

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PENRICE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

St Austell

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112051

Headteacher: Mr John Wolfreys

Lead inspector: Mr Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 12 – 15 January 2004

Inspection number: 258728

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1359
School address:	Charlestown Road St Austell Cornwall
Postcode:	PL25 3NR
Telephone number:	01726 72163
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Warren
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Penrice Community College is a mixed comprehensive community school for students aged 11 – 16, situated in St Austell, Cornwall. Students are drawn from the local urban as well as more distant rural areas. The socio-economic background from which students are drawn is average overall but varies widely. There are currently 1359 students on roll. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is about average. Attainment on entry is average and the college has a fully comprehensive intake. The percentage of students with special educational needs is average, with 157 students with identified needs. Most of these are for learning difficulties, but a small number of students have physical disabilities. An increasing proportion has emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Fifty-seven students have statements of special educational needs; at four per cent of the roll, this figure is above average. The college is overwhelmingly white British with very small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are two students with English as an additional language. The student population is relatively stable and few students join or leave the college at other than usual times. The school has been a Language College since 1997 and was made a Beacon School in 2001. It has also been awarded the Healthy Schools Award (2003), the School Achievement Award (2003), the International School Award (2003) and the Vektor Award for multi-media language learning (2002).

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Lead inspector	
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
19646	Narindar Shinhmar	Lay inspector	
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
17278	Bernard Abrams	Team inspector	Science
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology
28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
28178	John Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8672	Michael Roberts	Team inspector	History, Geography
30695	Geraldine Dinan	Team inspector	Art and design, Citizenship
24026	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education
16747	Alan Jones	Team inspector	Special educational needs
1611	Paul Sadler	Team inspector	Science

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **very good school** which provides very good value for money. The dedicated leadership of the headteacher and his senior staff ensures a commitment to providing the highest levels of teaching and educational provision. Standards are well above average and students' achievements are very good.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the headteacher and his senior team is providing a strong sense of common purpose and direction.
- Very good teaching, the very positive attitudes of the students and the very effective use of teaching assistants to support learning combine to ensure that most achieve very well.
- Management at all levels is good but monitoring and review procedures are not yet systematically applied to ensure that the college's procedures for self-evaluation are fully effective.
- The impact of the language college provision gives students an international dimension to their learning and a rich cultural experience.
- Very good relationships and a friendly atmosphere, alongside very productive links with the wider community, help to promote achievement.
- The college's commitment to the care of all students and the very good personal development of students is strongly promoted through the college's pastoral and tutorial programme.
- Not all teachers give enough information to students on how to improve their work.

Overall, the college has made very good improvements since the last inspection in 1998, maintaining the strengths identified and making confident and secure improvements elsewhere. Standards in Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations have all improved. Key issues at the time of the last inspection have been tackled rigorously.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A\* - very high and in the top 5 per cent of schools; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Achievement is very good, overall, through all years.** Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11 and improving. In 2003, 67 per cent of students achieved five or more A\*-C grades. In Year 9 tests in English, standards were well above average, in mathematics they were average and in science above average. The achievements of students in English, mathematics and science are very good through Years 7 -9. In other subjects, achievements are good in music, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, art, religious education, and very good in design and technology, drama and modern foreign languages. In Year 11, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average and students achieve very well. Achievements in other subjects are very good, except in music, physical education and religious education where they are good.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good overall.** Students' attitudes are very good. They are keen to learn and their positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievements. Behaviour is also very good overall, and many students demonstrate considerate and thoughtful behaviour towards others. Attendance is good and levels are above average.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the college is **very good**.

**Teaching is very good.** Teachers are hardworking, committed and energetic. They have high expectations, are confident in their subject knowledge, and set challenging work for their students. As a result learning is very good.

The curriculum is very good, preparing students successfully for their future. Its strong international dimension provides cultural enrichment.

The college's procedures for the care, guidance and support of students are very good. Tutors know their students well and are committed to their personal and academic development. Extensive links with the community and partner schools make a very good contribution to students' learning.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management** are very good. Dedicated leadership by the headteacher has inspired and empowered team leaders at all levels in the college. He is very well supported by his deputies and senior team. The work of the governors is very good. They provide experienced and committed oversight of the college's work, and are astute and confident in their role. Self-evaluation procedures are not yet fully effective.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

The college's partnership with its parents is good. Parents are very supportive of the college and by and large, the college has their confidence. In particular they are pleased that their children are expected to work hard, and that they make good progress as a result of good teaching. A minority of parents are critical of the behaviour of some students, of the information they receive about their children's progress and whether the college takes their views into account.

Most students express considerable support for the college. They enjoy the challenge of the teaching and participate in all activities with enthusiasm. They feel trusted by their teachers. Whilst many students are critical of the behaviour of a minority, they feel that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop a more systematic approach to reviewing the college's work so as to become a fully self-evaluating school.
- develop more consistent approaches to marking and informing students how to improve their work.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- develop more consistent arrangements in tutorial lessons and assemblies for providing a daily act of collective worship.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

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

Standards of work seen, overall, during the inspection are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are very good through all years. Although boys do not attain as well as girls in a number of subjects, the difference is no greater than that found nationally, and boys' results at GCSE have been improving strongly since 2000.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are very good throughout the college, and value added measures in Years 10 and 11 indicate well above average progress.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards at all levels are improving.

#### Commentary

1. Given the students' standards on entry in Year 7 as measured by their attainment in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, most students' achievements are very good. The college has a fully comprehensive intake, and although ability as measured by cognitive ability tests taken by students on entry vary slightly from year to year, overall attainment on entry is average.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the students' performance in English was well above average; in mathematics it was average and in science it was above average. In comparison with 'similar schools' - those with students who achieved similarly in Year 6 tests - performance in English was also well above average, while in mathematics it was average and in science above average. Although mathematics results are less good, they reflect a declining performance in mathematical ability on entry. Taking all core subjects into account, performance was above average while comparison with similar schools indicates that well above average progress was made. The overall trend in performance in Year 9 tests has been broadly in line with the improving national trend, although results in each subject have varied.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.1 (35.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.2 (36.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.9 (35.8)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 268 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Although girls tend to do better than boys, the difference in most subjects is no greater than found nationally. Taking the last three years' average in English, boys have done better relative to boys' performance nationally than girls, reflecting the effective work put in by the college to raise the achievements of boys. Able students do well particularly in English where the percentage of students reaching Level 7 in 2003 was double the national figure. The percentage of able students reaching Level 7 in mathematics and science is about average. The achievements of students with special educational needs are good.



4. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in 2003 was 67 per cent, well above the national average and well above the similar schools' average. The average GCSE points score per student of the best eight subjects in 2003 was 41.0, well above the national average and very high, being amongst the top five per cent of schools that performed similarly in Year 9 tests in 2001. Results have been improving faster than the national trend. Value added analysis indicates that all students made well above average progress, and boys' results in particular have been improving strongly, although girls still outperform boys overall.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	67.0 (66.3)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96.0 (96.3)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100.0 (98.8)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	41.0 (39.4)	39.4 (34.7)

*There were 249 students 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, all subjects did well, and results in science, design and technology, drama, English (both language and literature papers), French, German, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and physical education were significantly above the national average. Students in drama, design and technology, French and German did significantly better in these subjects than the others which they took.
6. Overall, students' achievement, that is, how high standards are in relation to their ability and prior attainment, is very good throughout Years 7–11. In work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards were above average, in line with recent test and examination results. The college has worked hard to engage and motivate a small minority of boys who are in danger of becoming disaffected, and this is increasingly effective, although it remains an ongoing priority. In most subjects, but notably science, history, physical education, design and technology and drama, the percentage of students achieving A and A\* grades at GCSE in 2003 was above average, and inspectors found little evidence to suggest that able students and those whom the school identifies as gifted and talented are not achieving as well as other students.
7. Students with special educational needs in Year 7 make good progress during their first year, and achievement continues to be good through Years 8 and 9. Increasing effort leads to more extensive work presented with improved quality. In Years 10 and 11, these students apply themselves further, resulting in very good achievement by the time they leave the college. Students with physical or sensory disabilities often perform in line with other students. Lower ability students successfully gain accreditation on vocational courses, and in 2003 all students passed.
8. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards are well above average in both Years 9 and 11. Given their attainment on entry, students make very good progress and achieve very well through the college. Standards of literacy are above average throughout the college. Students speak fluently and with confidence. Listening skills are good and students listen with careful attention to both teachers and their fellow students. Most read fluently, with expression and with a good sense of understanding. They locate information quickly and bring a critical approach to what they have read. Most write well at length, organise their work well into paragraphs, and use punctuation accurately, although a small number make errors in spelling. Much writing in Years 10 and 11 is characterised by clarity and a good sense of structure.

9. In work seen in mathematics, standards are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and students' achievements are very good. Standards of numeracy are well above average. Most students accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and are reasonably confident at mental calculations.
10. Standards in science are well above average in Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are very good throughout. They have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
11. In other subjects, most students' overall achievements are very good in French, German, ICT, history, geography, art, and design and technology. They are good in music, physical education, religious education and citizenship.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and make a strong contribution to high levels of achievement. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships amongst the whole college community are very good.
- Students are very enthusiastic in lessons and enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities.
- Students respond very well to the staff's high expectation of good behaviour.
- Students are keen to use their initiative and take responsibility.
- Most students attend college regularly and are punctual.
- Personal development is very good and most students act with increasing maturity as they move through the college.

### **Commentary**

12. Attendance is good and has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. Nearly all the students enjoy coming to college. Their attendance overall is above average and rates of unauthorised absence are much less than the national average. In the year 2002/03, all year groups had an attendance rate of above 90 per cent. The college has good procedures to monitor attendance and staff swiftly contact home when absence is a cause for concern. There is a supportive reintegration programme for students who have been absent for long periods. Punctuality is good. Very few students are late for college and lessons start promptly.

