significantly below the national average. However, they were above the average obtained in similar schools. In 2003, the language results were lower than in 2002, but the literature results improved.

Standards and achievement

47. On entry to the college, students' standards in English are well below average. They have limited vocabulary and find it difficult to write accurately and in complete sentences. Because of these very low standards on entry, and also because of the very high number of students who arrive at and leave the college during the year, standards are still well below average at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11, consistency of teaching over time leads to an improvement in standards, although they remain below average. Students' standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening reflect their overall standards. In GCSE files, pieces of work illustrate the good progress that students make during their time at the college. For example, in writing about R C Sheriff's First World War play, 'Journey's End', students show insight into the moral and spiritual implications of war, as well as into the dilemmas of the characters.

Teaching and learning

48. Teachers know their subject well. Their method of teaching is in line with the government's plan for raising the attainment of 11-14 year olds (the Key Stage 3 Strategy). Thus, at the beginning of lessons, teachers explain exactly what students are expected to learn. This is then reviewed at

the end of lessons. This highly structured approach is very appropriate to the needs of the students at the college. Early in each lesson, teachers make good use of short activities designed to improve literacy. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace and contain a good range of activities so that students learn in a variety of ways. Where the pace is less than brisk, students learn less well.

49. In the best lessons, students assume a measure of responsibility for their own learning. For example, a class of lower-attaining Year 10 students, assisted by very well devised questions, was able to sustain lengthy group discussions about the relationships between the characters in Charlotte Bronte's novel, 'Jane Eyre'. The teacher's evident enthusiasm for the novel contributed significantly to the students' interest in the topic and to their very good progress in the lesson.

50. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of individual students who have particular difficulties. For example, students who have recently arrived from overseas are carefully incorporated into group work. Good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants contributes significantly to the good achievement of these students and others with different special needs. Girls gain in confidence as a result of some of the classes being single sex. ICT is used appropriately, for example in the drafting of GCSE coursework. Although teachers set relevant homework, too many students do not complete it. As a result, they miss opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding.

Leadership and management

51. The head of faculty took up post in September 2003. An early priority was to ensure good teamwork because there had also been several other changes of staff in the previous year. This has been skilfully achieved, creating a sense of cohesion and common purpose. The head of faculty has a clear vision of how the subject should develop so that students' work can improve. For example, the plans to improve the test results of Year 9 students are good, being securely based on a thorough analysis of the present situation and ways in which the teaching can be more tightly focused on the aspects of the work that students find difficult. The quality of English teaching is monitored, formally and informally. At the time of the last inspection, English was a strong subject in the college. It remains so today. There is good capacity for further improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. On entry to the college, students have very low standards of literacy. This is a huge barrier to successful learning in all subjects. The college works very hard to tackle this issue. Its problems in doing so are exacerbated by the many changes in the student population. The recent appointment of an Advanced Skills Teacher to work in this area is a highly appropriate step. Standards remain well below average at the end of Year 9, but show some improvement in Years 10 and 11. The library makes a good contribution to the development of students' literacy. Although many teachers work to promote literacy in their lessons, further improvement in standards across the curriculum depends on the consistent implementation of a systematic approach that places literacy at the heart of all learning.

Modern foreign languages

The main focus was on French, but German and Gujarati lessons were also seen. In the German lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were good. In four weeks, students have learned to ask and answer basic questions to find out personal details and, with help, could write a simple letter to a pen friend. In the Gujarati lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were good. Most of the students are native speakers of Gujarati and standards of reading and writing are average. In 2003, most of the students entered for GCSE Gujarati gained grades A* to C. Over the past three years the results in Gujarati have been consistently high.

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement, by older students, because the teaching is good.
- The good use of ICT in some lessons.
- Good teaching and learning in German and Gujarati.
- The very low numbers taking French at GCSE.
- The disaffection of some students to learning French.
- The variability in teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

53. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were well below those reported nationally. In 2002, the number of students taking GCSE in French was too low to make meaningful comparison with national statistics, but five of the seven students entered gained an A* to C grade. In 2003, similar low numbers took French and results remained at broadly the same level. Boys have generally gained higher grades than girls in the last two years.

Standards and achievement

54. Standards in French, in Years 9 and 11 are below average, but higher-attaining students, in Year 9, have average standards in listening, speaking and reading and can use the past tense accurately to describe a college trip. Students' skills in writing are below average. In relation to their well below average attainment when they come to the college, students make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The inclusion of students with EAL into French lessons is very good.

