

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSBRIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kingsbridge, Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113521

Principal: Mr. R.J. Pope

Lead inspector: Paul Cosway

Dates of inspection: 23 – 27 February 2004

Inspection number: 259168

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1257
College address:	Balkwill Road Kingsbridge Devon
Postcode:	TQ7 1PL
Telephone number:	01548 852641
Fax number:	01548 854277
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. J Turner
Date of previous inspection:	19 January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

The college is a larger than average, mixed comprehensive school in the small town of Kingsbridge. It is a specialist science and mathematics college, with a large sixth form.

The area that the college serves is socially and economically mixed, with some relatively affluent households and some that are relatively deprived. Almost all the students are white. There is a smaller proportion than nationally (0.08 per cent) of students for whom English is an additional language.

The attainment of students on entry to the college is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students who have been identified as having special educational needs is slightly above the national average and the proportion that is on School Action Plus, who have statements of need and the help of outside agencies, is close to average.

The college was last inspected in January 1998.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
23413	Robert Allen	Team inspector	English (and in the sixth form), Drama
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education, Sociology (sixth form)
12276	Terence Payne	Team inspector	Music (and in the sixth form)
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art (and in the sixth form)
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Team inspector	French, German, Italian, Spanish
16042	Paula Haes	Team inspector	French (sixth form), German (sixth form)
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science, Biology (sixth form)
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics (and in the sixth form)
32334	Martyn Groucutt	Team inspector	History, Citizenship, Special educational needs
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology (and in the sixth form)
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
13623	James Waddington	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form)
33018	Angela Read	Team inspector	Geography (and in the sixth form)
30941	Keith Brammer	Team inspector	Media studies (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an excellent school. It gives very good value for money. Almost all students achieve very well and everyone in the college is valued and supported as an individual. The very good teaching and the very positive learning ethos help students to attain examination results well above the national average. The principal gives excellent leadership, supported by a highly effective senior team and governing body. They are bringing further improvement, identifying areas that need development and planning very effectively for the future.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are high in most subjects, because of the high expectations of all in the college.
- Attitudes and behaviour are excellent, fostered by highly effective systems for care and guidance, creating an extremely positive climate for learning.
- Teaching is very good, sometimes outstanding.
- Across the college, very good leadership and management are ensuring that the vision of excellence is becoming a reality.
- Students' personal development is very good, developing trust and responsibility.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is excellent.
- Students' learning is very good overall, with some variation in quality between subjects.
- Very good links with parents and excellent links with the community support students in their learning.
- Within a good, broad curriculum, there is scope to introduce more vocational (work-related) options for students who would benefit from less academic courses.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, especially in standards, behaviour and attitudes, teaching and learning, accommodation and leadership.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	C	B	

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

Students achieve very well overall and attainment is well above the average nationally at the end of Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form.

In 2003, results in the national tests for Year 9 students were well above the national average in mathematics and science; average in English. They had made good progress from their levels of attainment on entry. Results have risen over recent years in line with the rise nationally.

At the end of Year 11, GCSE results were well above the average nationally and well above those in similar schools. This represents good progress. The best results were in art, science, design and technology, English, English literature and mathematics. There was comparatively weaker performance in physical education.

In the Sixth Form, results in A/AS level and vocational examinations were above the national average in 2001 and close to average in 2002, but have improved again in 2003. The best performing subjects in 2003 were biology, chemistry, design and technology, French, mathematics, sociology and the vocational subjects - business and travel and tourism. The lowest performing subjects were physical education, Italian and music.

Students' personal development is very good. By the time they reach the Sixth Form they are confident, independent, sociable young people. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.** Students' attitudes to college and their work are excellent, as is their behaviour, and they form very good relationships. Attendance is good and they are very punctual.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the college is very good. Very good teaching to all year groups ensures that students learn very well in the large majority of lessons. Teachers plan their lessons to make them interesting, helping students to learn, and the teachers' good subject knowledge and their good relationships with students ensure that they concentrate, work hard and learn quickly. In the few cases where lessons are less effective, it is because the teaching does not provide enough challenge to ensure that all the students learn well.