### **Attendance**

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002-3***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
College data	7.3	College data	0.3
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.*

13. The students have maintained their very good attitudes found at the time of the last inspection. Most are enthusiastic learners and in over ten per cent of lessons seen during the inspection, students were judged to have excellent attitudes. Most teachers are successful at developing the students' self worth and self-esteem; they have very good relationships with the students and value their opinions. The students become confident to join in class discussions and

activities, are willing to tackle challenging tasks and have little fear of failure. They listen carefully, respond with interest and are often engrossed in their work. The students enjoy participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and take part with enthusiasm. These very positive attitudes enable the students to achieve very well.

14. The vast majority of students are developing into mature and confident members of the college community. They enjoy taking responsibility and the year and college councils are eager to bring about improvements in college life. Students are keen to become involved in the local youth parliament and others have volunteered to evaluate the recently drafted anti-bullying policy. Older students act as 'peer mentors' and give valuable support to students who have been bullied or lack confidence. Others help in tutors groups, act as guides at open evenings, raise funds for charity and organise the leavers' ball. Prefects provide valuable supervision at breaks and lunchtimes.
  
15. Students' behaviour is very good and this judgement reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The college operates as a harmonious community and this has a positive impact on students' learning. Relationships throughout the college are very good and there is a high level of trust and mutual respect between students, teachers and other adults working in college. The students know that staff expect good behaviour and they nearly always behave very well. They are trustworthy and show respect for property, for example when they are allowed to use classrooms at lunchtime without close supervision. Students feel that bullying is not a major problem in college and say that any anti-social behaviour, including racial harassment, is dealt with quickly and effectively. The college works hard to support students with behavioural difficulties and does all it can to keep students in college. Strategies in regard to disaffected students have been successfully implemented. Those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, reluctant attenders and low achievers have responded well to counselling and to activities led by the student support worker. Results include improved attendance, behaviour and self-esteem. There were three permanent exclusions last year for persistent threatening behaviour.

***Ethnic background of students***

***Exclusions in the last college year***

Categories used in the Annual College Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1322	23	3
White – any other White background	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	2	0	0

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

16. The college does much to promote the students' personal development and students behave with increasing maturity and understanding as they move through the college. The curriculum and opportunities for enrichment and taking responsibility contribute significantly to their confidence and self-esteem. The promotion of the students' spiritual development is good, although there is lack of consistency in the use of tutorial time to promote this aspect of students' development. Year assemblies held during the week enabled students to reflect on the transitory nature of life and were sensitively handled. Social and moral issues are also

raised during assemblies and the college's strong moral framework is made clear to all students. Students take their responsibilities on the year and the college councils seriously and do worthwhile voluntary and charitable work. Cultural development is strongly promoted through the work of several subjects, notably the drama, art, music and languages departments. The emphasis placed on an international dimension to the curriculum, including overseas trips and visits ensures that students have a very good understanding of different cultures. In addition the college does much to help prepare students for life and work in culturally diverse Britain.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the college is very good. In particular, the very good quality of teaching, the effective use of assessment, the very good quality of advice and guidance given by tutors and pastoral staff and the highly effective links with partner schools and the community, are ensuring that most students achieve very well.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is very good throughout the college, and ensures that students make better than expected progress. Assessment of students' work is good and is being used effectively to inform planning although marking is not consistently good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and levels of challenge.
- Strategies to improve the motivation and involvement of boys are working effectively.
- The use of teaching assistants to support individual students is very effective.
- Marking is not of a consistently high quality.
- Comprehensive performance assessment procedures are well used by teachers to plan the curriculum and set targets.

### Commentary

17. Around 93 per cent of students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider that they are well taught. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching in most subjects to be very good, particularly in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and art.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 149 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
8 (5.4%)	53 (35.6%)	70 (47.0%)	17 (11.4%)	1 (0.6%)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.*

18. The college has had improving the quality of teaching and learning as a strong focus of staff professional development in recent years. As a consequence, teachers have an increasingly good understanding of how individual students learn and how best to plan their teaching to meet individual needs. The use of three advanced skills teachers to support their colleagues and to share good practice has been very effective, and has resulted in considerable improvements in the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection. The proportion of excellent and very good teaching is now much higher, and unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced.
19. The college has also concentrated on how best to involve boys in their learning. Led by one of the advanced skills teachers, this has led to improvements in the achievements of boys, particularly in English, design and technology, French and German. Learning strategies which involve more active participation, the setting of personal targets and the use of boy-friendly

resources, including ICT, have been adopted and found to increase motivation and improve achievement. Many teachers are making good use of the interactive white boards available in an increasing number of classrooms.

20. Where teaching is most effective, it is led by the teachers with energy and commitment. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables them to provide stimulating, interesting and relevant activities. Students are encouraged to be independent learners and to take responsibility for managing and organising their own learning. Most lessons are characterised by a purposeful and productive learning ethos and very good relationships between students and their teachers. Many teachers are particularly good at offering encouragement and building confidence in the students' ability to learn.
21. Where lessons are less effective it is usually because the objectives for learning are not clearly defined at the beginning of the lesson, or that the students are not actively participating. The quality of marking is inconsistent and in English, mathematics, science, ICT and modern foreign languages often lacks sufficiently detailed comment for students to know how to improve their work. Where it is effective, as in art, marking is regular and supplemented with constructive comments about how the work might be improved. Consequently, students know how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum or GCSE criteria, and how they move onto the next stage. Students are often given oral feedback which challenges them to think more deeply or to move the learning forward. Written feedback is not always so helpful. Peer and self-assessment is also being developed successfully by a number of teachers, most notably in drama, but this too is inconsistent across the college.
22. The college has deployed its teaching assistants very effectively to support learning. A number are based in faculties which enables them to contribute in a sustained and planned way to the support of teachers and individual students. They offer sensitive and well-managed support asking questions of students, advising and explaining and enabling students to complete tasks successfully.
23. High expectations in a number of very effective lessons ensure maximum rates of progress. In an excellent Year 8 art lesson students were studying cubism. Very effective use of ICT and well-prepared digital images provided the basic resources for the lesson. The objective was clearly explained and discussed so that students knew exactly what was expected of them. The teacher, alongside a well-briefed teaching assistant, challenged the students to look carefully while developing their own skills of representation. The ethos for learning was highly charged and all students gave of their very best in direct response to the teacher's flawless demonstration of the principles of Cubism. Learning was very effectively spurred on by the teacher's high expectations.
24. Planning of lessons is thorough and usually effective in meeting the needs of all students. As a consequence, students of all abilities including those identified as gifted and talented make good progress. Some particularly well-matched work for gifted and talented students was observed in science, where open-ended tasks enabled these students to flourish. However, approaches to ensuring the highest levels of challenge for gifted and talented students are not consistently applied in all subjects.
25. Students with special educational needs are very well taught. Teachers receive good quality information about the students that enables them to adapt lessons so that students can fully engage in the learning. Most lessons have a clear structure and a consistent approach is used so that students are familiar with class routines and expectations, enabling them to understand what they need to do and to anticipate and prepare for the next step. Resources, tasks and methods match individual needs. Very able and well-deployed faculty and individual needs teaching assistants strongly contribute to good learning.
26. Good use is made of the three-part lesson structure, ensuring that a lively introduction is followed by opportunities for active participation by all students and further opportunities to

consolidate learning at the end through a well-managed summary. Sometimes insufficient time was left for the summary, a possible consequence of the 50 minute lesson structure, and learning was not effectively consolidated. Activities are often well planned to interest and motivate students, particularly boys. In many lessons active participation by the students ensures that learning is based on relevant experience.

27. There are good whole-college and faculty strategies for assessing students' work, which teachers use well and consistently. External examinations results are analysed rigorously and the resultant action has had a significant influence on achievement. The college provides teachers with extensive data based on national and other tests. The relative achievement of boys and girls is monitored carefully. This enables heads of faculty to analyse critically the performance of their students and to inform future curricular planning.
28. While the quality of marking is inconsistent, students' progress is monitored carefully. Teachers have detailed information on individuals and groups of students, which are used within faculties to set individual targets and by form tutors to monitor progress towards those targets. They are used to particular good effect in art, design and technology and mathematics, where students are encouraged to analyse and evaluate their own work. Underachieving students are identified early and action is taken to support and encourage them. This comprehensive process is a major factor in the very good achievement that students make through the college. Both students and their parents receive very clear and well-informed guidance about standards attained, concerns the teachers may have and what is needed to maintain or improve those standards. The September target setting day, when form tutors meet students and their parents at the start of Year 11, is a particularly effective example of this.

## **The curriculum**

The college provides very good learning opportunities across Years 7-11. The curriculum is broad and ensures very good continuity and coherence for both boys and girls of differing aptitudes and abilities. It prepares them well for their academic and personal development, with a growing emphasis on vocational opportunities. The extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities is a strong feature. Accommodation and resources are both good although there are variations in the quality of some of the accommodation.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth of opportunities to meet the differing learning needs of students is very good.
- There are extensive opportunities for students to study foreign languages and to embrace an international dimension in their studies.
- A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly in drama and languages, strongly supported by students, are helping to raise standards.

## **Commentary**

29. The breadth of curricular opportunities for students throughout the college is very good. For students in Years 7 – 9 the National Curriculum is enhanced in a number of ways, for instance with drama and an enriched range of opportunities to learn a modern foreign language. The curricular provision for languages as part of the Language College is particularly rich. French, German and Spanish are offered to students in Year 7. All students are then given the chance to study a second language from Year 9, and a small number of students begin to study a third language in Year 10. In addition, through the innovative international studies programme in Years 7 and 8 students are given a taster experience of Russian, Japanese and Cornish. Students interviewed said that they enjoyed this course because of its mixture of language and culture. However this focus on languages results in less time than normal for both history and geography in Years 7-9.