Teaching and learning

55. The quality of teaching varies considerably from very good to unsatisfactory. The teaching was good when the teacher used French for most of the lesson, because this developed students' listening and speaking skills. The best lessons were very well prepared and involved all students actively from the very start. Students responded enthusiastically to the teacher's questions and prompts and worked hard and with purpose. The teacher made very effective use of the interactive whiteboard, which ensured a brisk pace and clarity of content. Students' written and oral work was corrected systematically, which helped them to improve. Relationships in good lessons were very positive and use was made of humour to motivate students to achieve their best. On occasions, lessons did not get off to a brisk start and the tasks and activities did not provide enough interest and challenge for the students. In a Year 8 lesson students did not have the opportunity to apply the language they had learned to a real-life shopping situation and as a result, they lost interest, began to misbehave and did not achieve well. Teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 because the stronger teachers were used in these years.

Leadership and management

56. The schemes of work are thorough and appropriate and there is good guidance to teachers on teaching, learning and assessment. Very good monitoring of students' attainment is used to track their progress well. Although some work has been done to tackle the inconsistencies in teaching, it has not ensured the spread of good practice in the department. Progress since the last report has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers focus on the learning needs of the students and carefully-planned and well-structured lessons lead to good achievement for many students.
- For a minority the pace is too slow and they are left with inadequate work and insufficient challenge.
- A strong and improving use of assessment to monitor students' progress and identify specific learning needs of the students.
- Students have knowledge of their progress, grades and levels, but the routine class work makes insufficient reference to these to motivate and encourage students.
- The good leadership has resulted in a strong collegiate approach and new staff being supported well.
- The good use of support assistants provides a valuable in-class aid to raising achievement for a significant number of students.

Commentary

Examination results

57. On entry to the college, students' attainment is very low. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were well below national average and well below average on the basis of the students' prior attainment. The large number of students for whom no data is available makes national comparison insecure. The college figures, which use a more reliable data set, suggest that these students have made better than expected progress during their time in the college. This matches the evidence seen during the inspection. Results at the end of Year 11 were well below the national average and were a serious decline over the previous year.

Standards and achievement

58. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average but represent better than expected progress and hence good achievement. Students in a Year 9 top set, which contained a significant number of students who were average or below average when they joined the college, were working very effectively on finding the path of a point as it moved under given conditions. Their level of attention and effort, combined with high quality teaching, enabled them to reach standards above those normally expected.

59. At the end of Year 11, standards remain below average and overall achievement is satisfactory. This is mainly because, although the majority of students respond well to the structured and systematic approach used very effectively by staff in their teaching, for a small number of students the approach is too slow. Hence they achieve less well. Some students in a Year 10 group very quickly grasped the ideas of how to calculate volumes of prisms. They successfully applied these ideas in a range of problems. However, whilst the much larger, slower group of students were being given extra help, which enabled them to successfully grasp the ideas, the smaller, faster group was left with very little to do.

Teaching and learning

60. Teaching and learning is good overall although it is slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The patient approach to teaching with step-by-step explanations combined with a knowledge of students' needs, and the generation of positive relationships in the classroom all produce good learning. For some students, including some with special educational needs, the approach is occasionally too slow, and the pace of work limits their progress. Support assistants are used effectively, they make a very positive contribution to students' learning and give good support to teachers.

61. Data from assessment is used to monitor progress well but it is not used effectively in lessons to raise standards. The progress grades and good advice on 'how to improve' that students have in the front of their exercise books was not referred to during any of the observed lessons and therefore students were not given constant reminders of their targets. This limits the value of an otherwise very good system.

Leadership and management

62. A strong collegiate approach has been developed and the department is well supported by an effective 'numeracy technician'. Schemes of work are detailed and provide good guidance. The recent acquisition of interactive white boards and the use of the good ICT facilities are impacting on the quality of teaching of all staff. Data on student progress is carefully analysed and areas of mathematical weakness are identified for individual students but insufficient use is made of this information particularly to promote the learning of those students who show a greater mathematical ability than the majority. New teachers are given good support, both in the department and through the very good whole-college induction and support programme. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Students' competence in mathematics is below average, overall. Some good applications were seen in music, where aspects of numeracy were being used in describing pitch and 'beats'. In design and technology the schemes of work identify opportunities for the development of numeracy skills and in science there are visual displays show students how to tackle simple numeric problems such as calculating percentages. Teachers direct students to these displays which refer to techniques developed jointly by maths and science to ensure consistency of approach.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- GCSE results in 2003 were very high in comparison with similar schools.
- Students make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good.
- Good curriculum innovation in Years 10 and 11 is having a positive impact on raising standards.
- Leadership and management of the faculty are driving the department forward.

