

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MOUNT CARMEL RC TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

Islington

LEA area: Islington

Unique reference number: 100460

Headteacher: Mr Paul Kehoe

Lead inspector: George Knights

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 258708

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	673
School address:	Holland Walk Duncombe Road London
Postcode:	N19 3EU
Telephone number:	0207 281 3536
Fax number:	0207 281 0420
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Paul Smith
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mount Carmel RC Technology College is a smaller than average girls' comprehensive school in the London Borough of Islington. There are 673 students, aged 11 to 16 years, on roll. Students come from a wide area of North London and will previously have attended up to 70 different primary schools. Most of the students are from a lower than average socio-economic background and overall attainment on entry is below average. The college has gained in popularity in recent years and is now full. The number of students eligible for free school meals is high. Students come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and the number for whom English is not their home language is very high. The number of students on the college's register of special educational needs is above the national average and the number with Statements of Special Educational Need is average. Around three-quarters of students continue in full-time education when leaving Mount Carmel, most attending a local college of further education. Student turnover is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9542	Brian Jones	Lay inspector	
12568	Christopher Morris	Team inspector	English
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Science
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Design and technology
28899	Graham Sims	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship
17349	Paula Askew	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Mount Carmel is a **good and improving** school with many **very good** features. Standards are improving and are **close to average**. Teaching and learning are **good**. Leadership and management of the college are **very good** and the college gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The sustained improvement in all aspects of the college has resulted from the clarity of vision, strong sense of purpose and high levels of aspiration that underpin all aspects of college life.
- Achievement is good because teachers know their students well and take very good account of the needs of individuals.
- Students are eager and enthusiastic learners who want to do well because they feel valued, supported, trusted and respected.
- A very strong ethos of support and care underpins all aspects of the life and work of the college.
- An excellent commitment to fostering good relationships ensures that the college is a very harmonious and tolerant community.
- Very effective steps are taken to ensure that all students are able to participate in every aspect of school life.
- Students are not given enough detailed guidance on how to improve their work.
- Steps taken to identify and share good practice are not yet rigorous enough.

Overall, progress since the previous inspection has been **good**. Standards of work being produced by students currently in college are better than previously reported because teaching and learning have improved. Good progress has been made in dealing with the issues identified in the previous inspection report, particularly those associated with the need to improve provision in music and design and technology.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below average, but were average for similar schools. They were slightly lower than in the previous year but the overall trend has been one of improvement at the same rate as national improvement. The results represent good progress in science and satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, given students' attainment on entering the college. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were at the national average and were very high when compared with similar schools. These results maintained a pattern of improvement at a faster rate than nationally over the past five years.

#### Year 11 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	B	B	A*

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained at the end of Year 9.*

Students currently in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well and working at higher levels than previous groups of students. Similarly, students in Years 10 and 11 are working at well-above-average standards in art and design and at broadly average standards in all other subjects. This represents good, and in some cases, very good progress since they joined the college. The reason for this good achievement is that teachers know the needs of each individual well and present lessons in ways that enable all students to learn successfully.

Students adopt very good attitudes to work. They are enthusiastic and hard-working learners who recognise that teachers have their interests at heart. Very good relationships pervade all aspects of

college life. Students behave very well, both in lessons and around the college. Attendance is above average and improving, largely because students enjoy college life and recognise that regular attendance is key to their success. The college, through lessons and other activities, makes a very good contribution to students' personal, and especially their social, moral and cultural, development.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided in the school is good.** Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is particularly good in English, art and design and information and communication technology and good in all other subjects. The strongest feature of teaching is the care that teachers take to meet the needs of students, whether they have specific learning difficulties or do not speak English as their home language. Only in provision for the most able students are there some instances where the needs of individuals are not met well.

The curriculum is good and has improved since the previous inspection. A varied and stimulating programme of enrichment activities complements the taught curriculum and contributes well to students' personal development. The college is generally well staffed with experienced and well-qualified teachers. Only in mathematics are standards affected by difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teachers. Resources are satisfactory, as is accommodation overall. Some shortcomings in accommodation for design and technology and music will be overcome when the current building programme is completed. Arrangements for the care, welfare and health and safety of students are very good. The college takes good account of the views of students and acts upon them well. Links with the community and other schools are very good and links with parents are good.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the college are very good.** The acting principal has an exceptionally clear vision and sense of purpose. He and his colleagues have an excellent level of commitment to ensuring that all members of the college community are held in equal worth. Strategic planning is very good, enabling the college to manage its resources effectively. Whole college review programmes are rigorous and extensive, but further work is needed to improve review at middle management level. Similarly the use made of the analysis of performance information, already very good at whole college level, needs to be extended throughout the college. Governance of the college is good. Governors have a secure working knowledge of how the college is doing and contribute well to helping shape its future direction. They fulfil most of their responsibilities well, though they do not provide parents with all the information they are required to.

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

Parents' views are very positive. They recognise that their daughters make good progress because teaching is good. They feel confident about approaching the college. Students say Mount Carmel is a good college. They make good friends and feel trusted. Parents and students recognise that this is a well-run college.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- ensure that students are given the detailed guidance they require to help them understand better how they can improve their work;
- make review and self-evaluation at middle management more rigorous so that the considerable amount of good practice in the college can be shared better and extended;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the governing body provides all the required information for parents.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were **below average**. In GCSE examinations, results were **average**. The achievement of students currently in the college is **good** and the overall standard of their work is **average**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved teaching has led to GCSE results improving at a faster rate than nationally in recent years.
- Standards of work being produced by students currently in the college are better than those for students who left the college last year.
- Very good strategies are in place to help all students to do their best.
- Achievement in art and design is particularly impressive, but achievement in mathematics is only satisfactory.

#### Commentary

1. As the college has become more popular it has attracted a greater number of more able students. However, overall attainment on entry in recent years has been below average. Those students currently in Year 11 and those who left in 2003 had well below average standards when they joined the college. Given these standards on entry, results indicate that students make good progress throughout their time at the college.
2. Results in national tests for 14 year olds in 2003 were below average, having been average in the previous year. They were average for similar<sup>1</sup> schools. Despite this slight decline in 2003, results in these tests have been improving over recent years at about the same rate as improvement nationally. Results were average in science, representing good progress. In English, results were lower than in the previous year because some students did not do well in the writing element of the tests. The college has recognised that it needs to do more to improve writing standards and evidence from the inspection indicates that the steps taken have led to an improvement in writing standards. In mathematics, results were higher than in the previous year but remained below average. Difficulty in appointing a full team of qualified teachers was the main reason for mathematics results not being higher. Full details of results are given in the table below.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.7 (34.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.6 (32.4)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	32.9 (32.1)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 126 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Standards of work being produced by students currently in Year 9 represent good achievement, given their attainment on entry. Standards in English, mathematics and science are all average. In other subjects standards are well above average in art and design and this represents very good achievement. Students are achieving well in all other subjects. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Similar schools in this context are those schools where students had gained similar results in national tests at the end of their primary education (Year 6).



because teachers know their students very well and plan lessons that meet the needs of individuals.