30. Students in Years 10 and 11 are offered a very wide range of GCSE and other courses and the timetable is planned to ensure that their choices can be accommodated wherever possible. Vocational subjects are included, and the college has an increasingly effective partnership with the local tertiary college in order to offer a coherent 14-19 curriculum. Some GCSE courses are taught to small numbers of students, for example in humanities, business studies and applied art and design. However, there is not yet a review of the rationale behind offering these courses so as to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
31. The curriculum is fully inclusive and offers good opportunities for all students. It enables students with special educational needs to achieve well, with a strong emphasis on their inclusion. Good communication between the subject and individual needs faculties leads to well-deployed teaching assistants, who ably support curriculum access. Needs are also well met through good physical access and the use of ICT. Improvement in personal skills and attainment are enabled by good quality individual education plans.
32. The needs of gifted and talented students are being addressed through a considerable variety of enriching extra-curricular experiences. Specific programmes in modern foreign languages have focused on gifted and talented students. The college has the intention of promoting similar action across the curriculum though no appointment has as yet been made to co-ordinate this work. As a result practice is inconsistent. With the exception of mathematics and languages, little training has been provided for teachers to meet the needs of the gifted and talented students in lessons.
33. The college provides very good opportunities for students beyond the taught curriculum. These include a wide range of activities concerned with the college's Language College status and international ethos, together with opportunities in drama, music and sport.
34. The college has an appropriate range of well-qualified staff. Support staff are used imaginatively to support students and enable teachers to do their job effectively. Accommodation and resources are both good although this judgement masks variations. For instance, while accommodation for art is excellent, there is some inadequate laboratory and ICT provision in science.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Arrangements to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of students are very good. Teachers and the health and support staff know the students very well. Pastoral and academic monitoring procedures are effective in ensuring comprehensive support and guidance. The college actively seeks and respects the views of students.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The college is committed to full inclusion and every student is valued and cared for.
- The transition and induction arrangements for students joining the college are very good.
- The college positively seeks, values and acts on the views of students.
- Although tutors have good relationships with their students and know them well, the quality of tutorial time is variable.

### **Commentary**

35. All students are made welcome and valued. Most students have very good relationships with staff and feel that there is a sympathetic adult to whom they can turn. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme makes a good contribution to the students' self-esteem and self-awareness. There are effective procedures for child protection. A college counsellor is available for students and provides confidential and valued advice to individual students. A student support worker also offers invaluable support to individuals. The college has a number of peer mentoring schemes in place.

36. The college provides a safe environment, and health and safety are scrupulously monitored by the college health and safety committee. Thorough risk assessments are carried out and precautionary action is taken to eliminate and minimise hazards in classes, after-school clubs and trips. The college is very well served by its nurse who ensures that the procedures for first aid are very good. There are effective arrangements to ensure the safety of students when using the Internet. The site is well maintained and most students treat their environment with respect.
37. The college prides itself on its student-centred approach to pastoral care. Tutor teams move through the college with the students, helping to ensure continuity. As a result, a very strong bond is established between tutors and students. Students are given continuing feedback on their personal and academic development, with targets for improvement. Despite the planning of a well-considered programme for the use of tutor time, its effectiveness is mixed. While many tutors use registration time effectively to monitor students' progress and offer personal support and guidance, others are less effective in engaging students in purposeful activity during this time. Much good work is carried out by tutors in supporting students although the college is planning to further develop the role of the tutor as learning mentor.
38. Thorough, regular monitoring of the special educational needs of students, and very positive relationships, facilitate good guidance and support for these students. Good quality individual education plans help students understand what is expected and how they can improve in regard to their specific needs. The college has successfully implemented strategies in relation to disaffected students. Individual counselling, extended work placements and group activities, such as conservation work, organised by the student support worker, contribute strongly to personal development. The strategies have led to improved attendance, behaviour, self-esteem and achievement, and have promoted inclusion.
39. Careers education is well planned within the PSHE programme and becomes more focused as the students progress. The emphasis throughout is upon raising the students' self-awareness of their abilities and potential, as well as extending their knowledge of the opportunities available. A good proportion of school leavers carry on with full-time education and a significant number of others encouraged to apply for modern apprenticeships. The college has had Investor in Careers status since 1998, an indication of the effectiveness of its provision.
40. The college has very good links with its partner primary schools and has developed a very good and supportive programme to integrate students into Year 7. This is much appreciated by the parents, and both students and parents are full of praise for the transition arrangements.
41. Students are encouraged to contribute their views on college issues, and they report that the college listens to and acts upon their suggestions. Students take their responsibilities seriously.

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

The college's partnerships with parents, other colleges and the community are very good.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective links with primary schools through Language College status give students a flying start in their language skills.
- The very good links with local colleges offer students good opportunities to succeed in vocational studies.
- The very good links with local employers through work experience and joint projects prepare students very well for the world of work.
- The college provides parents with very good information about students' progress.
- The extensive international links enrich students' understanding of the wider world.

## Commentary

42. The college's links with parents are good. The college is held in high regard by parents and many take a keen interest in the children's education. Parents are welcomed into college and many are supportive of its work. Parents assist with literacy programmes, help with extra-curricular activities and organise fundraising events as well as serving as parent governors. Attendance at parental consultations and events such as options evenings is high. The college keeps parents well informed through regular newsletters and celebrates achievement through the 'Penrice News', a high quality newspaper. A minority of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire were unhappy about the information they received about how their children are getting on. At the time of the inspection, the college was in the process of improving the format of the students' annual reports. The new-style reports have been issued to parents of students in Years 7 and 8 and the feedback from parents, students and staff has been very positive. Inspectors share these positive views. Reports are comprehensive and present information about what students can do, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work, in a clear and concise format. The college seeks parents' views by canvassing groups of parents, for example about the policies for anti-bullying and racial equality. It is committed to increasing opportunities for all parents to become further involved.
43. Parents of students with special educational needs are well informed and involved with individual education plans. These parents are specifically invited to regular meetings by the head of the individual needs faculty, although their overall attendance is not as high as the college would wish. Good links with the police, conservation groups and employers associated with the activities for disaffected students are well established. Good links with St Austell College provide extended opportunities for lower ability students to gain qualifications on vocational courses.
44. The college's links with the community are very good. The college has forged valuable links with local employers and parents value the arrangements for work experience. Students gain helpful insights into the world of work and are able to work alongside professionals on projects such as those on biodiversity detailed in the leadership and management section of this report. The college has established many international links and students benefit from trips to France, Spain and Germany, debates via e-mail with students from a variety of European schools and video conferencing with members of the European parliament. These links enrich the curriculum and students gain confidence and social skills as well as making gains in their language acquisition.
45. The college's extended services in primary schools are very good. Through funding from its language college status, teachers from the college visit eight local primary schools and provide initial language teaching to Year 6 pupils. When these students start college, they are confident in their abilities and their achievement is very good. The participating primary schools and students' parents are very appreciative of the work done by the language teachers. The college also offers useful Saturday morning classes to students and adult evening classes in a good range of modern languages including French, Russian and Japanese, which have proved very popular.

46. The college's links with local schools and colleges are very good. The college's comprehensive programme for the transfer and induction of new students is very good and is particularly valued by parents. Through a series of visits and meetings, members of staff have a very good understanding of the needs and abilities of the students and parents value the comprehensive arrangements to ensure that their children settle quickly. The college has established beneficial partnerships with local colleges and is able to offer students a very good range of vocational courses.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall leadership is very good and management procedures are good. Committed and clear-sighted leadership by the headteacher provides a sharp sense of common purpose. He is exceptionally well supported by his deputies and senior team, who work very effectively alongside governors and team leaders at all levels. The work of governors is also very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Dedicated and purposeful leadership by the headteacher.
- A very strong and committed leadership team is helping to drive the college forward.
- Good management procedures are not yet fully effective in ensuring a rigorous and self-critical approach to development.
- Governors provide experienced and effective support and challenge to the leadership team.
- The budget is very well managed and there is a good link between educational and funding priorities.

### **Commentary**

47. The headteacher is providing very good leadership. Since his appointment he has transformed the college into a high achieving Language College and the college has gained status as a Beacon School and training school for teachers, as well as a number of other awards. He has driven the college forward with ambition, and has inspired the respect and commitment of the whole community.
48. The three deputy headteachers provide very effective critical support, and the more recent appointment of the head of science as an assistant headteacher ensures that the leadership team as a whole, which includes the bursar, has the experience and expertise to innovate and carry forward ideas confidently. Leadership at other levels is also mostly very good. Most subject and pastoral team leaders are leading and managing their teams confidently and with a commitment to ensuring standards and provision are continually improving.
49. Management at all levels is effective, supportive but clear about its purpose in raising standards. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and the college keeps its work under review. Performance data is analysed and used to inform practice and develop strategies for improvement. For example, the successful implementation of strategies for raising the achievements of boys was put into action as a result of a careful review of tests and examination results. Led by one of the advanced skills teachers, the strategy has had a significant impact on the improving achievements of boys. Performance management has been introduced effectively, and links sensibly with the college's procedures for development planning and professional development. The various development strands from the Language College and Beacon School are drawn together effectively within the whole college development plan. Priorities are identified only after careful and detailed consultation with all stakeholders.
50. While the college has a culture of review and self-evaluation, the process is not systematic or formalised. There is no annual review cycle in which every aspect of the college's provision and performance is monitored and evaluated. For example, the college does not have systems in place to inform governors and managers about the consistency with which marking is carried out or the homework policy implemented. The college has the potential to be fully self-

evaluative. Its commitment to further improvement is not in doubt and it tackles issues with honesty and integrity. Governors have already engaged in a self-review process of their own. The college now needs to ensure greater rigour in its own self-evaluative processes.