Commentary

Examination results

64. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were well below average and well below average on the basis of the students' prior attainment. The large number of students for whom no data are available makes national comparison insecure. Results at the higher levels were broadly in line with similar schools. GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average but were very high in comparison with similar schools. This is a significant improvement on the 2002 results. The successful introduction of GNVQ science contributed significantly to this improvement. These results have been achieved despite significant changes in the student population.

Standards and achievement

65. Standards in the current Year 9 are well below average, for example in terms of understanding of displacement reactions of metals, reactions of acids with different materials and details of cell structure. In Year 11, standards are below average, for example in students' ability to write and use balanced equations and to understand precipitation reactions. However, from their earlier attainment, students make good progress and achieve well throughout the college. In some lessons, students at an early stage of learning English, make insufficient progress. Positive and imaginative measures are in hand to rectify this situation.

Teaching and learning

66. Lessons are well structured, conducted at a good pace and involve a suitable variety of activity. Teachers' explanations are clear and questioning is used to involve all students well. Students respond well to teachers' suitably high expectations of both behaviour and level of work, and they learn and achieve well. In some lessons, which were satisfactory overall, too long was spent on low level tasks for part of the lesson and opportunities were missed to provide a good level of challenge. A range of teaching styles, including modelling with some good use of ICT by the teacher, written questions, interpretation of graphical data, matching and sequencing activities, hot seating, debate and some writing for a purpose, meet students' different learning needs well. Assignment-based work in the GNVQ and applied science courses in Years 10 and 11 involves students well and helps their development as independent learners. Students currently make insufficient use of ICT to support their learning but this is shortly to be rectified with improved resources. Some homework is insufficiently demanding. Very good procedures are used to track students' progress and set appropriate targets but information from assessment is not used to maximum effect in ensuring consistently high levels of challenge in lessons. Marking procedures emphasise the need to make constructive comments but implementation is not yet consistent within the team that includes many new teachers.

Leadership and management

67. A clear emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in a significant improvement in GCSE standards in the last two years. The introduction of new courses in Years 10 and 11 is having a marked impact. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a definite impact but is not yet implemented fully or consistently. In Years 7 to 9, while practical skills are being developed well, there is not enough use of full and open investigative work. Good practice is shared informally but, as yet, schemes of work do not give sufficient detail for guidance of all staff and formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching has yet to raise standards of all teaching to that of the best.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students make good progress as a result of the good teaching in the department.
- Constant and effective assessment of students' work encourages them to achieve more.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the subject.
- Students' poor response to homework reduces their ability to reinforce and extend their work.

Commentary

Examination Results

68. The results of teacher assessment, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were below those reported nationally. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well below the national average but results have improved in 2003, with students following an intermediate level GNVQ course.

Standards and Achievements

69. Standards in Year 9 are higher than those indicated by last year's assessment as a result of the continued good teaching. Students of all abilities have developed technical skills in using computers and other ICT equipment. They are competent in using the software to complete the college developed ICT-based GNVQ courses. They use a variety of sources, including the Internet, to find things out, develop their ideas and apply these to their own and other students' work. Students use research to redraft and improve their work but poor levels of literacy in all year groups adversely affects achievements.

Teaching and learning

70. Students benefit from the good knowledge and skills of teachers in ICT and rapidly develop skills in order to use computers with confidence and progress at a steady rate. The high expectations of staff, both for work and behaviour, results in students concentrating on their work and therefore progressing. Teachers constantly assess students' work, share the information with them and use it to set realistic but ambitious targets. This is particularly effective when students are completing units for their GNVQ course and the assessments are used as a means to improve the final examination grade. The department is particularly effective in the induction of students who arrive in the college throughout the year with a range of ICT skills. These students are encouraged to develop confidence in using computers and achieve more using ICT than they do by more traditional methods. The department also deals sensitively with students with specific educational needs and has developed appropriate courses for them.