4. Results in GCSE examinations were average in 2003 having been above average in 2002. Despite this slight decline compared with an exceptional set of results the previous year, GCSE results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally over the past five years. Results in 2003 were very high when compared with similar<sup>2</sup> schools. Almost all students left the college with at least one GCSE grade and this is well above the national average. Further details of results are given in the table below.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades	47 (58)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades	88 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.2 (36.8)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 119 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. In 2003, students did relatively better in religious education and Spanish than they did in other subjects, while those taking design and technology and English did less well in these subjects than in their other subjects. In all subjects students did at least as well as expected and, in most subjects, did better than expected.
6. The standards of work being produced by students currently preparing for GCSE examinations are well above average in art and design and are broadly average in all other subjects. This represents very good achievement in art and design and information and communication technology and good achievement in all other subjects except mathematics, where achievement is satisfactory. This pattern of good achievement results from consistently good teaching in almost all subjects.
7. Standards of literacy are good and support learning in all subjects. This is particularly impressive, given that many students in the college do not have English as their home language. Very good steps are taken to ensure that these students quickly and successfully acquire the necessary English skills. Successful work has been undertaken to improve overall writing standards. This has involved teachers across many subjects and improvement in students' writing standards results from teachers having taken this work seriously. Students generally have the necessary mathematical skills to enable them to make progress in other subjects. Whole college approaches to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills are well co-ordinated, though more progress has been made recently in improving literacy skills than mathematics skills across the curriculum.
8. The most impressive aspect of student performance in the college is that all groups of students do equally well. The college community is made up of students from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds, many of whom do not speak English as their mother tongue. The college also has a larger than average number of students with special educational needs. The college has put in place a range of very effective strategies that help ensure the good progress of all. Care is taken to monitor the performance of groups of students, for instance, those from similar backgrounds. The information from this monitoring is shared with teachers, who respond by modifying teaching, where necessary, to ensure that no group falls behind. Very good work is undertaken to ensure that those students who are at an early stage of learning English are fully integrated into lessons and are able to learn well. Specific examples of good individual support for these students are given elsewhere in this report. Good links between

<sup>2</sup> Similar schools in this context are those schools where students had gained similar results in national tests at the end of Year 9.

subject teachers and tutors who monitor students' personal welfare also ensure that the needs of individual students are met well.

9. The support for students with special educational needs is very good. The needs of individuals are carefully identified and these needs are communicated to subject teachers. Tasks in lessons are modified to make them accessible and useful. Learning support assistants make a very good contribution to the education of these students, frequently working very well alongside class teachers. As a result, students with special educational needs make good progress.
10. The college is strongly committed to further improvement in standards. It broadly met its targets for results in national tests and GCSE examinations in 2003. As the college has become more popular, more students are being admitted who have done better in their primary education. Senior staff and governors recognise that this poses a challenge and consequently have set ambitious but achievable targets for the coming years.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students have **very good** attitudes to all aspects of college life. They behave **very well**. Their personal development, as a result of what the college provides, is **very good**. Attendance is **good** and punctuality is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students from a range of backgrounds work very well together, both in lessons and around the college.
- Students are enthusiastic workers who recognise that teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Students grow in maturity, responsibility and self-confidence very well as they progress through the college.
- Attendance has improved steadily because students want to gain from what the college offers them.

### **Commentary**

11. A strong feature of most lessons, and other activities in the college, is the enthusiasm that students show for their work. Students recognise that teachers have their interests at heart and that they plan interesting and stimulating lessons. Consequently they work hard. Students like their teachers, with whom they form very good relationships. These relationships are built on very good levels of mutual respect and genuine care and concern for one another.
12. Although students who make up the community come from many different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, the college is characterised by high levels of racial harmony. This represents the maintenance of a strength identified in the previous inspection. This situation arises because teachers encourage students from different backgrounds to work and play together and because they structure activities that enable this to happen. In this regard the college fully lives out its aim to 'to create a multicultural community in which all the talents of both students and staff are recognised, valued and encouraged'.
13. Central to the successful building of a community in which students and staff relate so well together is that students know that their individual needs are attended to. Hence they appreciate the support given to them, whether their need is to develop their command of English, to become better integrated into both college and wider community life or to overcome a specific learning difficulty. Because of this good knowledge of students' needs and a commitment to meet them, all students grow in confidence and in self-esteem. This is well illustrated in the many ways that students display a willingness to take responsibility, both formally and informally, in all aspects of college life.

## Attendance

14. Attendance is good and has been improving steadily in recent years. The main reason is that students feel that it is worthwhile being at college and they recognise that regular attendance is important if they are to do well in their studies. Good links have been established with parents, most of whom are now very supportive of the work done by the college to improve attendance. A home-school worker is very effective in furthering these links, especially in situations where there is some reluctance on the part of students to attend. Attendance levels are set out in the table below.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.7	School data:	0.5
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

15. Students behave very well, both in lessons and around the college. This is mainly because teachers and support staff respect them and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. The college has clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour that are respected by students. These guidelines are associated with rewards and sanctions that both students and parents consider to be fair. One sanction, exclusion, is only used after other sanctions have been exhausted. As a result, exclusion numbers are relatively low. Details for the last full year are given in the table below. During the current school year there have been fewer fixed period exclusions than last year, and no permanent exclusion. This is because, as the college continues to improve, students are becoming more responsible for ensuring that they behave well.

## Exclusions

### **Ethnic background of students**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
Black or Black British - Caribbean
Black or Black British - African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Any other ethnic group
Parent/pupil preferred not to say

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

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
207	17	0
27	9	0
14	3	0
21	2	0
99	8	1
145	8	0
12	2	0
37	2	0
8	1	0

16. Taking more responsibility for their actions is one of the many ways in which students show their growing maturity. This is a central aspect of how the college effectively promotes very good personal development of students. Again this is a clear illustration of the college fully living out its aims. Students in the college develop a very good understanding of, and respect for, the feelings, values and beliefs of others. This does not happen accidentally, however. Teachers very successfully emphasise these qualities, both in lessons and in other activities.

As a Catholic Christian community, the college places a strong emphasis on helping students identify right from wrong. This is done by carefully helping students explore a range of moral and social issues in many different contexts. The college also successfully meets a further aim to ‘maintain respect for other cultures, traditions and faiths’. This it does through good teaching that breaks through prejudice and provides frameworks for the girls to shape their own views from an informed perspective. Students also, through living and working in the college community, develop good levels of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the college is **good**. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are **good**, as is the provision of enrichment activities.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall, with some very good features. The assessment of students’ work is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching throughout the college motivates students to learn well and to develop positive attitudes to work.
- Teaching and learning are very good in English, art and design and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teachers know students very well and their thorough planning ensures that work matches the needs of students with different abilities.
- There have been improvements in teaching, learning and assessment since the college made them a priority for development.
- Occasionally the most able students are not sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Assessment of students’ work is good, but the information gained is not used well in all subjects to guide students towards improvement.

### Commentary

17. The overall quality of teaching is good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. However, because over a quarter of lessons are now very good and many more lessons are good than previously, this represents a significant improvement. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and none in Years 10 and 11, where the proportion of good teaching is higher than in Years 7 to 9. This is due to the concentration of more experienced teachers in Years 10 and 11 and to the fact that, during the week of the inspection, Year 11 students were fully engaged by well-focused and stimulating teaching in preparation for their GCSE examinations.
18. Teaching is very good in English, art and design and ICT and good in all other subjects. This has led to the raising of standards in recent years, especially in the GCSE examinations. Important strategic decisions have been made to improve teaching and learning, which have been a main focus for staff development and departmental reviews. Effective management by heads of subject, senior management and the local education authority has ensured positive developments in teaching strategies and in the use of resources.
19. Lesson observations during the inspection confirm the college’s own self-evaluation that teaching and learning are good. Details of teaching in lessons seen are given in the table below.