The college is developing a curriculum that is innovative and appropriate, enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation and levels of staffing are very good and support learning well. It has a very good partnership with parents and excellent links with the community: both contribute to the effectiveness of the education it provides. Marking and assessment give very good guidance to students in most subjects.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the college are very good with excellent leadership and management from the principal and his senior team. He provides a strong sense of direction. Senior managers are very effective and have complementary strengths. The college's capacity for future improvement is good, because of the high expectations and morale of the staff. The governing body is very effective: it makes a significant contribution to the work of the college.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are very pleased with the college and believe that it is helping their children to make good progress. Around ten per cent of parents were concerned about how well informed they are about their child's progress and about the setting of homework, but the inspection found that these aspects were good. Almost all students like the college and value all that it does for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- As planned, broaden the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form in order to provide more courses for students who would benefit from more vocational (work-related) study.
- Again as planned, review the effectiveness of learning and teaching styles in areas where students are not achieving as highly as they are generally in the college.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good sixth form. Dynamic leadership has created an environment that is vibrant, challenging and highly supportive, so that the students achieve very well and reach standards that are well above average. Value for money is very good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership drives the move to ensure that students achieve very well.
- Students achieve very well because teachers work hard to ensure that the provision is very good.
- Excellent guidance and support enable students to flourish and to gain confidence and independence.
- Senior managers analyse information from examinations and assessment very well in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Students hold staff and the provision in the sixth form in very high regard.
- There is a very wide range of A and AS courses, but the staff is aware that more courses are needed for those who require different routes to college and employment.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	The provision in English, German and Italian is good and students achieve well. Students achieve very well in French because the provision is very good.
Mathematics	The provision in mathematics is very good as the subject is led well. Results in mathematics are very good as students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
Science	The provision for biology is very good and the students learn very well, because of the very good teaching.
Humanities	Excellent leadership and management of geography and religious education enable students to achieve very well. The provision of both subjects is outstanding. The provision of psychology is good and in sociology is very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Excellent leadership and management of product design lead to excellent provision with the result that students achieve very highly.
Visual and performing arts and media	Achievement in art and music is very good, because the excellent leadership and management ensure that the provision is outstanding. In media studies, the very high quality of leadership and very good quality of provision enable students to achieve very well.
Business	Students achieve well in business studies, as a result of good leadership and management.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

This is excellent. Teachers and administrative staff go out of their way to ensure the best possible guidance and support for their students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

This is an exceptionally well run sixth form because of the excellent leadership of the head of the centre, who has a passion for the education of young adults. The senior management team works closely with her to further the work, and the very good management of the centre revolves around the hub of the *One Stop Shop* (advice centre), run very smoothly by the administrator.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students appreciate the provision of the sixth form. Most enjoy being students and all say that the teaching is challenging. They feel that their teachers are experts in their subjects who encourage them to study and research independently and are supportive. They feel they are treated fairly and that all members of staff listen to them. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, some registered concerns about whom they could turn to if they had a personal problem and some felt they did not receive helpful advice about what to study when they entered the sixth form. The inspection team found no evidence of this, as students were eager to dispel these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve very well overall in the main college and the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in many subjects was well above the national average in GCSE examinations in 2003.
- Attainment in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2003 was well above the national average in mathematics and science
- Students make very good progress.
- Attainment could be raised still higher in some subjects.