Leadership and management

71. The head of department manages the department and the development of ICT throughout the college very well. Good progress is made by students in their achievements, not only in the ICT courses, but also its use in other areas of the curriculum. Examination results were well below the

national average but the introduction of the computer-based GNVQ course has led to improvement. Younger students are benefiting from the college-based computer courses which prepare them for the GNVQ in Years 10 and 11. These successful courses have been developed by the head of department and his team to meet the needs of all students. The level of commitment by the department fully supports the caring ethos of the college and greatly enhances the education students experience in the ICT areas of the college. Good accommodation, sufficient numbers of computers and technical support for the network systems all contribute to students' success.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Pupils' ICT competence is satisfactory. The funds received with Technology College status has allowed the college to increase the number of computers and other ICT equipment in all subject areas of the college. Every classroom now has a computer that is connected to the college intranet and used, for example, to record and monitor students' attendance and punctuality. Students are able to use word processing and spreadsheet packages to prepare work for all subjects. Specialist machines in Technology give students the opportunity to use *computer-aided design* and *computer-aided manufacture* programmes. The use of the Internet by students is widespread, allowing them to research information for a wide variety of subjects. Presentations, prepared both by teachers and students, use PowerPoint software and multimedia projectors. Every subject area has an interactive white board, which are increasingly being used to deliver more effective lessons.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Does not apply

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement throughout the college.
- Well-structured and interesting lessons engage students so that they are keen, want to learn and achieve well.
- Regular assessment and careful marking ensure that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, at times, assessments are not used sufficiently in lesson planning.
- The use of a large number of teachers with differing qualifications in geography leads to inconsistency in provision, particularly in the development of skills.
- Insufficient use of maps, diagrams, pictures and fieldwork, limits the achievement of some students who have difficulty visualising features or patterns.

Commentary

Examination results

73. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were well below those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were very low, lower than in 2002 when they were a little below the national average. Until 2003, GCSE results had been improving and so the 2003 results have been analysed carefully in order to understand the reasons for the change in the trend.

Standards and achievement

74. Current standards in Year 9, although well below average, are higher than indicated by last year's teacher assessments. From a very low starting point, students are achieving well, particularly in knowledge and understanding. By Year 9, students who joined the college with very limited understanding of places beyond their locality are beginning to understand ecosystems, such as that of rainforests, and think about the environmental implications of human activity in these areas. Their ICT skills are developed well through the use of websites and CD ROMs to research information about flora, fauna and sustainable developments. However, their understanding about where rainforests are located is weaker and their ability to use maps to help them locate places is underdeveloped.

75. Standards in the current Year 11, while still well below average, are higher than those represented by last year's results. Standards in Year 10 are higher. Students are achieving well. Students in Year 11 use data, such as birth and death rates, to improve their understanding of the economic development of countries. Although students can identify and classify these countries, their ability to locate them is again underdeveloped.

Teaching and learning

76. Teachers structure their lessons well and plan interesting and practical tasks and activities so that students enjoy their lessons and want to learn. Students' work is marked carefully and assessed well, so that students are clear about how well they are doing and also know precisely what they need to do to improve. Teachers have a wealth of assessment data, which is shared with students, but sometimes this information is not used well enough to plan lessons, resulting in some tasks that are too difficult for the students to carry out. Years 10 and 11 are taught by teachers with a good knowledge of the subject but in Years 7 to 9, too many lessons are taught by teachers who are not geography specialists. Consequently, there is inconsistency in some of the teaching, particularly in relation to the teaching of geographical skills of thinking. In some lessons, too little use is made of visual material, such as maps and photographs, to help students with limited literacy skills to understand the key features of what they are studying. For example, although students knew the names and definitions of river features, they had great difficulty describing a canoe journey down a river because they could not visualise features. Teachers use strategies, such as key words and writing frames, to help students develop their literacy skills but with insufficient emphasis, given students' low levels of competence in reading and writing.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject, is well organised and understands the subject well. The use of ICT has been developed well in Year 9. Students' work and their assessments are carefully monitored. The large number of non-specialist teachers in the subject makes communication, the development of a team and finding strategies to continue to improve the teaching, a challenge.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides rich and diverse opportunities for all students to learn.
- Excellent relationships between staff and students encourage participation and support learning
- The subject is well managed.
- Expectations are not always high enough for higher-attaining students.
- The developing of students' literacy skills is not strong enough to provide a secure base for higher attainment.