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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1 (1%)	30 (28%)	50 (46%)	26 (24%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
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*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.*

20. In the best lessons, students' knowledge and skills are well developed because teachers have high expectations and thoroughly plan a variety of stimulating tasks. Students are fully engaged in their learning and, as a result, build up a good understanding of the work they are studying. Teachers relate to the students very well and set high expectations of behaviour through very good classroom management. Students experiment, enquire and work in groups, so that their skills of discussion, listening and writing are being well developed. This has been enhanced by the effective use of interactive technology in classrooms and the wider use of computers to make learning more exciting.
21. Teachers know students very well and ensure that carefully structured work matches the needs of all abilities. This is a strength of the teaching as the proportion of students with special educational needs, and those for whom English is not their home language, is well above average. These students are particularly well supported, mainly in lessons rather than by withdrawal for individual help. Teachers make very good use of the information they have about these students to modify their lessons and set suitable learning objectives. Good liaison exists between teachers and classroom learning assistants, who provide valuable and very effective classroom support. Consequently, all students have the same opportunity to learn and to achieve equally well.
22. Only rarely is teaching unsatisfactory. The main reason for this, or for teaching being less than good, is related to inadequate planning to match the work to the students' abilities. This sometimes means that lessons lack pace so that learning is slow. It also means that there is occasionally a lack of consistent challenge for the most able students. Although extension work is often set, the progress of these students is not always monitored rigorously enough to ensure all are achieving well.
23. Assessment procedures continue to be good, as previously reported. The college has set assessment as a clear priority for development. Recent staff development programmes have effectively shared good practice amongst subject teachers and raised awareness of assessment for learning. There are clear whole college marking and assessment policies to guide further developments. The college has very thoroughly compiled information on students' work and progress which is communicated well to teachers so that they are aware of students' prior attainment, especially on entry to the college in Year 7. Nearly all subjects have good assessment procedures. Teachers analyse results well and use them effectively to influence curriculum decisions. History and modern foreign languages, in particular, have improved in these respects since the previous inspection. However, the college acknowledges that the tracking of students' progress and guiding them on how to improve, through target setting, needs to be improved. This is particularly so in mathematics, history, design and technology and physical education, although the situation is not unsatisfactory in these subjects.

## **The curriculum**

The college provides a **good** curriculum, which is enriched by a **good** range of activities outside lessons. The college's resources and accommodation are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The college very successfully ensures that all students, and particularly those with special educational needs or those for whom English is not their mother tongue, have full access to the curriculum.
- The college's planning and implementation of strategies to develop students' literacy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum are good.

- The college has a good range of learning resources and these are having a positive impact on students' learning.
- Shortcomings in the college's accommodation have an adverse effect on the teaching of some subjects.
- Although the college is generally well staffed, problems in recruiting suitably qualified staff in mathematics have had an adverse impact on students' learning.

### **Commentary**

24. The college offers a traditional curriculum leading to GCSE qualifications, and students in Years 10 and 11 can choose from a satisfactory range of subjects. The college has been slow to introduce more vocationally based courses, although a new vocational GCSE course in leisure and tourism is shortly to be implemented. The college is, however, very successful in the way it ensures that all students have access to the curriculum. Good support, both within the classroom and through occasional withdrawal sessions, is provided for a significant proportion of students who have special educational needs, and for students whose mother tongue is not English. The college exercises sensitivity in the way it deals with students from a very wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with the result that these students are very well integrated.
25. Much thought has gone into planning how key skills of literacy and information and communication technology can be developed across the curriculum. All departments have identified ways in which they can develop specific literacy skills. Students develop their information and communication technology skills well in most subjects and, where such opportunities are still limited, such as in music and modern foreign languages, action is being taken to bring improvement.
26. New curriculum initiatives are implemented well. The programme for education in citizenship, for example, is not just taught formally through the curriculum, but is worked out in practice through such activities as the students' involvement in sponsoring disabled children to visit Lourdes. The college has effective arrangements for drugs awareness and sex education. Aspects of the curriculum which were previously weak, such as music and design and technology, have improved significantly. The implications of acquiring technology college status and additional time allocated to developing students' information and communication technology skills have, however, had a detrimental effect on the teaching of modern foreign languages, where teachers do not have enough time to reinforce students' speaking skills.
27. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the formal curriculum. For example, students participate in theatre visits, enrichment activities in mathematics, a monthly Euro-Club and a range of sporting activities. The range of music activities for students to participate in has increased. The computer club is very popular and a large number of students participate in the four foreign visits, organised primarily by the modern foreign languages department, but also with involvement of art and design, design and technology and history departments. Students with special educational needs have their own helpful extra-curricular club, and many departments organise additional sessions to support students in their preparation for GCSE examinations. An extensive range of activities challenge and extend gifted and talented students.
28. In most subjects the college has been able to recruit and retain well qualified teams of teachers. However, the college has had significant problems for a number of years in recruiting suitably qualified staff to teach mathematics and this has had an adverse impact on students' learning and the standards achieved in this subject. Teachers are given good support by a well-qualified team of classroom learning assistants and by an efficient administrative staff team. The college is well resourced. Involvement with the local Education Action Zone and acquisition of technology college status have resulted in significant improvements in the quality and range of resources, such as the installation of interactive whiteboards. These are used to good effect in many parts of the college and are having a positive impact on students' learning. The learning resources centre is managed very well and its facilities have improved

significantly. Students use the centre extensively and they have open access to the computers and support from the centre's staff at lunchtimes and before and after the college day.

29. Overall, the school's accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. However, poor outdoor facilities for physical education and unsatisfactory accommodation for design and technology and music currently restrict what students can do in these subjects. The new technology building, currently being built, will provide good new facilities for design and technology and allow relocation of music teaching rooms to resolve problems in these two subjects.

### Care, guidance and support

Provision for care, support and guidance and measures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Arrangements to provide guidance and advice on careers and education beyond the age of 16 are **very good**. Arrangements to ensure that all students have a voice are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral system provides very good support so that students feel valued and achieve well.
- Through the work of the learning mentor, the college makes very good provision to ensure all students are included in college life.
- Monitoring and support for students for whom English is not their first language are very good.
- The student council is very effective in enabling students to express their views and make a contribution to college life.
- Systems to ensure students with special educational needs are identified and supported are very good.

### Commentary

30. The college has a very good caring ethos, central to which is a well-organised pastoral system that identifies students' individual needs when they join the college. Very good induction arrangements ensure that students' needs are identified and that they are well supported. Through the work of the tutors and heads of year and strong links with external agencies, the college ensures students have access to a very good range of support and guidance. The college seeks to raise students' aspirations through very good advice and guidance on career pathways and educational opportunities beyond the age of 16 years. Health and safety procedures are good and the college has very effective procedures for the protection of children. The vice-principal is the nominated person for child protection and all adults employed in the college receive effective regular training on child protection issues.
31. Tutors play an active and effective role in the day-to-day monitoring and support of students' personal and academic development. However, tutors are not yet actively involved in giving academic advice, support and guidance to members of their tutor groups. This is largely because they currently do not receive the necessary information from subject teachers. Tutor time is used effectively and is crucial to the development of good working relationships between teachers and students. Heads of year oversee and support tutors and hence students feel valued and secure.
32. Students with special educational needs and those newly arrived in college are assessed, supported and monitored very well. This enables them to take a full part in the life of the college. Similarly, assessment and support for those for whom English is not their first language is very good. Since the previous inspection the college has extended its care with the provision of a learning mentor to support those students requesting, or deemed to require, personal support. This person complements the work of tutors, heads of year and the home-school worker and is greatly valued by students. Through this high quality provision the college seeks to ensure that all students can achieve and are effectively included in the life of the college.

33. An active student council represents the views of students from all tutor groups and, in addition to charitable work, promotes students' personal development and sense of responsibility. A good example of this is the paper recycling programme instigated by students.

34.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

**Very good** links with the community and other schools have a positive effect on students' learning. Mount Carmel has **good** links with parents.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good links with the community increase students' opportunities for learning and give them the chance to shine.
- Mount Carmel gives and gains a great deal from its very good links with other schools and colleges.
- Parents think well of the college and give good support to their daughters' learning.