Commentary

1. The attainment of students on entry to the college is average overall, but is rising. The current Year 7 students attained above average scores in the national tests for 11 year-olds. Students make very good progress during their time at the college and their achievement is generally very good. By the time they take their GCSE examinations, their attainment is well above average overall. They achieve very well because of the very good, sometimes excellent teaching. In addition, they are set challenging but achievable targets. The concentration on achievement, which is a feature of the college's ethos, ensures that students take full advantage of the well planned, well taught lessons they enjoy in order to learn and to make progress in their studies. If any students are failing to reach their targets, the careful monitoring of their progress alerts teachers and parents to their need for additional support. The quality of the support and mentoring within the college is a further reason for the very good progress made by almost all students.
2. In the few areas where achievement is less than very good, this is because learning is not very good. A number of factors affect learning and they are explained in the teaching and curriculum sections of this report. For example, the teaching in physical education and in information and communication technology is not always by specialists. Where non-specialists take classes, they are well supported by good resources and carefully written lesson plans. However, they do not always have the expertise to challenge and extend the higher attaining students. There are also occasions where assessment information is not used well to ensure that the students are set appropriate work, as is explained in the subject reports.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.4 (32.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.1 (36.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.6 (35.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 205 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national average in mathematics and science, and average in English. The inspection finding is that attainment is rising in English. Over all three subjects, students are achieving well and making good progress. They are well above the average of students from similar schools. In science

they made exceptional progress compared with students with similar attainment in science in the national tests at the end of Year 11. Their results put them in the top five per cent of similar schools.

4. Overall, both boys and girls have attained results well above average in the national tests in recent years. Boys have attained slightly less well than girls, as has been the case nationally.

Attainment at the end of Year 9

5. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the age of 14 is well above the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. This represents very good achievement in most subjects, in which students' standards have risen from average on entry to the college to being well above average at 14. The findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students are making over the year.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS at the end of Year 9	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Above average	Very good
Mathematics	Well above average	Very good
Science	Well above average	Very good
Art	Above average	Very good
Citizenship	Well above average	Very good
Design and technology	Above average	Very good
Drama	Above average	Very good
Geography	Well above average	Very good
History	Above average	Good
Information and communication technology	Above average	Good
Modern foreign languages	Above average	Very good
Music	Average	Good
Physical education	Above average	Good
Religious education	Well above average	Very good

6. Full details of what students do well and what they need to improve can be found in the subject reports in Part C of this report.

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	68 (68)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (90)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.7 (34.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 194 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Overall, the performance of 16 year-olds in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well above the national average and well above that in similar schools. The proportions of students who gained five or more A* to C or A* to G passes in their GCSE examinations were well above the national average. The proportion of students who passed one or more GCSE at any grade was above average.
8. Almost all subjects attained results that were above the national average in GCSE examinations – the exception is physical education, where results were average. The subjects that performed best in the 2003 GCSE examinations, gaining a significantly higher proportion of A* to C grades than was the case nationally, were art, science, design and technology, English, English literature and mathematics.
9. Both boys and girls have attained results well above the national average over recent years. Although girls' results have been higher than boys', boys have attained as well as girls compared with their peers across the country as a whole. The college exceeded its ambitious examination target for 2003.
10. Currently, students are achieving very well and their attainment is well above average. The inspection findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students are making over the two-year courses.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS at the end of Year 11	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Well above average	Very good
Mathematics	Well above average	Very good
Science	Well above average	Very good
Art	Very high	Very good
Citizenship	Above average	Good
Drama	Well above average	Very good
Design and technology	Above average	Very good
Geography	Well above average	Very good
History	Above average	Good
Information and communication technology	Above average	Good
Modern foreign languages	Above average in French, well above in German	Very good
Music	Above average	Very good
Physical education	Above average	Good
Religious education	Well above average	Very good

11. Overall, attainment in literacy and numeracy is above average by the age of 16. Oracy and ICT skills are good and developed well. Across the college, the students identified as having special educational needs are achieving very well, because of the excellent provision. There are no students at an early stage of learning English.

The college's results and achievements for students in the sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.4 (88)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	45.4 (27.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	256.7 (252.0)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 86 students in the year group. The figures in brackets are for the previous year.