Commentary

Examination Results

78. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were below those reported nationally. GCSE results were below the national average in 2002 and those in 2003 were lower with few students gaining the higher grades. Results have fluctuated since the previous inspection but they have generally shown an upward trend.

Standards and Achievement

79. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Students' knowledge and understanding of history are broadly average but their ability to use documentary and pictorial sources is less well developed due to limited literacy skills such as poor spelling and grammar. Most Year 9 students use ICT well however, and are able to describe and analyse historical events through word processing, layouts and scanned illustrations which show increasing attention to detail. Written work shows less accuracy and poor presentation affects the achievement of many students who take insufficient interest in completing and extending their written work. Students' achievement, from very low levels on entry, is satisfactory

80. In Year 11, students' understanding of history is broadly satisfactory. Students respond with enthusiasm to historical material and reach conclusions which are well substantiated by evidence. Most students show confidence in following lines of enquiry and use their knowledge to analyse and explain events and change as in the Kennedy assassination. Although there is some development in the length and sophistication of written work, deficiencies in handwriting and spelling persist and the low levels of literacy are a constraint on learning and affect the standards reached. Students make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and Learning

81. In all years, students benefit from excellent relationships with experienced teachers who support and encourage students' interest and provide a classroom atmosphere which encourages learning. The majority of lessons are well planned for students of all levels of ability, and students with special educational needs are particularly well catered for and achieve as well as other students. Within some teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 however, the higher-attaining students receive insufficient challenge and direction to achieve the higher attainment levels. In Years 10 and 11, students' attitudes to the subject are very good, they clearly enjoy the variety and pace of history lessons and these contribute to their achievement. Teachers' marking, reporting and assessment procedures encourage students very well, as do the many extra-curricular opportunities which support classroom learning. Although students are aware of their progress and attainment levels they are given too little detailed guidance about how they could raise their level of attainment.

Leadership and management

82. The department is well managed with a strong team of teachers. The head of department provides clear direction. A commitment to raising standards results in a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and encouraging students' learning through a variety of assessment and reward systems which celebrate their achievement. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership provides a very clear vision for the subject.
- Students achieve well in all years because of the overall good teaching.
- All students in years 10 and 11 follow well-structured examination courses that build on their own faith backgrounds.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students create the right environment for class discussion of moral issues and religious teachings.
- Very good systems test students' knowledge, understanding and skills, to establish their attainment levels in the subject.
- Students do not have sufficient access to ICT in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

83. Results in the 2003 GCSE full and short-course examinations were average and continue a rising trend. One-third of students entered for the full course has English as an additional language.

Standards and achievement

84. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are at the levels expected by the Agreed Syllabus or in the examination course which all students follow. Students enter the college with well below average standards in religious education. They gain a reasonable knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the main religions in British society. In Year 9 lessons, students were able to use biblical and contemporary sources to explain Christian attitudes towards God and follow on by comparing these to their own thoughts. Students' oral skills are often good because through their own faith background they are used and willingly to discuss issues and understanding.

Teaching and learning

85. In all years, students benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are planned well, and the pace of lessons is always brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs, with specialist help, progress at a rate that matches that of other students in most areas of the subject. In lessons seen, those students for whom English is an additional language were helped by the teacher and work was carefully planned for them but they made insufficient progress because there was no specialist support. Homework is used to reinforce learning well. A strong feature of all lessons is the way in which students show an interest in the activities, work co-operatively and change activity quickly and quietly. Older students' attitudes to the subject are very good and they become actively engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities. Teachers are particularly well informed about the requirements of the courses they teach and share this information with students so that, for example Year 11 students understood the weighting of marks in their forthcoming mock examination.

Leadership and management

86. The head of department provides excellent vision and direction. Responsibilities are shared with other teachers. Much effort has gone into the examination courses for Years 10 and 11, producing detailed schemes of work, good quality revision booklets and writing frames in class and for homework. Assessment systems are thorough. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching they receive and the close monitoring and assessment of their coursework.
- The quality of leadership and management provides a clear direction for the subject and a supportive environment for students and teachers.
- Designing skills are weak, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

Examination results

87. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were well below those reported nationally. GCSE results, in 2002, were significantly below average. A higher proportion of girls than boys gained higher grades. Results in the 2003 examinations fell; however students achieved well in most design and technology subjects.