#### **Commentary**

35. Partnerships with parents are good. The pre-inspection questionnaire and the parents' meeting produced high levels of positive response. Mount Carmel welcomes new parents and makes clear its high expectations. The overwhelming majority commit themselves to the college's high standards. They support their daughters' regular homework. Students' planners achieve very good communication with the form tutor because parents sign it every week. The college makes very good use of its own bilingual staff and the local education authority's translation service, to involve parents whose first language is not English. Meetings in Spanish and Turkish that explain the English educational system are very popular. There are regular formal meetings for all parents with form tutors. Written reports to parents are detailed and individual.
36. Very good links with the community are used well to extend students' learning. The North Islington Education Action Zone provides significant support. A particular feature at Mount Carmel is students' confident use of interactive whiteboards. The Education Action Zone funded the purchase of these whiteboards and the cost of training for staff. Other community links give students the chance to shine. This happened literally when a group of students made a Cloth of Gold Banner for the Lord Mayor's Show with the help of a local artist. Others meet classical musicians and see unfamiliar instruments at the London Symphony Orchestra. Still more use a professional-standard studio to compose their own music or win awards for dance and drama. Visits by Year 10 students to local businesses on work experience help them understand their future opportunities and responsibilities.
37. Links with other local schools are very good. Mount Carmel receives students from about 70 primary schools each year. It achieves a smooth transition. Teachers visit all these schools and receive helpful academic and personal information for all students. This information enables teachers to ensure that new students settle well. Good curriculum links are made, for instance, through running summer schools in literacy and numeracy and providing taster courses in science, design and technology and information and communication technology for Year 6 pupils. As a lead school in the Education Action Zone, Mount Carmel offers experience in advanced computer programs to other local schools. Close co-operation with colleges and universities enhance the breadth and quality of learning at Mount Carmel. The college hosts initial teacher training for three academic institutions. Gifted and talented students benefit from community links, for instance, visiting a range of universities. During the inspection, forensic science specialists from University College London were helping Year 9 students solve Mount Carmel's own 'murder mystery'.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the college are both **very good**. Governance of the college is **good**.



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acting principal has an exceptionally clear vision and sense of purpose.
- The commitment to ensuring that all members of the college community are held in equal worth is excellent.
- Levels of concern for the needs of individuals are excellent.
- Very good arrangements for their induction and professional development help ensure that staff feel valued as members of a strong team.
- Self-evaluation is very good at whole college level but is less well developed at departmental and year team level.
- The monitoring of performance information, and taking subsequent action, is very good at whole college level but is inconsistent at departmental level.

## **Commentary**

38. The strongest evidence of the very good leadership of the college is that, in all its activities, it lives out its aims to the full. Inspired and very ably led by the acting principal, the college continues to improve in all aspects of its work. This is because members of staff have a very strong common sense of purpose and work very well together as a cohesive team. Senior and middle managers are strong motivators of others and provide very good role models, both for other staff and for students.
39. Strategic planning is a major strength. Very good procedures are in place to involve all staff and governors in the identification of priorities. These are strongly linked to the overall purposes of the college, which are set out clearly in the college mission statement. Detailed planning ensures that resources are well targeted to meet identified priorities and steps are taken to ensure that teachers have the necessary training to implement plans successfully.
40. Significant improvements have taken place in the college in recent years, especially related to teaching and learning. The insights and guidance provided by the acting principal and his senior colleagues are further developing a community focused on improving academic standards whilst at the same time ensuring that the personal development of students is very good.
41. Most noticeable of all the characteristics of the college is the work undertaken to promote equality of opportunity for all. Great care is taken to ensure that all students take part in the full curriculum and all are able to benefit from the good programme of enrichment activity. In this multi-cultural and multi-ethnic college community the qualities and gifts of all are celebrated and the needs of all are met with equal care, as befits a Catholic Christian community.
42. Management of the college is very good. A detailed programme of rigorous self-evaluation has been put into place at a whole college level that enables senior staff and governors to identify priorities for further development. The college's plan for further improvement is based on this review programme, and priorities within that plan reflect current college needs very well. Self-evaluation is less well developed at middle manager level than at whole college level. However, one priority identified in the college is to strengthen the skills of both heads of subject and heads of year in the evaluation of what is happening in their areas of responsibility. Already steps have been taken to provide additional time for middle managers to undertake this review, and training in the necessary skills is currently being provided.
43. At a whole college level, analysis of performance information is very good. This is illustrated by the fact that senior staff have assured themselves that no particular group of students is performing significantly differently from others. However, this analysis is not currently undertaken systematically at departmental level. Some very good work is undertaken in English, mathematics, information and communication technology and art and design and good plans are in place for this expertise to be shared with other subjects. Plans are also in place to develop better systems for communicating the outcomes of this analysis to heads of years and their tutor teams so that better academic guidance can be provided for students.

The management of provision for students with specific learning needs is very good. Whether related to a learning difficulty or to a limited knowledge of English, the specific needs of individuals are carefully identified, communicated well to all staff and acted upon.

44. The college is situated in an area where the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced teachers are difficult. However, a very strong commitment to the professional development of staff and a range of creative initiatives mean that any negative impact on the college of staff shortages has been minimised. Only in mathematics, where some difficulties have arisen, have standards been lowered by not being able to appoint suitably skilled teachers. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are very good, representing a big improvement on the previous inspection when appraisal arrangements were not in place. Governors and senior staff are strongly committed to providing all teachers with the training necessary to meet the needs of the college and for personal advancement. Recognising the strength of links with initial teacher training providers, the college has a very well developed programme to support the work of student teachers. Similarly, arrangements for teachers new to the college or the profession are very good.
45. Very good attention is paid to ensuring that financial priorities are closely matched to the educational priorities in the college. The college has benefited in a number of ways from a range of additional funding initiatives in recent years and is able to identify where, and in what ways, the college has improved its provision for students as a result. Senior staff and governors monitor expenditure patterns carefully and manage the resources available to them very well. Very good steps are taken to apply the principles of best value to management and use of resources. Overall college administration is smooth and effective, with support and administrative staff ably supporting teachers so that the latter can focus their energies on teaching and learning.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,331,156	Balance from previous year	31,722
Total expenditure	3,351,244	Balance carried forward to the next	11,634
Expenditure per pupil	4,972		

46. Governors make a good overall contribution to helping shape the vision and direction of the college. They have a good overall view about the strengths and areas for improvement in the college and play their part in producing the annual plans for improvement, for setting the budget and for monitoring expenditure patterns. They informally monitor what is happening in the college but their arrangements for systematic review are somewhat dependent on the guidance they receive from senior staff. Governors ensure that almost all their statutory duties are fulfilled, though they do not meet all requirements associated with providing information for parents.
47. There are many aids to raising achievement in the college. In particular the leadership of the acting principal, the commitment of all staff to working together as a team and the willingness of students to commit themselves fully to what the college offers stand out. The only significant barrier to raising achievement is the occasional difficulty of retaining high quality teachers, though this has only been a problem in mathematics recently.

# **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**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well because teachers have a good knowledge of individuals and tailor work to meet their needs.
- Very good leadership and management of English ensure a consistent approach to the subject.
- Marking does not provide enough specific guidance to the most able students on how to improve.
- Students for whom English is not their home language are very well integrated and supported in lessons.