12. Attainment in the GCE A level and AS level examinations is rising. It was close to the national average in 2002. It was above average in 2003 and the college is forecasting grades for 2004 that are likely to be well above the national average.
13. In 2002, female students attained best, attaining an average point score significantly higher than their male counterparts. However, in 2003 this gap reduced significantly and there was, overall, little difference between the results of male and female students. The college recognised that there was a possible problem with the achievement of male students. A range of procedures was put in place, including additional mentoring, and these were successful in raising motivation and expectations.
14. The GCE A level subjects with well above average grades in 2003 were biology, chemistry, design and technology, French, mathematics, sociology and the vocational subjects - business and travel and tourism. The lowest performing subjects were physical education, Italian and music.
15. Overall, results have continued to improve – with a one hundred per cent pass rate forecast for the coming year.
16. The finding of the inspection is that attainment in the sixth form is above average, overall, and that almost all achieve very well. A summary is given in the table below. Further details are contained in the subject sections in the sixth form section of Part C of this report.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS at the end of Year 13	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Above average	Good
French	Well above average	Very good
German	Above average	Good
Biology	Well above average	Very good
Geography	Well above average	Very good
Religious education	Well above average	Very good
Psychology	Average	Good, sometimes very good
Sociology	Above average	Very good
Design technology	Very high	Excellent
Art	Well above average	Very good
Music	Above average	Very good
Media studies	Well above average	Very good
Business	Above average	Good

17. Literacy, numeracy and ICT standards in the sixth form are above average. There is a programme for developing key skills and standards are above average.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development are excellent. Levels of attendance and punctuality are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent attitudes and behaviour of students enable them to make good progress because they are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- The excellent relationships throughout the college create a sense of community and promote a positive learning environment.
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and contributes significantly to the well-rounded development of individuals in the college.
- Students enjoy college - they attend regularly and arrive on time.

Example of outstanding practice

There was an outstanding example of the way that excellent teaching of a subject can support other aspects of students' personal development and it illustrates the high personal qualities of the students.

In a physical education lesson, the Year 10 students were asked to teach and support a class of Year 5 pupils (visitors from a local primary school). The teacher's excellent preparation ensured that the Year 10 students fully understood what they had to do. The teacher's expectations were very high and students responded very well, by showing an exceptional sense of responsibility and working very hard indeed. The leadership shown by the Year 10 students was excellent. They gave very clear instructions to the younger ones and motivated them through their own enthusiasm and enjoyment. They made very good use of the excellent expertise of the teacher to give very good guidance to their charges. The lesson contributed to the development of their skills in physical education and also in citizenship, as they developed leadership qualities and care for others.

Commentary

18. Students and parents alike have very positive views about the college. Students are proud of their college. They are highly motivated and speak enthusiastically about their interest in lessons, their willingness to learn and keenness to participate in all the college offers. This results in a very productive learning environment. Students appreciate and take full advantage of the large number of activities - clubs, sports and visits - provided to enrich their educational experience. The college works hard to provide alternative ways of involving and encouraging the small number of disaffected students.
19. The behaviour of most students is excellent in lessons and around the college. This is developed through systems that focus on promoting good behaviour and supporting those individuals who find difficulties in this area. The well-structured programme of rewards and sanctions is recognised and valued by students and parents. The college applies exclusions as part of its behaviour management system. The number of both short, fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions, whilst low in comparison to that in similar schools, has increased slightly since the last inspection. This is because of the rigorous implementation of the very effective new behaviour management policy and the result is that very few students re-offend. Relationships between staff and students and amongst the students themselves are excellent. There is an ethos of mutual respect and this promotes a harmonious community. There are few incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour. Students and parents do not feel that bullying is a problem in the college.