Standards and achievement

88. By the end of Year 9, students' designing and making skills are well below average; however this represents satisfactory achievement given students' very low attainment on entry to the college. They use a variety of tools and equipment competently and with confidence in all material areas. Students designing skills are weak because too little opportunity is provided for students to develop skills of analysis and evaluation. By the end of Year 11, standards of designing and making are below average. This represents good achievement since Year 9. Students make interesting products using a range of materials to designs that often reflect their cultural traditions. Good use is made of ICT overall and in product design, students are using computer-aided design software and computer-controlled machines to produce accurate, well-presented projects.

Teaching and learning

89. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Lessons are usually well paced and have clear learning objectives. A strong feature of all lessons is the way in which teachers provide interesting activities, particularly at the start of lessons to focus students' attention. The college has experienced difficulties in recruiting experienced qualified teachers and

has had to employ unqualified staff to fill vacancies. These teachers are well supported but their inexperience has occasionally led to unsatisfactory teaching because students are not given work of an appropriate level and activities are not sufficiently planned to ensure students make the most from them. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is better because the more experienced teachers are used. Teachers have high expectations and assessments are used well to help students' learning improve. When challenged and engaged by teachers, students' attitudes are positive, they are interested and take pride in their work. Teachers work hard to ensure all students achieve well and have developed strategies, such as coursework guides and support packs, to assist students at risk of underachievement. However, analysis and evaluation skills of the highest-attaining students are insufficiently developed and in general too little emphasis is given to presentation skills.

Leadership and Management

90. The department is managed well, new teachers are supported and there is a positive working relationship between the teachers. The joint heads of department have a strong vision for the subject and a clear focus on teaching and learning and raising attainment. Many of the strategies now in place are helping to raise the standard of students' work. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department is now well placed to build upon recent improvements and ensure that good practices are embedded throughout the department.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Does not apply

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not high enough because a significant number of lessons are currently, and have been in the past, taught by non-specialists.
- Specialist teachers' command of the subject and good lesson planning results in good achievement.
- A good range of teaching and learning styles are used effectively and generate positive attitudes to learning.
- Throughout a period of staffing turbulence the subject has been led and managed well.

Commentary

Examination results

91. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were not recorded in 2003. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and students achieved less well than in their other subjects. The results in 2003 were similar. A significant number of students join examination groups after the start of Year 10 with very little previous experience and achievement in the subject. Many have low standards of written and oral English and some have a poor record of attendance.

Standards and achievement

92. In current classes, standards are well below average and students' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, some students develop a range of skills in the subject. Basic skills of drawing and painting, alongside a growing awareness of artists' work, underpin students' own work. Many are able to explain their decisions confidently, for example about composition and colour. However, whilst attitudes are positive and achievement is good in some lessons it is unsatisfactory in others. Expectations are too low. For example sketchbooks and portfolios contain too much unfinished and poorly presented work and insufficient progress week on week, year on year. Many classes have in the past have been taught by non-specialist or temporary teachers. In Years 10 and 11, the disruptions to learning have left gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding that hamper progress and act as barriers to raising standards. Many students begin Year 10 disadvantaged and unprepared for the rigors of examinations. The task of rebuilding confidence and developing positive attitudes is a challenging one.

Teaching and learning

93. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were sound overall but stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in younger classes. In the most effective lessons, teachers' enthusiasm and bilingual expertise were used very well to develop students' language and specialist vocabulary. The most effective learning was as a result of very well-planned lessons matched to students' learning needs. A variety of teaching and learning styles were used to good effect - small group and whole-class teaching, question and answer sessions and teacher-led demonstrations of particular techniques. These provided a good basis for developing students' literacy skills alongside their art and design work. Behaviour was well managed and students with special educational needs, or for whom English was a second language, were able to make good progress. Without the skills to demonstrate particular techniques, and without good examples of work that exemplified what teachers required and expected of students, non-specialist teachers were unable to maintain the same rate of progress as their colleagues. Inconsistencies in teaching and learning, brought about by prolonged staff absence and a series of non-specialist supply teachers, were evident in the work available for scrutiny.

Leadership and management

94. Throughout periods of staffing turbulence and difficulties of finding specialist supply cover, leadership and day-to-day management has been good. Schemes of work provide a secure basis for planning lessons. Progress has been made in the use and standards of computer-generated art and design work. However access to computers is very limited and curriculum requirements for ICT are not met.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy the subject and achieve well.
- Teachers explain clearly how students can improve their work.
- Students' GCSE results are limited by their lack of literacy skills.