#### **Commentary**

48. Results in Year 9 national tests in 2003 were below average but were above the average for similar schools. These results were lower than in the previous year. Fewer students attained Level 6 because they did not perform well in the writing aspect of the tests. The college has since focused on improving students' writing in all subjects. The English department itself has given specific emphasis to improving writing skills. This is proving successful and writing standards have improved significantly so that, by the end of Year 9, students can write in a wide range of different styles. Overall achievement in English by the end of Year 9 is good. In reading, students can generally identify important events and themes in fiction and the more able students have learned how to tease out underlying significance. All students, including those for whom English is not their home language, speak with confidence in lessons.
49. Results in GCSE English in 2003 were at the national average overall, though fewer than average gained the highest grades. These students had entered the college with well below the national average attainment and so these results represent good progress during their five years in the college. Students currently in Year 11 are achieving well and working at broadly average standards. In speaking and listening, they are skilled in using emphasis and intonation to make their meaning clear. There is a marked increase in the number of literary devices these students regularly employ and a good improvement by the majority of students in organising extended writing. These students relate social and historical context to the texts they are studying. Less able students, however, make far fewer amendments during the drafting process. All students are given good support in lessons in order to enable them to make good progress. Teachers know the needs of individuals well and use this information to modify tasks to meet individual needs. This is particularly of benefit to students with special educational needs and to those at an early stage of speaking English.
50. Teaching is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. It was at least good in all lessons. Lessons are very well structured with individual tasks building systematically on previous work. Teachers use their very good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses when asking questions of different levels of difficulty and when allocating time to individuals and groups of students. As a result, all students are fully involved and all are able to gain similar benefits from lessons. Teachers set tight deadlines for activities and this maintains a sense of momentum. Very occasionally, however, teachers attempt to include too much content in lessons. Relationships between teachers and students and among students are very good. Students from different cultural backgrounds work very well together in English lessons. They are accordingly confident about attempting difficult work and are willing to seek help both from the teacher and each other. Assessment by teachers is accurate and reflects their very good knowledge of test and examination criteria. Marking is generally good and

teachers always identify strengths in students' work. Teachers do not, however, give enough specific guidance to the most able students on how they can improve.

51. Students respond very well to the teaching they receive. They are enthusiastic and keen to answer questions and share their work. They collaborate and work well together. Careful steps are taken to enable all students to participate in lessons. For instance, where an adult translator was working alongside a student at an early stage of learning English, the student was able to play an important role in the lesson.
52. The department provides a very comprehensive curriculum. English lessons enable students to consider a range of social and moral issues. Aspects of citizenship education are also dealt with well. Students use information and communication technology effectively to produce writing in a range of formats. A very good range of extra curricular activities enhances students' understanding of both the subject and media studies. Some of these activities specifically provide for the needs of gifted and talented students.
53. Both leadership and management of the department are very good. A highly enthusiastic and well-motivated team of teachers brings a very consistent and complementary approach to the subject, which results in real continuity for students. The reviewing and revising of schemes of work are such that the department regularly responds to areas they have identified as needing attention. The previous report on the department was very positive and there has been further good improvement. Teaching is better and the few areas in the curriculum that were less well covered have now been successfully improved.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

54. Standards of literacy are good and support learning in all subjects. Those students who enter the college with little English make good progress in acquiring the language. The provision for literacy is good. Writing in a range of different styles was identified as an area for whole college development and successful training for teachers followed. The local education authority's literacy consultant has worked effectively with representatives from individual departments and the positive impact of this work is apparent in lessons. The management of the focus on literacy has been good, and the college working party on literacy involves teachers from across the curriculum. The teaching of literacy is good in most subjects, with an emphasis on structures to support extended writing, precise use of key vocabulary and good discussion.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- French and Spanish are taught in a lively and interesting manner.
- Students achieve well during lessons, but not enough time is allocated to the teaching of languages for students to consolidate their learning.
- Teachers receive clear guidance from the head of department, who keeps a very careful check on what is happening within the department.
- Through the organisation of regular trips to France and Spain and a range of extra-curricular activities, the department motivates students and makes a very good contribution to their cultural development.
- The department recognises the richness of the school's cultural diversity and provides the opportunity for students to gain GCSE qualifications in their native tongue before they reach Year 11.
- The teaching is hampered by rooms with poor acoustics and lack of availability of, or access to, information and communication technology.

## Commentary

55. In Years 7 to 9, all students study either French or Spanish according to which tutor group they are in. Students whose native language is Spanish are automatically allocated to a group which learns French.
56. Overall standards in both French and Spanish at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly average. Students' performance at GCSE in modern foreign languages, and particularly in Spanish, is as good as, or better than, in most other subjects. When taking into consideration their attainment on entry to the college and the very limited amount of time which is allocated to the teaching of languages, students of all capabilities achieve well. Students' reading and listening skills are the most secure, and their speaking skills the least secure. Students for whom English is an additional language form a large proportion of those who achieve the best results in modern foreign languages.
57. The most significant factor affecting students' attainment and progress in learning a foreign language is the recent decision to reduce the number of lessons allocated to teaching languages from three to two each week. The effects of this decision are seen in the fact that results fell in 2003 and in the difficulties that students have in remembering previously taught work and in learning to speak with fluency. Teachers do not have enough time to consolidate previous learning or to enrich the teaching with activities that develop students' wider understanding and appreciation of language. The acoustics in all three rooms used for teaching languages are poor, making it difficult at times to hear. This was noted in the previous inspection, and simple remedies such as the use of curtains or carpeting to improve the acoustics have not yet been implemented.
58. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers generally have a good command of the languages taught. Lessons are planned very thoroughly, ensuring full coverage of the curriculum and containing a good variety of activities. In the best lessons, the teaching is lively and engaging, and students are keen and eager to participate. They collaborate well, particularly when asked to work with a partner or in a small group. Teachers have a very good awareness of students' needs and abilities, and provide extension work for the linguistically more able and additional help for those who need it. Occasionally, lessons lack pace or fail to engage the students' interest and, as a result, students lack motivation and involvement. Teachers make good use of two foreign language assistants. Homework is set regularly and used effectively to reinforce work undertaken in class. Students' written work is marked thoroughly, but not enough emphasis is given to the need for students to go back over their work, make corrections and learn from their mistakes.
59. The department is led and managed well. The development plan pays due attention to whole-college initiatives as well as the department's evaluation of its own performance. The head of department regularly checks the teaching and standard of work in other classes and provides very good guidance and support for a newly qualified teacher. The commitment and good teamwork within the department is seen in the wide range of additional teaching sessions and extra-curricular activities provided by the teachers and assistants. The organisation of a European languages day, the monthly European club and other weekly activities help to celebrate cultural diversity and promote interest in languages. Regular trips abroad enrich students' cultural development and awareness of language. Students who are already fluent in a language other than English are encouraged and enabled to gain a GCSE qualification in that language in Year 9. Over the last few years, a significant and increasing number of students have gained good GCSE passes in this way.
60. As part of its development plan, the department is improving the way information and communication technology is used as a tool for teaching and learning. However, only one of the classrooms is fully equipped to enable the teacher to make regular use of a computer and interactive whiteboard, and some classes have no access during their timetabled lessons to the school's computers. Effective use is made of new technology when available.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching ensures students learn in a systematic way.
- Students' oral and speaking standards have improved since the previous inspection.
- Assessment is not yet rigorous enough and is not used sufficiently to help students know how to improve.
- Too few students achieve the higher grades in GCSE examinations.