51. The role of heads of year is very clear and they work effectively in monitoring the students' academic performance as well as their personal development. They work with their tutors to ensure students who are underachieving or who are vulnerable are identified and mentored.
52. Leadership and management of the individual needs faculty are very good. The strong commitment to inclusion, clarity of vision, comprehensive monitoring, review and planning, and a well-organised, positive, enthusiastic team are well established. The increasing proportion of students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is, however, starting to impact on the work of co-ordinating the needs of all students with special educational needs. Nevertheless, the college is enabled to be proactive and to provide very successfully for students who do not respond well or have difficulties in learning.
53. As a result of gaining specialist Language College status, the college has been able to develop a broad range of initiatives which have a high profile in the life of the college. The management of this by senior managers is very good. The college makes good use of additional funding from its specialist status to underpin the growing curriculum opportunities, ensure their success and raise the overall provision in languages.
54. The availability of additional ICT resources is giving teachers a greater variety of learning strategies to employ, and there have been training visits by college staff to a number of European countries. Amongst other initiatives, the college is part of a project on biodiversity led by the science faculty, involving schools in six other European countries and the Eden Project. The college has also devised a training programme for overseas students who want to teach in England. Languages are offered to adults through the college's community provision, as well as to teachers and pupils in partner primary schools. The college has managed these initiatives very effectively, not just to lever up standards and provision in languages, but to act as a catalyst for higher quality provision across all subjects.
55. The college makes a good contribution to Initial Teacher Training, and was designated a Training School in 2003, working in partnership with three other local secondary schools. Offering graduates an alternative route into teaching, the college has already successfully prepared trainees in design and technology, mathematics, English, science and modern foreign languages. This rigorous, college-based programme is tightly structured and carefully monitored by college staff. All trainees based in the college so far, have been successful in meeting the standards for Qualified Teacher Status.
56. The work of governors in support of the college is very good. They are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the college. They are fully involved in both strategic planning and monitoring, and have a good knowledge of the college. Governors are kept well informed and comprehensive performance and financial data are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions. They are consulted on college development planning, and as a result of their own self-review are increasingly confident in their monitoring role. A strong committee structure ensures that they can all contribute and while they are very supportive of the headteacher, they are critical when necessary. Good relationships and communication characterise their work. Statutory requirements are largely met, although requirements in respect of collective worship are not fully met.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,340,928
Total expenditure	4,231,208
Expenditure per pupil	3,212

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	339,057
Balance carried forward to the next	448,777

57. The college's budget is very well managed. An experienced bursar has a confident grasp of financial procedures and budget planning. She has a good long-term view of the budget and possible future reductions. The relatively large carry forward for example, has enabled the college to maintain its provision in the light of overall funding reductions during this year. As a member of the senior management team she ensures that budget priorities are made in the light of the college's educational priorities, and that best value principles are applied wherever possible. The college cleaning contract for example, is, at the time of the inspection about to go out to tender, providing the college with a useful opportunity to define exactly which services are needed. Some planned initiatives such as the increased employment of teaching assistants have been very well implemented, enabling teachers' workloads to be reduced while improving the overall quality of learning support to individual students.
58. The most recent audit judged the financial systems and controls to be satisfactory. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and the Language College are used well. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. The college is efficiently administered and it makes good use of information systems to process data, ensuring that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the college effectively.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- Standards are well above average and students' achievements are very good as a result of very effective teaching.
- Students are articulate and make good progress through discussion.
- Students have a thoughtful and sensitive response to literature.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good and promote high standards.
- There are some inconsistencies in the helpfulness of the marking of work.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum.

##### **Commentary**

59. Students' achievements in all years are very good. Standards in national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. Standards have been improving in recent years and although girls do better than boys, the difference has been decreasing as a result of successful strategies undertaken by the teachers. In work seen, standards reflect these test results, and students are on track to reach well above average results in tests at the end of the year. On entry in Year 7, standards are broadly average. Very good progress by all students, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is made through Years 7-9. They make particularly good progress, especially at the start of Year 7, in using detailed description to add interest to their extended writing and in developing a more varied vocabulary. Students also develop a sensitive, thoughtful response to literature and in analysing the ways in which writers use language to make an effect on their readers. Good progress is made in understanding how to spell and in finding out and correcting more difficult spellings. Students across the attainment range speak articulately and confidently and make good progress through discussion.
60. Standards at GCSE in English language in 2003 were well above average. The percentage of students attaining grades A\*-C was above average with a good proportion achieving A\* and A grades. There has been a considerable overall increase in the percentage of grades A\*-C over the previous three years. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys although, in terms of grades A\*-C, the disparity is smaller than is seen nationally. Results in English literature were well above the national average in 2003. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in the current Year 11 is well above average and students are well on course to achieve well above average results. Students' achievements through Years 10 and 11 continue to be very good as they respond to the considerably increased demands which the course makes. Students make comprehensive notes in order to both clarify their thoughts and to provide a firm basis for revision. They have a good understanding of the way in which the contextual background of literature can enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation. This is a sophisticated concept which they understand well. Thorough research and planning for written assignments contributes to students' progress, as does the good use which they make of the frequent opportunities for discussion. Students make confident use of a broad vocabulary specific to the subject in order to express their ideas precisely.

61. The quality of teaching is very good overall. A particular strength of the teaching is the high expectation which teachers have of students and the high level of challenge they offer, balanced by good support for students who require it. They make very good use of questioning to probe and extend understanding and students respond positively by thinking hard to refine their ideas. Teachers plan a wide range of activities and tasks, which maintains a fast pace and keeps concentration levels high. Students respond by showing interest and enthusiasm and by working hard to fulfil teachers' expectations. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their crystal clear explanations and thorough answers help to boost students' confidence. The thoughtful and sensitive response to literature shown by students across the attainment range is the result of the very good range of methods which teachers use to make demanding literary texts, especially poetry, accessible to students. For example, a group of students in Year 11 who were finding it difficult to write about a challenging poem at a sufficiently analytical level, made very good progress in the initial stages of their task by using a framework for writing devised by their teacher, and then moved on to more independent writing. A strong feature of the teaching is the emphasis placed on the importance of appreciating the contextual background of the texts studied and teachers offer good support in demonstrating to students how this can enhance their understanding and response. Students show a mature respect for the traditions and life-style of many cultures and historical periods in both discussion and in their writing. The teaching of spelling is also a strength and serves to emphasise the importance of this skill to students, who put thought into their spelling and show regard for accuracy. While marking is generally regular and helpful in advising students what they need to do in order to improve, not all teachers do this consistently and some marking is rather brief and uninformative.
62. The quality of leadership and management is very good. There is a clear commitment to raising attainment and the recently appointed head of faculty has developed a very good range of procedures in order to achieve this. A particular strength is the wide range of regular additional support which is available to all students outside the classroom, including at weekends and in school holidays. There are some well-devised procedures for raising the attainment of boys, and the effectiveness of this is beginning to be seen in their thoughtful and enthusiastic approach to literature and in their good participation in lessons. There are new, very thorough schemes of work and a regular programme of assessment which is rigorously applied. Very good use is made of a wide range of assessment information to track and predict students' progress and to identify underachievement or strong potential. Thought has been put into providing resources which will appeal to all students, and especially to boys and the faculty benefits from having its own dedicated computer suite. As a result students have good opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills. While there are some opportunities for students to enrich their experience of the study of English through activities such as theatre visits, these are infrequent and there has not yet been sufficient thought put into how such opportunities could be extended. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

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

63. Overall the use of literacy skills across all subjects is very good. Students are offered good opportunities to engage in discussion and they do so articulately and confidently. This is a strong feature of the college. In all subjects, students make very good use of subject specific vocabulary in response to good teaching. Their general vocabulary is also generally good. The extent to which students are given opportunities to write, and the rigour with which their accuracy is checked is variable from subject to subject, but students have generally good opportunities to write for a range of purposes and their ability to do so is at least competent and frequently good. There are examples of very good practice in enhancing students' understanding through the use of literacy. For example in a Year 7 lesson in art on "self-image" students were asked to imagine, with eyes closed, the appearance of a neglected and vulnerable young boy while having a poem on the subject read to them. On this occasion students made good progress through discussing their individual interpretations of the poem.

## Modern foreign languages

French and German were inspected in depth and are reported on below, and Spanish was sampled. In the three Spanish lessons observed, teaching was good overall, promoting good learning and leading to above average standards. Also, a French lesson in Year 6 in a local partner primary school was observed. In this lesson, given by the college's community languages co-ordinator, very good teaching led to very good learning. As a result, the students obviously enjoyed the experience and were engaged throughout. A Japanese lesson for a small group of Year 10 voluntary students was also observed. This lesson formed part of the extended day provision. Teaching was good and students were challenged by the complexity of the language, which included work on hiragana and kanji characters.

### French

Overall, provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Good teaching promotes good learning and leads to above average standards.
- Teachers make very good use of ICT.
- Learning objectives are not sufficiently sharply focused.
- Marking does not give students sufficient information about what they need to do to improve.

### Commentary

64. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, students following modern foreign language courses reached above average standards overall. Girls performed better than boys, but boys performed better than boys did nationally.
65. Standards in French at GCSE in 2003 were well above average. Girls performed better than boys. However, boys' performance was better than that nationally. This is because the faculty has had a recent emphasis on improving boys' performance, an initiative led by the advanced skills teacher for modern foreign languages. The gap between boys' and girls' performance was in line with the gap nationally. French was among the better performing subjects in the college, although overall, there was a slight decline in results from 2002. This was slightly more pronounced than the decline nationally caused by the first examination of a new specification in the subject. Students gained more A\* grade results than the national average, and all students entered for the examination gained a graded result.
66. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were above average. Students can produce extended pieces of writing using complex sentences and referring to present, past and future events. They speak with confidence and reasonable accuracy, and although their pronunciation may be approximate at times, their meaning is usually clear. This represents well above average achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 were also above average. Students in Year 7 showed high levels of confidence and enjoyment which the staff attribute to their experience in Years 5 and 6. They speak confidently, and by the end of Year 9 they can produce extended writing on a variety of topics, referring to past events and future plans. They are not as confident in writing in different registers, for example the creative and imaginative, although they have well developed comprehension skills.
67. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers use French extensively for all aspects of classroom work. They use new technologies readily and regularly and support language well with visuals and objects of reference. They have very good knowledge of examination requirements. As a result, students are thoroughly prepared. This is reflected in the well above

average results. The creative and imaginative dimension of teaching is not as well developed, however. In addition, learning objectives at the start of lessons are not always sharply focused, and marking is not always linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grade criteria. Students do not always know what level they are working at, or what they need to do to improve. Overall however, students are well motivated to learn and show positive attitudes to the subject.

68. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is well organised and well supported by comprehensive documentation. Specialist Language College status brings vision to the faculty and ensures that a richness of opportunity is available to students. Assessment procedures are secure and the quality of teaching is monitored. Development priorities are appropriate and linked to the college's improvement plan. The faculty is ambitious and keen to learn from best practice elsewhere. There is a comprehensive programme of visits and exchanges, significant links with other institutions such as partner primary schools, and the faculty benefits from its role, training overseas students and primary school teachers, through the college's Beacon School status.
69. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards improved consistently until 2003, the faculty is involved in a wide range of initiatives and all the issues raised in the previous report have been resolved with the exception of provision for reading for pleasure.

## German

Overall, provision in German is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Good teaching is promoting good learning and leading to above average standards.
- Teachers make very good use of ICT.
- Marking does not give students sufficient information about what they need to do to improve.
- Strategies for dealing with disaffected students are not always effective.

### Commentary

70. Standards in German at GCSE in 2003 were well above average. Girls performed better than boys. However, boys performed better than national figures. The gap between boys' and girls' performance was smaller than the gap nationally. There were no A\* grades, but the number of A grades achieved was greater than the national average. All students entered for the examination achieved a graded result. German was among the better performing subjects in the college. Overall, there was a slight decline in results from 2002. This was slightly more pronounced than the decline seen nationally caused (as in French) by the first examination of a new specification in the subject. Boys, however, maintained their level of performance slightly better than girls. This is because the faculty has worked hard on improving the performance of boys.
71. Standards seen during the inspection were above average. Students have a wide range of vocabulary, they can refer to past, present and future events and errors cause only occasional problems with communication. They are not as confident when writing in different registers. However, student standards represent very good achievement in relation to their prior attainment. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 were also above average. Students can refer to past events and future plans and produce extended pieces of writing using simple sentences rather than more complex structures. They speak confidently, and although pronunciation is occasionally approximate, their meaning is usually clear. This represents very good achievement, boosted by the positive attitudes engendered by their experience in the primary school.



72. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers use German extensively for all aspects of classroom work. They use new technologies well to support learning and motivate students. They have very good knowledge of examination requirements. As a result, students are thoroughly prepared. This is reflected in the well above average results. The creative and imaginative dimension of teaching is not as well developed, however. Also, learning objectives are not always sharply focused, and marking is not always linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grade criteria. Students do not always know what level they are working at, or what they need to do to improve. Overall, students are well motivated to learn and show positive attitudes to the subject. On rare occasions, learning is held back by the poor attitudes and behaviour of a minority of students.
73. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is well organised and well supported by comprehensive documentation. The team of German teachers is effective. Assessment procedures are secure and the quality of teaching is monitored. Development priorities are appropriate and linked to the college's improvement plan. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning, overall, are very good.
- The use of ICT both as a teaching and learning aid is very good.
- Procedures for assessment are very good and involve Year 7 to 9 students in evaluating their own performance and target setting.
- Relationships between students themselves and with teachers are very good.
- Opportunities for sharing good practice are very good.
- Marking of students work is not informing them of how well they are doing and what to do to improve.
- The current handbook is not promoting consistency of approach with respect to faculty policy.

### **Commentary**

74. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were broadly average. Since the last inspection standards have been rising significantly, although test results in 2003 were not as good as in the previous year and are lower than in both English and science. Standards in GCSE in 2003 were well above average and are a significant improvement on the previous year. Students' achievement compared to prior attainment in Year 9 is very good with boys performing significantly better than girls. However, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades is below average. Current standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 reflect a continuing improvement in standards and are well above average, higher than last year's test results. In Years 10 and 11 standards are overall well above average and achievement is very good.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7 to 9 and as a result students achieve very well. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their planning, exposition and explanation. Teachers have high expectations of students who respond well maintaining a brisk pace to lessons. There is a good balance between theory and practice and careful management and control enables all students to be included in lessons. For example, in Year 7, students with a very broad range of ability were able to take part in the study of co-ordinate geometry, plotting the graphs of linear functions. In Year 9, higher-attaining students, working collaboratively, effectively investigated the circumference and area of the circle establishing an algebraic link between the two formulae. Year 9 lower-attaining students were able to sustain their concentration through the use of well planned 'bite-size' activities and investigated

successfully the surface area of 'multi-cube' structures. Students benefit from the mental starter sometimes linked to the main learning objective, though the summary review of learning is not always used effectively. Homework is given regularly and marking is up-to-date, though the absence of attainment and effort grades coupled with supportive comments leaves students unaware of how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Very good use is made of teaching assistants to support students with special educational needs in achieving very well.

76. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11. There is clear evidence of continuity and progression with students building upon previously taught skills. For example in Year 11, lower-attaining students made good use of their knowledge of the properties of angles to calculate and construct bearings. Very good use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning with well-planned lessons included in the scheme of work. Much work of high quality is recorded in exercise books to aid review and revision particularly by higher-attaining students. Work is often intellectually demanding and students record work in a variety of ways such as graphs and diagrams, although occasionally poor or incomplete work goes unchallenged by the teacher. On rare occasions, the recording of key words, formulae and statements by average and lower-attaining students is sometimes overlooked in lessons. The relationship between students and teachers is very good and often enables the subtleties of the subject to be explored.
77. Leadership and management are very good. The issues raised in the last report have been addressed and much good work previously reported has been sustained. There is clear vision for an improvement in standards, such as increasing the proportion of A\*s at GCSE by a committed team of subject specialists. Assessment practices are well established and a centralised computer record of student performance is in place. Opportunities for sharing good practice are a strength of the faculty though policies included in the handbook need to be reviewed to remove inconsistencies of practice and procedure. Accommodation is very good and the high quality of student displays and posters are an aid to learning and promote the subject well. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

78. Numeracy is taught very well in mathematics lessons, and other faculties have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. For example, in design and technology and art and design, schemes of work identify what students are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms supported by a clear policy. There are particular strengths in shape, space and measurement and data handling. Numerical skills are, overall, very good without students having to rely on the use of the calculator. The contribution of lessons to mathematics across the curriculum overall is very good though uncoordinated. Reference to numeracy in schemes of work is not monitored or evaluated and an audit of practice is incomplete. Whole-school staff training on raising awareness of numeracy has taken place and is ongoing. Planned numeracy sessions are included as part of the college's tutorial programme. Arrangements for improving standards of lower-attaining students are underway through an intervention 'catch-up' programme. Currently students' numerical skills are developed sufficiently to ensure all have full access to the curriculum.

## Example of outstanding good practice

### **This Year 7 mixed ability mathematics group were plotting linear functions, and demonstrated how to introduce this difficult concept very successfully.**

The routine of linking mathematical terms to the first letter of students' Christian names marked the start and was a reminder of work completed throughout the term. 'Quick-fire' questions calculating the complement of a pair of numbers extended students' vocabulary as well as their numerical skills. Students listened very well to the teachers' exposition regarding the construction of straight line graphs supported by students' succinct explanation of the previous lesson to the rest of the class. Use of 'how?' and 'why?' prompted students to explain their thinking and confirm their understanding using the correct terms, such as 'origin', 'quadrant', 'function', 'gradient' and 'coordinate'. The opportunity to draw graphs was welcomed and formed the main activity. Work was carefully differentiated to suit the needs of three previously identified sub-sets of students and support by a teacher assistant enabled all to be included. The teacher had high expectations of the groups; plotting points in the first quadrant for  $y=x+5$  by the lower-attaining students; including negative numbers for average-attaining students and identifying patterns linking various functions and their graphical properties by higher-attaining students. All were engrossed in their work. The teacher reviewed the work expertly demonstrating the graphs using the graphic calculator and screen to the wonder of the students without interruption and securing their conceptual understanding. The students were able to speak confidently of what they had learnt when reviewing the lesson.

Overall, a difficult idea warranting a variety of methods, this lesson was taught in an inspiring and highly effective way. Excellent planning enabled all to participate and achieve well. The lesson was enjoyable and extended the students' vocabulary as well as their skills, knowledge and understanding.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have improved significantly over the last few years and are now well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are very good in all Years 7 to 11 because teachers plan carefully, provide a variety of interesting activities in well-structured lessons, and make good use of techniques from the national Key Stage 3 strategy.
- Provision for gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 results in a very high number of A\* grades at GCSE.
- High quality support from teaching assistants allows students with individual needs to participate fully in lessons, and as a result these students achieve well.
- Numeracy skills are only partially addressed because lesson planning gives inadequate attention to them.
- Written diagnostic comments on students' work indicating its strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve further, are used inconsistently.

### Commentary

79. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average but were lower than in 2002. Results in the 2003 GCSE science examinations were well above the national average and those in 2002 were also well above the 2002 average. Students' knowledge of the topics they are currently studying is usually very good. For example, in Year 9 some students use symbol equations for chemical reactions. In Year 11, students' books show detailed work on the molecular process of addition polymerisation. Lower attainers often give good explanations when they are speaking in class but their written answers are brief and lack precision. Students have satisfactory numeracy skills but do not always give the results of calculations to an appropriate degree of accuracy. Students' practical and investigative skills broadly match their standards in other aspects of science. Lessons with experimental or demonstration content support students' development of investigative skills, and some open-ended tasks are used to stretch high-attaining students who relish such challenges. Students

enter Year 7 with test results that are in line with the national average. In Year 9, they now reach standards that are well above average. Hence, they do better in science in Years 7 to 9 than might be expected so that their achievement in science is very good. Year 11 students gained examination results that were also well above average, reflecting very good achievement for most students.

80. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the college. Teachers have good, secure subject knowledge. They usually question well and target their questions appropriately to check that everyone has understood. They provide homework tasks to extend students' learning, but comments on students' work often fail to indicate strengths and weaknesses or how to improve further. In Years 7 to 9, teachers make particularly good use of the initiatives of the Key Stage 3 strategy, and this is extended to support learning in Years 10 and 11. For example, in a very good lesson for Year 10 lower attainers, students enjoyed a 'starter' activity, writing on boards to show that they understood safety aspects concerning the use of domestic electrical appliances. They studied labelled diagrams for three-pin plugs and correctly wired one themselves. At the end of the lesson they had to answer questions about what they had learnt and discussed how this compared with some students' experiences on holiday abroad. It was clear that their learning had been swift and secure and that students had gained confidence from being able to demonstrate their achievement. Some higher-attaining Year 11 students are required to learn independently, working in small groups using a variety of resources to discover how micro-organisms are used to prepare food and drink. They also carried out their own risk assessments for the procedures they identified and, after checking by their teacher, selected the apparatus needed to carry out their chosen method in the laboratory. Each group of students then produced a multi-media presentation for other members of their class. Together with an appropriate pace and challenge in the teacher's input, this approach helped the students to achieve very well.
81. The science faculty is very well led and efficiently managed. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good, and the high degree of co-operation between teachers contributes to students' high levels of achievement. Teachers, technicians and the teaching assistants work well together as a team and share a determination to raise standards further and improve examination results for all students. There is some inadequate laboratory accommodation and the ICT suite is very cramped. GCSE results have improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection, and there has been a similar improvement in the test results at the end of Year 9. Hence the faculty has made very good improvement overall.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11, although co-ordinated planning is needed to ensure that all students in Years 10 and 11 are receiving their full entitlement to ICT.
- The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is very good, especially in design and technology, science, modern foreign languages and mathematics.
- Leadership is very good and shows commitment to improvement.
- The attitudes and response of students are very good and sometimes excellent.
- Students with special educational needs do not have the support necessary to enable them to make sufficient progress.
- In Years 7 to 9, marking is inconsistent and does not always give any indication of how to improve.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and staff have very good relationships with the students.

## Commentary

82. Results in GCSE were above the national average and every student who entered passed. Current standards in work seen in Year 11 are well above average, reflecting the improving standards. A high number of students opt to take a full course in GCSE or a short course combined with business studies. Standards in Year 9 are above average and students' achievements are good, although some students in Years 8 and 9 are not making enough progress in lessons. This is because some lessons taught by non-specialist teachers are insufficiently challenging. In addition, there is only limited support in the faculty for students with special educational needs. ICT facilities in all curriculum areas are open at lunchtime to enable students to complete work, but as yet, there are no ICT clubs available.
83. The college is piloting nationally recommended units for ICT in Years 7 to 9 and this has been carefully mapped across the year groups. Some units still need adapting to fit the 50 minute lesson, as middle and lower ability students have difficulty in completing the assigned work. The faculty recognises this and will be assessing the success of the units and redesigning them where appropriate; however, the good teaching, overall, ensures that the students achieve well. Students in Year 7 are very interested in the work on control and in a good lesson observed, most students succeeded in creating a procedure to run a set of traffic lights. The subject knowledge of specialist and some non-specialist staff is very good. The delivery of the programme has been very well planned, but the head of faculty does not always yet ensure that all non-specialist staff are secure in their knowledge of the new units and that all teachers use marking to motivate students to raise their current level of achievement. By Year 9, students have made good progress in word processing and the use of presentation software. They use desktop publishing effectively; for example, in a very good lesson, students were using and improving their skills as well as adapting these skills to produce a design for a particular target audience. Students are making good progress in the use of spreadsheets by answering a range of questions by creating formulae in a financial model and they are able to create graphs to illustrate their data. Students can set up a database, choose the correct data type and enter information into the table. They annotate and evaluate their work.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students in Year 11 who are following courses in GCSE ICT are completing high quality portfolios of work and in lessons, teaching is challenging and expectations are high. Teachers have very good relationships with the students, who behave very well and express their enthusiasm for the subject. There is a detailed marking scheme and students are able to evaluate their work and identify where it can be improved. Students in Year 10 are working very well on their project, which includes desktop publishing and the use of spreadsheets. Students in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow GCSE courses in ICT are receiving their entitlement to ICT through the very good use of ICT in other curriculum areas. In addition, 12 students are taking a certificate in ICT at the local college of further education. This was a key issue in the previous report and the new head of faculty has audited the areas of ICT covered in other subjects and will be mapping individual progress.
85. The leadership of ICT is very good and there is a strong commitment to further improvement. The head of faculty is new and is already moving the faculty forward. The head of faculty and the ICT co-ordinator work well together, are well informed and collaborate well with other departments. The head of faculty has produced an effective development plan, which recognises the need for the continual updating and improvement of resources and the evaluation of schemes of work and assessment procedures. For example, a new ICT handbook has recently been produced by the ICT co-ordinator to enable students in Year 7 to identify their achievements and to relate their individual targets to National Curriculum levels. There are realistic and achievable targets set for student achievement this year. There is a comprehensive code of conduct for use of the ICT network and Internet and email facilities. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Not all rooms are laid out effectively to enable the teacher to have an overview of all computers and one room is small and poorly ventilated. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

86. The use of ICT in other curricular areas is very good, especially in modern foreign language, mathematics, science and design and technology. There is a language learning centre where each workstation has its own audio cassette recorder together with a VCR and monitor. Students have access to TV channels from Germany, Spain, France and Poland. There are also small computer suites in the English, humanities, mathematics and science faculties, which are used regularly. ICT is an integral part of the mathematics schemes of work and there is regular use of spreadsheets for formulae and graphs. Data logging takes place in science and there is effective use of multimedia resources. ICT is used very well in all areas of design and technology, although the number of computers in the department is limited.
87. The Internet is used regularly for research in English, science and humanities. For example, in geography, students were able to look at pictures of the recent earthquake in Iran. Graphics software is used effectively in art to manipulate images. ICT is used widely for the presentation of examination work and students are able to make an informed choice of whether to use word processing, desktop publishing or presentation software. Interactive whiteboards are used very well by teachers to enrich lessons and improve learning. There is a general lack of hardware resources in music, although there are some stand alone computers with a range of composition applications. Access to ICT for music and drama within the visual and performing arts department is limited.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong planning and co-operation between teachers and teaching assistants account for the good achievement of students with special educational needs.
  - There is insufficient time to fully develop issues within the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
  - High quality leadership and management contribute very effectively to the high quality of the delivery of geography and the above average success of the students.
  - Teachers use a wide range of learning activities to stimulate students' interest and learning.
88. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, although for a substantial minority they are average or below. That reflects the dip in the general level of students' attainment at intake for 2001 and 2002 but they are also an outcome of the discontinuity occasioned by the alternating block teaching with history in Years 8 and 9. Achievement by students in Years 7 to 9 is good because their attitudes are positive and enthusiastic. They work hard and well collaboratively. At the end of Year 11 standards are above average. The 2003 GCSE pass rate was well above average but the absence of any passes at the higher A\*/A grades pulled the points score down to average. Boys' results were poorer than the girls'. All 14 candidates entered for the GNVQ passed with a points score well above average. Achievement by Year 10 and 11 students is very good. Their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They are interested in what they are doing, concentrate well and respond positively in the lesson activities. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall. The level of support given to them by both teachers and teaching assistants is inclusive and made very effective because planning amongst staff is very strong.
89. The quality of teaching is very good. A significant feature of all lessons is the good relationships established between teachers and students that creates a positive learning ethos and enables students to work with confidence. The discrete use of humour and the use of stimulating resources add a sparkle to lesson activities. Reading an extract from *Love on the Dole* offered an insight into the attitudes of a working class community in Lancashire in the 1950s and an

appropriate starting point to analyse the growth and changes in tourism in the last 50 years. Teachers' expectations are high and their questions probing but students respond very positively and this contributes effectively to very good learning. In explaining why two earthquakes, both rated at 6.3 on the Richter Scale, should cause the death of 25,000 people in Iran but only three in California, students explored social and moral issues as integral elements of their answer. They have good ICT skills and Internet websites of local tourist attractions are used in lessons for research. Assessment procedures are very good and are used effectively to set targets. Students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

90. The leadership of the humanities faculty, which includes both history and geography is excellent. There is a very well-organised team, which includes the teaching assistant, all contributing very positively to the work of the faculty. Forward planning is clear and directed at the improvement of learning and the students' perception of the humanities subjects in order to increase the numbers opting to study them in Years 10 and 11. The management of the faculty is very good. Monitoring of the department's teaching by the head of faculty is strong. Programmes of study are detailed but not sufficiently focused to cope with the restricted teaching time allocated in Years 8 and 9. Teachers use ICT in their teaching programmes but the level of such resources is inadequate. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has resulted in a very high level of achievement.
- There is insufficient time to teach the National Curriculum in any depth in Years 8 and 9.
- High quality leadership and management contribute very effectively.
- Teachers use a wide range of learning activities to stimulate students' interest and learning.
- Very strong planning and co-operation between teachers and teaching assistants accounts for the good achievement of students with special needs.