Commentary

Examination results

95. In 2002, GCSE results were significantly below the national average. The results in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

96. In drama lessons students improve the standard of their speaking and listening skills. In the examination course, students discuss complex social issues with maturity and some insight. They are then able to incorporate some of these ideas into their own practical work. Students' GCSE grades are limited by the standard of their written English. The students' practical work often shows a good sense of movement and timing, together with an awareness of how to use space to good effect.

Teaching and learning

97. Students are able to learn well because the teachers plan thoroughly and make their expectations clear. In group work, students co-operate well. The best teaching successfully challenges the students to think analytically so that they can improve their performances. Teaching does not always take full account of the linguistic and cultural background of the students. Appropriate extra-curricular activities offer the students opportunities to develop their interest in the subject.

Leadership and management

98. The subject is well organised with a good scheme of work that is clearly aimed at raising standards. The teachers benefit from a familiarity with one another's work and teamwork is good. As at the time of the last inspection, drama is a good feature of college provision.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good	Very Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to good achievement for those who attend regularly.
- Very good management ensures the curriculum keeps up with new developments.
- Good planning ensures that work is well related to students' needs.
- Computer resources for music are unsatisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection.
- There is a low take up for music options in extra-curricular activity and instrumental lessons and the number of students opting for GCSE music in year 10 is often low.

Commentary

Examination results

99. There were no candidates for GCSE music in 2002. Results in 2003 show students making good progress and achieving in line with expectation.

Standards and achievement

100. Standards in Year 9 are below average but represent good achievement in relation to the well below average standards on entry. The achievement by students with special educational needs is also good for those who attend regularly. Students have opportunities to use keyboards but computers are not available for use in the department. By Year 9, all students are able to use electronic keyboards with moderate to low competence for performance and for composition. Listening and appraising skills are well below average; students develop a limited musical vocabulary with which to describe the music they hear. Progress to Year 9 is restricted by the lack of suitable computer resources, the low take up of instrumental tuition and a number of students who do not attend regularly.

101. By the end of Year 11 students are able to produce compositions on electronic keyboards. Standards in composition and performance are below average, and are well below in musical appraisal. The department identifies students' musical and general literacy as a weak area and gives a strong focus to key words and technical terms. This has a positive effect on attainment in those areas requiring written, rather than practical, skills. There is no significant difference in attainment between different groups of students, apart from those with a record of poor attendance.

Teaching and learning

102. Teaching and learning are very good. In Years 7 to 9 students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning; lessons often have a wide range of interesting tasks and a brisk pace. This helps to consolidate student learning and maintain interest. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on composition, basic rhythm values and composing techniques were reinforced to help students to focus on the examination requirements. As a result, three students produced a competent piece for drums at a standard slightly above average. Teaching embodies very strong preparation, a range of teaching styles and very good organisation. Music teachers support all students with special needs, involving them in all activities. Some work is especially designed for them and most classroom activities are available at a range of levels. Very good teaching and good planning ensure that most students make good progress across Years 10 and 11.

103. The provision for instrumental teaching is very modest. The number of students taking lessons in college is well below average in relation to the size of the college. The visiting instrumental teachers' work is carefully managed and generally integrated into the work of the department.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership in the department is good and management very good. Administration within music has strong organisation. The department promotes literacy by supporting students well in lessons but as yet does not provide translations for the many students whose first language is not English. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of students' work are good. Teachers analyse attainment across the range of skills taught in music lessons and consider this information to extend the work offered to students.

105. Extra-curricular activity is growing. The performing and composing work of students is appropriately celebrated in musical events. Opportunities, such as the musical productions produced by the drama department, have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of students. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report. A main issue from the previous report, concerning the appropriate use of computers in music, remains unresolved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping students to learn and achieve well, especially on the GCSE course.
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- Students' good attitudes help their learning.
- Extra-curricular activities give very good opportunities for students to extend their learning.
- Non-participant students are not sufficiently engaged in learning.

Commentary

Examination results

106. GCSE results in 2002 were below average with boys performing better than girls and more boys than girls entered on the course. Results in 2003 were similar with a high proportion of students gaining D and E grades. This has led to reorganisation of groups, by the department, to raise the standards of these lower-attaining students.