### **Commentary**

61. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were below average, but average when compared with similar schools. These results represent satisfactory achievement, given that these students entered the college with below average standards in mathematics. Results in mathematics were below those for English and science in 2003. Students currently approaching the end of Year 9 are achieving well and working at average standards. This improved situation is the result of some better teaching associated with adoption of aspects of the mathematics strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
62. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were below average overall, though the number of students gaining at least a G grade was above the national average. Given that this group of students joined the college five years earlier with standards that were well below average, these results represent good achievement. Because of a sequence of enforced staff changes over the last 18 months students currently in Years 10 and 11 are working at below average standards, as they were when they joined the college. This represents satisfactory achievement over this 18-month period. However, because the staffing situation has become more stable, these students are achieving well as a result of the skilled teaching they now experience.
63. Teachers know the needs of individual students well. As a result students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are provided with very good support from their teachers and their achievement is good. Students with English as an additional language make rapid progress with their mathematics learning once they have reached a reasonable competence in English. Students with special educational needs are also provided with very good support and their achievement matches that of other groups. Occasionally the most able students are not challenged enough for them to attain the standards of which they are capable.
64. Teaching and learning are good. This is because teachers ensure students learn in a systematic way. The main strengths of teaching are structured lessons, with clear learning objectives and the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards, which engage students well in learning. Some very good teaching occurs when teachers use a good variety of approaches that motivate students to learn. In the best lessons, students are challenged to predict and justify their hypotheses and this leads them to make rapid progress. However, some students lack the confidence to tackle work independently and their literacy skills are not developed well enough for them to give good explanations of their work when answering examination questions. Nevertheless, students' oral and speaking skills have improved since the previous inspection and consequently they are more confident in responding to questions in class. All lessons start with an introductory activity that consolidates and extends students' understanding of basic mathematical concepts.
65. The marking of work is undertaken regularly but does not provide students with advice on how to improve. Not enough use is made of test results and other assessment information to review the progress of individuals and specific groups of students. Nor is it used well to enable students to set personal targets for improvement and to assess their own progress.

66. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear vision of what is needed to improve. She is a very good role model who provides very effective support to recently appointed teachers. As a result a very strong team of enthusiastic teachers is emerging. Teachers have made considerable use of the good practice recommended in the mathematics strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Relationships with students are very good and all teachers give generously of their time to support students through clubs and revision workshops. Procedures are in place to monitor teaching and learning, but these have yet to be implemented fully. Results in external tests and examinations are improving, particularly by the end of Year 9. Because of the recent difficulties in recruiting teachers, progress since the previous inspection has been only satisfactory. However, the department is now improving well and providing an effective mathematics education.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

67. Students' competence in mathematics is sufficiently well developed to allow them to make progress in other subjects. In design and technology, students use numeracy skills to measure accurately and to construct grids and co-ordinates using computer programmes. In science students use graphs appropriately and they are able to manipulate numbers satisfactorily. However, poor graphical interpretational skills limit progress in geography. The extent to which different departments contribute to the development of students' numerical skills is variable.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good because of good teaching and learning and very good leadership.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to plan lessons, which challenge and interest students.
- Good assessment helps students to improve their work.
- Students do not always make effective use of teachers' comments on their work.
- Test and examination results have improved since the previous inspection.

### **Commentary**

68. In 2003, results in national tests for 14 year olds in science were average. This represents good achievement, given that these students arrived in the college with below average attainment in science. Results in these national tests have improved since the previous inspection at a faster rate than nationally because teaching and learning have improved. Results in science were better than those in English and mathematics and were very high compared with those in similar schools.
69. In 2003, overall results in GCSE science were average, though fewer than average gained A\* to C grades. Given that these students entered the college with well below average standards in science, this represents good achievement. The college enters more students for double award GCSE science than other schools nationally. Almost all students do as well as expected and almost two thirds do better.
70. Students' current work in all aspects of science shows that standards are average at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Students' achievement is good because it is closely monitored and any student who is not doing as well as expected is given help in order to improve. This support means that students, including those with English as an additional language or those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout their time at college. Students like science. Though they are expected to work hard, lessons interest them. Hence they are attentive and respond well to the good variety of learning styles they experience.
71. Teaching and learning are good. In the lessons observed, teaching was good or better in two thirds. There are several strengths in the teaching that underpin the good quality of students' learning. Teachers share clear learning intentions with students and lessons are very well

prepared. Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively and they are skilful in their questioning and explanations. They regularly set and mark homework, which helps students to build on work completed in class. Very good lessons start with activities that consolidate previous learning and focus students' attention on new learning. Very good teaching involves the use of questioning that probes and extends individual students' understanding at the correct level.

72. Assessment is good with regular tests and supportive marking of students' work. However, students do not always respond to teachers' helpful comments and thus do not gain maximum benefit from teachers' efforts. Teachers set targets and monitor progress on a regular basis. They know, and respond effectively to, students' strengths and weaknesses.
73. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has created a strong team of teachers who work well together and who are taking advantage of national initiatives to introduce more innovative teaching, such as links with a university to teach forensic science. Management is good. Systems of tracking student progress are effective and all teachers are using the information available to measure student achievement. The head of science monitors individual students' performance very effectively and takes action when students are falling behind. Systems to review patterns across classes or year groups are less well established. Technicians work very efficiently and effectively and provide excellent support to teachers. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards, achievement and teaching have improved as a result of very good leadership and good management.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, reflecting very good achievement.
- Students taking the GCSE course achieve well.
- The school is well resourced for ICT.
- Very good specialist subject teaching enables students to learn particularly well.
- Teachers and students make good use of ICT to support teaching and learning in most subjects.

### **Commentary**

74. Students' standards in ICT when they join the college are generally below average. Students make very good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9, largely because of the college's full implementation of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and very good specialist teaching. In 2003 teacher assessments in Year 9 indicated that standards were above average, which represents very good achievement.
75. All students in Years 10 and 11 take a key skills course in ICT and some also follow a GCSE course. Students following the GCSE in ICT make good progress and achieve well. Overall results in this course in 2003 were above average, with the proportion of students gaining an A\* to C grade, well above average. All students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in ICT, with the key skills course enabling them to learn the ICT skills necessary for work in other subjects.
76. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers challenge students well because they have good expectations of what they can achieve and because they know individual strengths and needs. Teachers have effective systems to monitor students' progress. Students with special educational needs are well supported in class and very good use is made of the technology to engage all students in learning. There is a substantial programme of out-of-lesson access to computers in clubs and the learning resource centre and this ensures that students have the confidence to use their computer skills in both ICT and their other subjects.
77. Management and leadership of the department are very good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths of the department, together with a detailed programme of action to bring about



further improvement. The department has a small enthusiastic team of ICT teachers with very good subject expertise who share responsibilities well. The team benefits from good technical support. Good procedures for monitoring students' work and tracking their progress are in place and these are being used well to raise students' achievement further.

78. Very good leadership and management of the department, together with the increased resources, have resulted in good improvement in provision and standards in ICT since the previous inspection. The improved resources are a result of the college successfully gaining technology college status and having membership of a local Education Action Zone.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

79. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning in subjects is good apart from in modern foreign languages and music where it is less well developed. These are subjects that the college has identified for future support. Resources have improved and been updated since the previous inspection. All departments have access to interactive whiteboards and are using them effectively to support the teaching of their subjects. The number of computers available for students' use is well above the national average and access to them out of school hours is good. Particularly good use is evident in work by students in media studies and art and design.
80. The ICT co-ordinator monitors the use of ICT across all subject areas. A working party for ICT across the curriculum, chaired by the co-ordinator, has been effective in developing the use of ICT to support both teaching and learning with computers, and in moving the college forward in using ICT to improve achievement.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- The leadership and management of geography are good.
- Students are not able to undertake fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.
- There is good support for students' writing.