## Commentary

91. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average but for a substantial minority they are only average or below. This reflects the dip in the general level of students' attainment in the core subjects at intake for 2001 and 2002. They are also an outcome of the discontinuity caused by the alternating block teaching of history with geography in Years 8 and 9. At the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. In 2003 the proportion of students passing GCSE at A\*-C and the higher A\*/A grades was well above the national average. Boys and girls did equally well, overall, but more girls attained the higher grades than boys. All 11 candidates entered for humanities passed with a points score significantly above average.
92. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good because students are interested in history and respond very positively in their lesson activities. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good because students respond very positively to stimulating teaching and their behaviour is excellent. Complex issues are discussed in a sensible and informed manner. Lesson planning between teachers and teaching assistants is very well organised and consequently the level of their support to students with special needs is extremely effective, which accounts for their overall good achievement.
93. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7-9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Excellent relationships between teachers and their students establish a very positive environment for learning and generate a co-operative response from them. The level of teachers' subject knowledge is very high and generates confidence in students, which promotes the development of their analytical and questioning skills, although in Years 7 to 9 the analysis of documentary

evidence lacks an evaluative edge. Teachers have high expectations and the work devised is challenging for students of all abilities. A wide variety of teaching activities is used to stimulate students' interest and involvement. In considering the results of the elections in Germany in 1928 and 1933, role-play was used very effectively to motivate students to understand the attitudes of ordinary Germans, such as farmers, shopkeepers or unemployed former soldiers, and why in 1933 many of them changed their party allegiance to vote for the Nazi Party. Playing a record of Billie Holiday's song "Strange Fruit" gave students an understanding of the oppressive environment prevalent in America in the 1930s and provided a disturbing and very effective introduction to discrimination, segregation and racism in their study of the black peoples of America. The assessment of students' work is very good and is used to determine realistic targets. Consequently, students know how well they are progressing towards those targets and what they need to do to improve.

94. Leadership of the subject is excellent, and management very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and contributes well to student achievement.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- The good leadership and management of the subject ensure that students receive a rich curriculum.
- Not enough attention is given to the provision of work to match the particular needs of some students.

### **Commentary**

95. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in relation to the locally agreed syllabus, and students achieve well. Students are well able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average. Standards in the GCSE short course were in line with the national average in 2003, the first year that all students were entered. Students achieved 59 per cent A\* - C. This compares well with similar schools, and represents good achievement.
96. Students' spiritual and moral awareness is good. They demonstrate a respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other. Students are guided to consider and respond to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgements that enable them to develop religious insights. The students' understanding of religious and ethical issues, enables students to make reasoned and informed judgements.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the college. Students develop their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts through the teachers' effective use of discussion and questioning. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, because students are provided with good support. The use of key words and technical language enable students to improve their speaking and listening skills. Students make good progress as a result of the teacher's good knowledge of the subject and an awareness of individual student needs. Assessment procedures provide a clear basis for monitoring what students know and understand. However, not enough work is done to set detailed targets and as a result, students are sometimes unclear about the standards they are reaching.



98. Subject leadership is good with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department has a clear view of the needs of the subject. The subject is managed well with good planning and effective monitoring of standards. Since the last inspection good improvements have been made in planning and in the schemes of work. The hard work of the curriculum leader has achieved credibility for the subject. Overall, improvements have had a good impact on students' achievement and their progress.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Overall provision for design and technology is **very good**.

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

- Leadership of the department and team work are excellent, and management including the organisation of support staff is very good.
- Achievement is predominantly very good, and standards overall are above national expectations at the end of Year 9, while GCSE results are significantly above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning are, overall, very good.
- Assessment, tracking of progress and target setting are used effectively, and have contributed significantly to boys' achievement.
- Projects are insufficiently linked to the work and styles of designers and design movements past and present.
- Although students' attitudes are generally very positive, not all students are fully engaged all the time in some lessons.

#### **Commentary**

99. The design and technology department is a strong department achieving high standards in all areas and at all levels. It is extremely well led and managed and contributes significantly to the success of the college. A good range of courses are offered in all years, including graphics, resistant materials, engineering, electronics, food technology, textiles and child development. The use of ICT together with computer-aided design and manufacture make an important contribution to the high standards achieved.
100. Students' achievement is overall very good in all years. Most students are working to their individual capabilities. By the end of Year 9, standards overall are above national expectations, and by the end of Year 11 GCSE standards are very high, with the number of A\* to C passes being well above the national average. In recent years, results have steadily improved, and predictions are for even better results in 2004, with graphic products, food technology and textiles being the strongest subject areas. Nearly all students have very positive attitudes, are very well behaved and work hard. The subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development through project work, contacts with local industry, and the community. Many curricular links are made with environmental, social, and moral considerations that are promoted through designing and making useful products.
101. Students in all years follow the design process well. They use tools, machinery, and electrical equipment accurately, carefully, and safely. For example, Year 7 students design and make puppet characters for the Eden project. Their designs for fantasy creatures are highly creative and original, as is their work in textiles where students make 'kit-rolls' out of fabric. They use machine and hand embroidery effectively and creatively and the resulting products are well finished. Ideas for clipboards are also very imaginative and accurately drawn both by hand and through the use of computer-aided design. Computer-aided machines are used to cut out plywood shapes, and students are able to use and combine different software applications to good effect. Year 9 students design shelving using plywood and slotted halving joints; ideas are

highly original, and no two students make the same design. They measure, cut and assemble the shelves carefully, and overall standards of designing and making are well above national expectations.

102. Year 10 students on the vocational engineering course learn about quality control, and design seating for the Eden Project grounds, using computer-aided design software. They quickly grasp the basic principles of the application and make very good independent progress through the investigation of the commands and menus. Students also show very good understanding of spatial relationships when designing nets for three-dimensional forms. As part of the child development course, Year 11 students study baby foods and make comparisons between commercial and home made baby meals. They show a good understanding of the subject. GCSE students know how to achieve the highest grades for coursework, and are fully aware of the assessment criteria. Design sheets for graphic products, for example, communicate original ideas well; very good use is made of students' strengths in literacy and numeracy to explain complex three-dimensional shapes for card box design. Ideas for point of sale displays are highly original and creative. Overall standards of graphic design are significantly above average.
103. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their specialisms and present the subject with enthusiasm. They are very keen to extend their knowledge, and to learn from colleagues. Careful planning and good presentation are strengths of teaching. In the best lessons very effective use is made of interesting resources, there are high expectations of students' work, and conduct and challenges are substantial. Thoughtful project delivery promotes interest and good learning patterns, enabling students to take a keen interest in the subject. In the very good lessons, teachers present good role models through the management and application of their subject, although strategies to ensure that all students are fully engaged in lessons are an area for development. Also there is insufficient emphasis placed on design principles, and links with designers and design movements which would promote even higher achievement and standards. Features of very good teaching in Key Stage 3, are the planning and documentation of aims and objectives for projects that meet National Curriculum requirements extremely well, with a strong emphasis on design. Teachers' excellent knowledge of computer software is communicated well, promoting high expectations and offering good challenges to students. In Key Stage 4, excellent working relationships have been established, and the encouragement and engagement of students are very good. Assessment of work is very good, tracking of progress, and target setting are used effectively. Day-to-day assessment is enhanced by the use of question and answer sessions, with appropriate questions directed at specific students by name, making lessons inclusive.
104. Leadership is excellent and management of the department is very good. The head of faculty has established a strong sense of purpose and has a clear vision of how the subject needs to progress. There is excellent team work and a strong team ethos. Curriculum development, the use of ICT, and strategies for tackling boys' underachievement are having a significant impact on students' progress and standards. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. The department's teaching support is very effective in identifying needs, and providing guidance where it is most needed. Health and safety matters are well addressed. Projects are 'open-ended' and individual feedback is of a high standard. Teachers have done much to organise the accommodation to make it as efficient as possible. Workshops are well organised with stimulating displays that inform students how to achieve high standards. The food rooms, textile room, graphics rooms and workshops are exciting places in which to work. The computer facilities are used efficiently, but there are insufficient machines for whole classes. The storage of work in progress and also completed work is a major problem.
105. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The major concerns of the last inspection have been addressed. ICT, computer-aided design and manufacturing technology have been developed. High standards have been maintained and are improving. The quality of

teaching has improved, control technology is now available, and projects for Key Stage 3 are now more innovative.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Music, and art and design were inspected individually and are reported on in full below. There were not enough lessons seen in drama for a firm judgement provision to be made. However, four lessons were observed and students' work and examination results were analysed.

106. Attainment in **drama** in GCSE examinations is very high, with about a third of students attaining a grade A\* or A, which is much higher than nationally. The system which has been devised within the drama department to measure attainment indicates that it is also very high at the end of Year 9.
107. Students demonstrate an extremely thoughtful approach to the subject, discussing and planning their performances in great detail. Since they also have a very imaginative and creative approach, the quality of performance in rehearsal at the time of the inspection was very polished, showing originality and attention to detail. Students have strong theoretical understanding of dramatic techniques and can translate these into practice very skilfully. They have a particularly strong sense of space and movement and some of their interpretations are very physical and lively. They work and plan together extremely well and there are clearly very good relationships between the students and their teachers. The quality of self- and peer-evaluation is very high, since students are both rigorous but also very supportive of one another and make very good progress in response to hearing the ideas of others.
108. Overall, the quality of teaching seen was very good, and one excellent lesson was seen. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and encourage students to be creative. Teachers lead discussions and evaluations very skilfully and are excellent role models for diplomacy when evaluating work. Teachers demonstrate excellent directing skills and reinforce clearly to students the way in which these can shape and enhance the quality of performance.
109. There is excellent enrichment of the curriculum through activities outside the classroom. There are regular college productions; in which older students work with younger ones to develop their skills and students have also worked with prestigious national companies. There are regular trips to high quality productions as part of the GCSE course.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good leading to good achievement.
- Students enjoy their lessons and numbers in GCSE groups have doubled since the last inspection. Numbers having instrumental lessons have also increased.
- More computers are needed to support the development of composing skills in Years 7-9.
- The second music room is small which restricts some practical activities.