Standards and achievement

107. Students have well below average skills when they enter the college as many students have not had previous experience in physical education. Students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9, especially in gymnastics and dance, because teachers work hard to build up students' movement vocabulary. Standards in the core curriculum, in Year 11, are below average but students are responding well to newly introduced activities, especially dance, fitness and aerobics. The achievement of students of all abilities is satisfactory. Standards, in Year 11, in the examination course are below average but students are learning and achieving well when previous attainment is considered and new setting arrangements are effective in targeting needs and raising standards. The transitory nature of some groups of students affects achievement overall. Non-participants do not achieve as well as they should because they are not sufficiently involved in the teaching. Some non-participants distract others and affect their progress.

Teaching and learning

108. Teachers demonstrate skills well so all groups of students, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is second language, understand. Teachers maintain students' interest using a variety of strategies and questioning is effective in checking students' understanding. In these good lessons, students respond well with good attitudes and learn well because of the high expectations of teachers. Choice, in some lessons, offers students different opportunities to extend work and push their achievement levels. For example, in a very good Year 7 gymnastics lesson, students were challenged to follow a sequence of movements devised by the teacher. Students ordered key words on cards to remind themselves of their planning. Students adapted the task to explore further possibilities well, as they fulfilled the objectives set. Students

learn well in groups and teachers encourage students to view one another's work. A video camera is used for analysis to improve performance as well as inform assessment. Talented students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular work and to lead extra-curricular groups; the programme for these students is being further developed. Assessment in the GCSE course, closely related to examination criteria; is used well to help students to check their progress and measure performance against targets. Marking does not always highlight areas for improvement and some work is unfinished, limiting revision possibilities. Students outside the examination course are aware of their progress because of the good monitoring systems in place.

109. The very extensive range of extra-curricular activities and team games enhances opportunities for learning. External links and coaching assist this rich programme. Activities are well suited to students' interests and needs.

Leadership and management

110. Very good leadership has focused attention strongly on standards and improvement. Very good analysis of the department's results and good teamwork has decisively re-structured teaching groups. Examination groups are now small and divided to suit the needs of different groups of students in theory lessons. The core curriculum course for all students has been extended to include dance, aerobics and fitness. This is designed to appeal to girls in particular to encourage them to join the examination course. The very good facilities are well used and teachers work to their strengths. Resources are good although access to ICT is limited. Very good guidance for teachers is provided in detailed schemes of work and policies.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The college offers a new business studies course this year. It was not observed because the teacher of the single option group was unexpectedly absent. The ICT GNVQ is reported within the ICT subject report. A GNVQ health and social care course, run jointly with another college, was sampled. The two lessons observed were both taught well. In both lessons, support staff worked well with students keeping them on task and helping them to learn. The plenary at the end of the lessons was used well to identify and consolidate the learning that had taken place.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are good role models and show commitment.
- Appropriate policies and documentation ensure that statutory requirements are met.
- Good ICT links relate to life-skills development.
- Insufficient time is allowed in years 7 to 9.
- Procedures for assessment not in place.

Commentary

Examination results

111. The subject has not been examined.

Standards and achievement

112. Standards on entry are well below the national expectation. In Years 9 and 11, the standard of the work seen was below that expected of students of these ages. Students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in lessons where they are encouraged to use their ICT skills of research, including spreadsheets and websites, to develop independent learning skills. Older students make good progress in lessons where they are able to discuss, debate and exchange ideas and therefore consolidate their knowledge. Overall, progress and achievement are satisfactory because they are variable, depending on the interpretation of subject matter, effectiveness of resources and enthusiasm of the teacher within the PSE programme.

Teaching and Learning

113. Teachers know their students well and offer good support and encouragement. They use a variety of teaching and learning styles and provide opportunities for debate and discussion. Within teaching, there is an appropriate emphasis on democracy and the rights of the individual but too little emphasis on individual responsibility or on students as informed citizens who have decision-making opportunities. All the required key elements of the subject are taught as discrete topics within the PSE programme. Aims and the expected learning outcomes are not always made clear so that students are unsure what it is they have learned by the end of the lesson.

Leadership and Management

114. The head of department has commitment and is enthusiastic about future developments. Documentation and schemes of work are a good basis for improved lesson planning. Monitoring and professional development have not been sufficiently rigorous to achieve consistency in the teaching of all those involved in teaching the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	6
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).