#### **Commentary**

81. The standards attained by students in geography by the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many students, including those for whom English is an additional language, in relation to when they started at the college in Year 7. Students of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding of both physical and human geography. In Years 8 and 9, students undertake good quality geographical enquiries. Map work skills are good but graph work and numerical analysis are unsatisfactory. Written work is well presented and students use a variety of approaches for recording their work.
82. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average, with all students gaining at least a G grade. These results maintain a pattern of steady improvement over the last three years. Inspection findings are that standards in the current Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement by the small number of students who opt for geography. Students develop a good knowledge of the subject matter through the use of case studies. Most students use technical language accurately and analyse and interpret data skilfully from a range of sources. The use of information and communication technology is a good feature of their coursework.
83. Teaching and learning in geography are good. Teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge mean that they plan lessons well. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively

to make lessons interesting and to help students to consolidate what they have learned. Assessment procedures are good. Students' work is marked accurately, providing good guidance on what students need to do to improve. Good use is made of performance data to set targets and to plan work. Relationships in the classroom are good and students display positive attitudes to their work.

84. The new head of department provides good leadership and management of the subject. Teachers are well qualified and strong teamwork provides good support to the newly qualified member of the department. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. The useful department improvement plan identifies an appropriate set of priorities for further development. In Years 10 and 11 there is good enhancement of the curriculum through fieldwork but this is not the case in Years 7 to 9. Good procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well throughout the college as a result of good teaching, although more able students are not always adequately challenged.
- The subject is well led and important innovations have been introduced.
- The sharing of good practice through monitoring of teaching is undeveloped
- Students' good attitudes help them to learn well.
- Assessment procedures are not used well to target improvements in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

85. Standards in Year 9 are just below average. This represents good achievement by all students as they enter the college with skills in history that are well below average. This is an improvement compared with the previous inspection. Students understand and record key events satisfactorily. More able students in Year 9 recall facts well and write effectively at length, though their skills of source analysis and interpretation of events are less developed. Enquiry and writing skills are much improved by Year 9, though there are limited opportunities for extended, empathetic writing before then. Standards of Year 11 students are average and nearly all students achieve well. This matches the GCSE results for the last two years. Students' skills of research and extended writing are further developed, though skills of critical evaluation of sources and causes are undeveloped.
86. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations and use a wide range of stimulating activities, often effectively engaging students by using interactive whiteboards. Students' skills of enquiry and working by themselves, criticised in the previous report, are well promoted by the teachers' good planning and encouragement of literacy skills. A variety of stimulating resources is used, including artefacts and good computer facilities in the very good learning resources centre. Teachers know their students very well and successfully match resources to the needs of those with special educational needs or for whom English is not their home language. However, more able students are not consistently challenged to think more critically. Marking is done frequently, but there is inconsistency in giving good advice about improvement. Assessment by students themselves and target setting are good in Years 10 and 11, but not well developed in lower years. Teachers encourage students to adopt good attitudes to learning.
87. Leadership and management of the history department are good. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 promote an awareness and interest in minority ethnic cultures with which students strongly identify. All teachers are strongly committed to improvement and share informal discussions well. However, the sharing of good practice is

limited because a programme for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching has not been effectively developed.

## **Sociology**

88. Standards in GCSE sociology in the last two years have been above average and students have achieved very well, performing better in the subject than in their other subjects. In the two lessons sampled, teaching was good as the enthusiastic teachers planned very well with stimulating group activities and resources that met the needs of students of all abilities well. The students' very positive attitudes to the subject helped them to learn and achieve well.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in design and technology are improving.
- Students are achieving well as a result of good teaching.
- Students' very good attitudes and behaviour have a positive effect upon their learning.
- Very good leadership is a central factor in improving standards.
- Limited accommodation restricts the breadth and quality of the curriculum, but the completion of a building programme will remedy this.

#### **Commentary**

89. Students enter the college in Year 7 with very limited technological skills. They achieve well during their first three years in the college so that, by the end of Year 9, standards are average. All students continue to study the subject in Years 10 and 11 and almost all take a GCSE examination. This is a considerably higher proportion than is the case nationally. Overall results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were average, but the proportion of students gaining higher grades was below average. Students currently studying design and technology in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well. In all years, students make good progress with practical skills and knowledge and understanding of materials and processes. Computer-aided design and manufacturing is increasingly a feature of students' work and they display good information and communication technology skills.
90. Recruitment difficulties in the past have been associated with interrupted learning and this has led to lower standards for some students. These difficulties have been overcome and there is now a more stable staffing situation. The benefit of this is illustrated by the high quality coursework in plastics, textiles and wood by current Year 11 students. In Years 10 and 11 the range of materials and processes students can use is restricted by the present accommodation. Students can choose to follow a course in either resistant materials, textiles or product design. These restrictions will be overcome with the completion of the current building programme for a new technology block. This will provide specialist facilities in one location and will also improve facilities for storage and preparation of materials.
91. Teaching is good overall, with very good teaching in some lessons. The effective management of students ensures that learning is developed at a very good pace. Resources are used very effectively to build on students' literacy skills and develop their specialist vocabulary. Teachers establish positive working relationships in lessons, as a result of which students develop very good learning habits. In the best lessons, very good planning ensures the effective use of time. Teachers use questioning well to check students' understanding and to challenge them to think for themselves. There is scope to offer even more challenge and independence for the most able students. Students work very well together and lessons are characterised by a positive atmosphere for learning. Although students are given regular advice about their work the use of

assessment is not always sharp enough to provide students with a good understanding of the progress they are making. Lessons are well supported with teachers' notes, worksheets and guidance materials and well-structured units of work help students' make good progress. This is particularly so for those students identified as having special educational needs.

92. Leadership of design and technology is very good and management is good. Past difficulties in staffing have been overcome well and the strong support given by the head of department to her colleagues is responsible for the good teaching and learning now taking place in the department. Effective steps are being taken to overcome the problems currently created by limited accommodation and resources for the teaching of design and technology. Improvement since the previous inspection, when inadequacies in provision for design and technology were a key issue, has been good. Statutory requirements are now met and the development of computer aided design and manufacture has been good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well throughout the college.
- Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use well to plan and present very good lessons.
- Small studios limit the range of activities possible for the large teaching groups.

#### **Commentary**

93. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is below the national average. However, they enjoy drawing, painting and craftwork and make rapid progress throughout Years 7 and 8. By the time they reach Year 9, most students have improved their skills base significantly and are producing work of a standard that is well above average. Achievement from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is very good.
94. In the GCSE examination in 2003, the number of students that attained A\* to C grades was well above the national average. Their performance in art and design was much better than in their other subjects. Achievement from the start of Year 10 to the end of Year 11 is very good.
95. Teaching is very good with some excellent features. Teachers are very well informed, possess very good subject knowledge and have very good relationships with their students. Detailed planning is carried out thoroughly before lessons and organisation during lessons is very good. Excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboard as a highly effective means of involving students directly in class activities. Management of students is very good and teachers have very high expectations that all students will work to the best of their ability. Very good informal assessment takes place during each lesson and students receive informed and relevant feedback. This is not, however, reflected in the rigour of more formal written records. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and marks stored in the students' visual diaries.
96. The majority of students enjoy the tasks that are set by their teachers and, as a result of very good teaching, very good learning occurs. Most students work in a highly concentrated manner to deepen their knowledge and understanding of art and design and to develop their technical skills in drawing, painting and in the manipulation of a range of three-dimensional materials. Students with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, are very well integrated into teaching groups and make very good progress. In Years 10 and 11 students are encouraged to develop their capacity for working independently.

97. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of how the department should develop. She is a very good role model for both staff and students and relationships are very good. Students find themselves working in a challenging yet supportive environment where they are encouraged to produce images that are based upon their own ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs.
98. Accommodation is just satisfactory. There are two multi-purpose studios in which students produce work in two and three-dimensions. These rooms are small, particularly given that teaching groups consist of 25 students or more. They are also in need of refurbishment, which is essential to the creation of an environment that is more conducive to learning. The college is aware of this and plans to enhance accommodation for art and design once the new technology block is completed. Resources are good. Students have access to a range of traditional materials, such as paints, paper, brushes and a range of three-dimensional materials. However, the provision of computers, scanners, digital cameras and printers within the art department itself is inadequate. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are now well above average and students make very good progress.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective leadership has ensured that improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.
- Good, well-planned teaching results in students achieving well.
- The department does not analyse and use assessment and examination data well enough to develop strategies for further improvement.
- Arrangements are not yet in place for ensuring the quality of the instrumental and vocal tuition provided.
- The music accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

99. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and represents good achievement because students enter the college in Year 7 with below average attainment. Students in Year 9 can compose melodic and rhythmic ideas and they show a good understanding of how to arrange a piece of music. Their group performing skills are developing very well. However, their keyboard skills and understanding of music notation are not as good. The more musically able students have a better understanding of harmony and how to use musical elements expressively to achieve an intended effect.
100. GCSE results for 2003 were below the national average. Since the previous inspection, results have been consistent but numbers are small and so comparisons with national averages are statistically unreliable. Students currently in Year 11 are achieving well and attaining standards that are close to the national average because they have been taught well. All students receive instrumental or singing lessons, which have improved their performing skills. Students compose well-structured pieces but their listening and appraising skills are less well developed.
101. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned and students are helped to achieve the musical learning objectives through the effective use of well-chosen resources and musical activities. Questioning is used well to check out and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding and to encourage them to think for themselves. Students concentrate and behave well because of the lively teaching, varied musical activities and the good relationships. Assessment is used effectively in lessons to help students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to improve their work and as a result they all make good progress. However, planning for the more musically able students is not sharply focused enough for them to make good progress in lessons.

102. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum leader has clear ideas for improving the department and is developing an effective team of specialist music teachers. Improvement since the previous inspection, when provision for music was criticised, has been very good. Requirements for the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are now being met as a result of thorough planning. Effective systems are in place for assessing students' progress but assessment information and examination results are not analysed and evaluated well enough to develop further strategies for improvement. The use of music technology to enhance students' musical learning is developing well because of improved resources, but is still at an early stage. The range of music activities, performance opportunities and specialist tuition is improving. However, procedures are not yet in place for ensuring the quality of the instrumental and vocal teaching provided. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are not enough practice areas in the vicinity of the music classroom. This restricts group work and the further development of specialist tuition.

### **Drama**

103. Results in GCSE drama in 2003 were above the national average. One Year 9 lesson was observed. Standards of speaking and listening were good and students achieved well. Good teaching enabled students to develop their improvisation skills and increase their understanding of how different methods of staging scenes provide very different perspectives on the action. Students clearly enjoyed the subject, as did those attending a lunchtime drama club.

### **Media Studies**

104. Results in GCSE media studies in 2003 were above the national average and this standard is reflected in work seen during the inspection. One Year 11 examination preparation lesson was observed. Students demonstrated good achievement, resulting from good teaching during the course. They confidently used subject-specific terminology and demonstrated good understanding of key concepts. The growing number of students choosing the subject as an option is indicative of its success within the college.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The overall provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strength and weaknesses**

- Positive attitudes and good relationships between staff and students help ensure that students make good progress in lessons.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is limited by the absence of a course in dance.
- Not enough of the older students are involved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Limited outdoor facilities restrict the range of activities provided.

### **Commentary**

105. Students arrive in the college with a wide range of physical education skills and experiences and, overall, standards are below average. They settle into the college quickly, respond positively to the good teaching and, by the end of Year 9, students' attainment is broadly average. This represents good achievement. In games activities students demonstrate good ball control, and are aware of simple attack and defence strategies. Many execute basic isolated skills to a satisfactory level, although their ability to apply these skills within the concept of a game is less well developed. The standard of swimming is good. The department makes good use of the facilities at the local public swimming pool and by the time students are 14 years old there are very few non-swimmers in the college. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 and by the end of Year 11 most students, particularly those in the examination group, are achieving average standards.

106. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, all students gained A\* to G grades, which is above the national average. However, the number of students gaining A\* to C grades was very much lower than the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the present small group of Year 11 students who are about to take the examination are working hard, achieving well and are likely to produce much improved results.
107. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some of the lessons judged to be very good. A key element of this is good classroom management that enables all students to be clear about the standard of work and behaviour that is expected of them. The aims of the lessons are made clear, work is well matched to the needs of individual students and the resources are well organised. Students with special educational needs, for instance, make good progress as a result of work being set that is thoughtfully planned so that it meets their particular needs. Good care is taken to ensure that students from different ethnic backgrounds work well together. Most students respond positively, are enthusiastic and are prepared to work hard.
108. College teams take part in many inter-college competitions and gain much success, particularly in netball and athletics. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities on offer, but support for these activities comes mostly from the younger students, and there is a need for some of the older students to become involved.
109. The head of department, who had been in post for a very short period at the time of the inspection, has made a good start. She has inherited good quality documentation, assessment procedures and schemes of work, and is now in the process of refining and adjusting them to meet her perceptions of the future needs of the department. The department might consider extending the GCSE subject offer to include dance. The outdoor facilities for the subject are very limited and this is inhibiting achievement. Since the previous inspection overall improvement has been satisfactory.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

No subject is offered in this curriculum area.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education**

110. The college provides a good programme for personal, social and health education under the title personal development. This includes good provision for careers education, sex and relationships education and for teaching about alcohol and drug abuse. Citizenship, as a National Curriculum subject, has been successfully integrated into this programme. Some lessons were sampled in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. Provision is good overall and is very good in careers education. Very good links with community groups and agencies all help to enhance the quality of the taught programme.

### **Citizenship**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership of citizenship has ensured the effective implementation of this subject in the curriculum.
- Students value the many activities that enable them to participate as active citizens.

- Planning in subjects where aspects of citizenship have been identified requires further development.
- Approaches to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are not well developed.

### **Commentary**

111. Standards in the current Years 9 and 11 are average. This represents good achievement. By Year 9, students have a good understanding of their rights in society through topics such as equal opportunities in the workplace and individual studies of government at local and national level. In Years 10 and 11 students develop a good knowledge and understanding of the work of government and the legal system. They have good skills in the use of computer-aided presentations, as seen in their work on making laws and global issues.
112. Students successfully develop their skills as active citizens. In Year 10 they demonstrate very good skills of enquiry and communication through the planning of community events such as the recycling project, the healthy foods project and the talent show. The work of the college council, the production of the *Mount Carmel Express* (the college newspaper) and the young enterprise college shop are examples of how students are developing very good skills of participation and taking responsible actions.
113. During the inspection it was possible to observe only a small number of lessons where citizenship was being taught. In these lessons teaching and learning were good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lesson planning is good. Teaching is enthusiastic and energetic and successfully engages students in their learning. Relationships are very good and students display very good attitudes to the topics being studied. Very good use is made of information and communication technology to support students learning. Procedures for assessing students' skills, progress and achievements in citizenship are good.
114. The leadership of citizenship is very good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the further development of the subject. She is a knowledgeable and innovative leader and is a very good role model. Standards of documentation and planning are good. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the teaching of citizenship are currently not well developed and this means that good practice is not being shared among teachers of the subject.
115. The citizenship curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is taught through distinct modules within the personal development programme, in other National Curriculum subjects and in religious education. Planning for citizenship within personal development is good and citizenship as a National Curriculum subject is being taught effectively across all year groups. In other subjects, heads of department are aware of where they are teaching aspects of citizenship, but these have not been formally written into their long-term plans. Until this is done the college will not be able to securely monitor the range of work that all students are covering. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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