## **Commentary**

110. At the end of Year 9 most students achieve just above national standards and only a few are below. On entry to the college, students' standards are broadly in line with national levels but there is a wide range of musical experience. In work seen, students develop good practical skills and understanding in a wide variety of musical styles and on various instruments. In a Year 8 lesson on jazz, students were able to scat sing in three parts holding their line accurately. Students only have limited opportunities to develop skills in music technology, which

adversely affects standards in their composition work. Numbers learning instruments have increased markedly to well above the national average and standards achieved are good. Achievement overall through Years 7-9 is good.

111. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results in recent years have varied. In 2003, results were broadly in line with the national average. Students who receive instrumental lessons achieved higher results. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Standards seen during the inspection are just above national average levels. Option groups in the current Years 10 and 11 have doubled in size and students represent the full ability range. Not all of these students have an instrumental lesson which has an adverse effect on their performance skills. The department organises music technology sessions to enable these students to develop skills in sequencing and multi-track recording for the performance element of the course. In a Year 11 lesson all students were able to improvise confidently in the set mode and, in a Year 10 lesson, they showed good understanding of the features of Gamelan music and could organise their chosen modes in stylistic compositions. Students' achievements are good.
112. Teaching and learning are good throughout all years and some very good lessons were seen. Teaching is lively and interesting and students respond enthusiastically. They work and behave well. In most lessons tasks are varied enabling students to gain an all-round knowledge of the topic. Teachers take care to include the emotional and spiritual aspects of music in their lessons. Questioning is well used to check and extend knowledge and teachers' subject knowledge is very good. In the best lessons tasks are well-varied, challenging and exciting and teachers take great care to support and develop confidence in their students. In a few lessons more practical activities are needed but limited resources sometimes restrict activities. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning. Teaching in instrumental lessons is good and students make good progress. Teachers give their free time willingly to organise many extra-curricular activities. Many groups playing in a variety of styles and for various occasions meet regularly.
113. Leadership and management are good overall. The subject leader has re-designed the schemes of work and world music studies are particularly well-developed. Performing, composing, listening and understanding skills are developed coherently and standardisation of assessment is currently being reviewed to ensure accuracy as the department has acknowledged that some assessments in the past have been over-generous. The department keeps video and audio recordings of practical work and some steps have been taken towards baseline testing in Year 7. The subject leader voluntarily teaches some sessions in the primary sector which is helpful to cross-phase development. Monitoring of teaching and learning and planning for the future have improved since the last inspection. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall.

## **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good quality teaching ensures students achieve very well.
  - The head of department fosters very good relationships, resulting in harmonious and productive working practices.
  - Very good assessment information is shared with students, so that they know what they need to do to improve.
  - Cultural diversity is well understood and celebrated.
  - There are insufficient printers to support learning in ICT.
114. Standards by Year 9 are above national expectations. Given that many students enter Year 7 with a wide disparity of prior experience, many lacking confidence and skills in such areas as printmaking, ceramics and three-dimensional work, this shows very good achievement.

Students effectively use a wide range of media, including graded pencils, paint, pastels and clay. They use very good levels of technical subject vocabulary, when evaluating their own work and that of established artists. They have a good knowledge of a wide range of artists from different times and cultures, such as Cézanne, Dalí, Picasso and Lichtenstein. Students recognise a variety of important art movements such as Cubism, Surrealism and Pop Art. Students use computers intelligently to create and modify images as starting points for drawings and paintings. Students in Year 8, benefit from the combined expertise of art and ICT teachers when designing and making their own very effective art websites. However much frustration is caused by the shortage of appropriate printers, which results in delays and interrupts progress.

115. Standards in Year 11 are well above average, which is reflected in the 100 per cent A\*-C grades gained at GCSE 2003. This represents very good achievement and is a significant improvement on standards reported at the last inspection. Students make intelligent and creative use of sketchbooks for homework and in lessons. Students in Year 10 settle quickly to the more demanding routines of examination coursework. Students in Year 11 are able to organise their ideas well and work independently. They build successfully on earlier skills and most are able to overlay complex layers of line, colour, shape and pattern, to achieve rich, meaningful and exciting imagery. Many students enjoy experimenting with the juxtaposition of visual and literary texts. They ably combine poetry, philosophical questions or musical lyrics into their paintings. A few search out spiritual themes such as issues surrounding life and death, others explore moral aspects of social responsibility, such as care of the environment. This makes a very good contribution to their overall development. Students use digital photography and computers well to scan, modify and print their own composite imagery, as a basis for larger, finished works. Students regularly write critical and reflective evaluations of their own work and compare it with that of other artists. They benefit from good levels of appropriate careers advice. An increasing number of students show an interest in art related careers.
116. The quality of teaching is very good. In two of the lessons seen it was excellent. Teachers plan exciting activities, which engage students' interest. They set firm ground rules for acceptable behaviour. This combination ensures that students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Teachers are excellent role models. Demonstration is used regularly as part of the teaching repertoire. The skills of drawing and painting are taught on a step-by-step basis. This particularly supports lower-attaining students and develops confidence in those with special educational needs. Teachers give very good levels of verbal and written feedback so that students are in no doubt what they need to do to improve. They have good subject knowledge and practical skills, which students recognise, respect and admire. The subject technician is well briefed, and makes a good contribution to learning.
117. Subject leadership and management are very good and account for the many improvements since the last inspection, in particular the revised schemes of work and sharper assessment procedures. Teachers work effectively as a team. Very good, professional relationships and the welcoming ethos, ensure all students feel valued. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. This is directly attributable to the very good teaching and to the new, spacious accommodation.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of students to learn well.
- GCSE results are consistently above the national average.
- The department has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- Relationships are very good and students have positive attitudes to work.
- The lack of curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 does not allow the non-examination aspects to be delivered in sufficient depth.
- Curricular links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped.

## **Commentary**

118. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 9 and Year 11 students, match national expectations and show good improvement from their work in previous years; most students are achieving well. Year 11 students' results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average. They achieve pass grades broadly in line with those in their other subjects. Results in the 2003 Teacher Assessments of Year 9 students were above average; standards, overall, are rising at above the national rate. Students with special educational needs and the talented, achieve well. Higher attaining students are successful in a range of sports at area, county and sometimes regional levels.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teaching is very well planned and challenging; teachers manage students very well. They consolidate and extend students' knowledge and skills through using a range of activities and by effective questioning; consequently, students are well focused and lessons proceed at pace. Work is planned to suit all students. For example, in a Year 9 badminton lesson, lower-attaining students improved well, because the teacher used appropriate grouping, modified tasks, provided short-handled rackets and used demonstrations. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the good progress made by students with special educational needs. The learning of higher-attaining students, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular participation. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, students planned work, judged peer performance and performed to an audience. Learning is less effective, when teaching becomes more prescriptive and students are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas. Students' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes, very good relationships and high participation rate in lessons. Most students, across all years, improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve students' technical vocabulary, and speaking and listening skills. Overall, the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, is satisfactory, but GCSE written assignments often lack the enhancement of ICT.
120. Leadership and management are good. The subject leaders are ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists; the department has a strong commitment to improvement and success. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor students' progress and set targets. The curriculum is fully inclusive for all students, but curricular links with partner primary schools are underdeveloped. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching has improved to good and in a significant minority of lessons, teaching is very good. Standards in Years 10 and 11, in non-examination work, are now in line with national expectations; assessment is now a strength and development planning is much improved. Year 10 and 11 students are still unable to study non-examination aspects in enough depth, due to the lack of curriculum time.

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

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching programmes are well matched to students' needs, which focus their attention and interest.
- The subject celebrates cultural diversity and helps students to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- Very good leadership skills ensure the subject has been effectively introduced into the curriculum.
- Citizenship has been audited to establish appropriate coverage in other subjects.
- There are inconsistencies in the expectations of some teachers regarding the standards of students' written work and presentation in folders.

### **Commentary**

121. Elements of citizenship are well identified in PSHE programmes. PSHE is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7, 8 and 9. Essential elements of citizenship are identified separately as modular units. Citizenship is also reflected in other subject areas, where appropriate. In discussion, students from all year groups were able to identify which subjects contributed to their development as good citizens and particularly mentioned drama, geography, art and history projects as helping them to identify and acquire essential skills and knowledge. Students are taught by form tutors who know them well. The development of skills of enquiry and communication is evident in work in students' folders. They use a variety of methods to research and record issues, such as the Internet, topic webs, flow charts, posters, notes and short essays.
122. Years 10 and 11 students receive PSHE and citizenship through a weekly lesson and through the GCSE religious education course. The course is designed to include national requirements for citizenship, through four modular units, linking religion with issues such as the environment, peace and conflict, crime and punishment and the electoral system and democracy. Through these issues, students become aware of their own social responsibility and that of others. Standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Students' achievements are satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
123. The quality of teaching is good overall but there are inconsistencies in the expectations of some teachers regarding standards required in students' written work and presentation in work folders. Typical of the effective teaching observed was a Year 9 lesson in which students were led to an understanding of themselves as learners. The teacher skilfully raised their self-awareness and enabled them to set their own targets for improvement. This was a successful lesson during which the students reflected on their own capabilities and past experiences enabling them to make informed choices about their GCSE options.
124. Leadership is very good. The co-ordinator, who has other responsibilities in college, has worked hard to conduct the necessary audit of all curriculum subjects, relate to outside agencies and provide teaching materials and briefing to all teachers.
125. Students receive only one lesson each week in Years 7, 8 and 9. Common themes are repeated very effectively through carefully planned assemblies and 'Thought for the week' which is a good feature of daily class tutorial and registration times. In the past year, the college has embarked on a lively programme of visits from outside groups and organisations, including local employers, the employment agency, Brook Advisory Services, Surfers Against Sewage, religious and theatre groups. Student year representatives have been elected to the college council, which is designed to give them insights into how democratic systems work.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### **Grade**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Students' achievement	2

<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well students learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3
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	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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