20. Students are eager to respond to the opportunities presented to take responsibility and contribute to activities around college. The year representatives on the college council undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and spoke of some of the improvements they had helped to instigate, including the provision of new benches around the site.
21. The excellent provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stems from the college's concern for the development of the whole child. Spiritual development is very effectively promoted in lessons, through assemblies and 'thought for the day'. During their time here, students acquire insights into the experiences of others, which will be of enduring worth. In religious education, for example, students in Year 9 are visited by a holocaust survivor: the work resulting from this visit shows that students have thought deeply about the nature of evil and the survival of the human spirit in the face of such evil. Students clearly understand and value the non-material dimension to life and the college works extremely hard to develop their personal beliefs and values. Teachers foster students' self-confidence and esteem by encouraging reflection, seeking their opinions and listening to their answers and concerns. Students' moral development is fostered in an environment that promotes personal responsibility and self-control. Students respond very well to the trust placed in them and this is reflected in their excellent attitudes and behaviour.
22. Opportunities are presented throughout their college life to help others and learn about those less fortunate than themselves, which helps raise their confidence and self-esteem. A Year 9 citizenship project sees students following a ten-week scheme working in the community. This offers valuable opportunities and insights - including working with old people, young children, and at local charity shops. Regular fund-raising activities across the college raise significant amounts of money to help support local and international charities, as well as the very successful Adumasa project - sponsoring a school in Ghana. Social and cultural opportunities are many and varied, including a large number of clubs, college productions, and residential and overseas visits that enable students to work closely together and experience living in a close-knit community. There is a highly developed appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions, fostered through many different subject areas and an extensive series of visitors and visits around the world. Despite having few students from ethnic minority backgrounds, the college works hard to prepare students for life in a culturally diverse society.

Attendance

23. Students are generally happy to come to college and eager to learn. Attendance is very good and above the national average. Most students attend college regularly and arrive punctually in the mornings, and there is little evidence of truancy. The attendance pattern, however, results from the nature of the local employment situation, linked as it is to the summer tourist industry. Most of the absences reflect the fact that parents are working during the summer holiday and therefore tend to take their children on holiday in term time. This is not encouraged and parents are informed of their responsibilities to ensure their children attend college regularly. The pastoral heads and form tutors monitor students' attendance effectively, regularly following up any issues of poor attendance with the educational welfare officer.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.2
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.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Black or Black British – African

No of students on roll
1213
1

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
44	3
1	0

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

Sixth Form

24. Sixth form students demonstrate excellent attitudes in their work and behaviour. They value the excellent relationships fostered in the sixth form, feeling that they are treated like adults. This encourages them to act accordingly and helps to promote very good achievement. Their very mature attitudes to learning help to promote a good level of debate and a productive working environment. The excellent provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is continued into the sixth form and provides a 'more rounded education' and broader opportunities than just their course work.
25. Sixth form students value and respect others and develop into confident and independent young people, providing stability to the college and acting as good role models to the other students. They are enthusiastic and willingly undertake roles of responsibility in the college. A number of students are trained to act as 'peer listeners', helping to resolve difficulties or advising students who have problems. The sixth form college council representatives feel that they are given an effective voice and involvement in the decision-making processes of the college. In the past, this has included representing the student body and being involved in the recruitment process for new teachers.
26. Sixth form students show similar very good levels of attendance and punctuality to the rest of the college.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education that the college provides is very good. Teaching, links with parents and the community and the college's care for students are all strong features and they contribute to the students' good standards of work. Parents are particularly pleased by the good teaching, which results in students' being encouraged to work hard and achieve their best, enabling them to make good progress. The curriculum caters well for the needs of the majority, but, as the college has recognised, there is not a wide enough range of courses to meet the needs of those in the main college and in the sixth form who would benefit from vocational (work-related) study. More such courses are already planned for the next academic year.

Teaching and learning

Very good teaching to all year groups ensures that students learn very well in the large majority of lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with a good variety of activities to interest the students.
- Students are told what they are to learn at the start of the lesson, so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Relationships are very good, so that in almost all lessons students are willing to learn.

- Teachers have high expectations of their students and praise them when they do well. Students respond well to this – working hard, concentrating and trying to succeed.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is appropriate for the full range of ability in the class, so that some students are not challenged enough or find the work too difficult.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 205 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
20 (10%)	76 (37%)	89 (43%)	20 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching in a Year 10 English lesson led to the students’ making outstanding progress in both their knowledge and understanding of poetry.

The teacher had planned a very interesting range of activities designed to help students to appreciate, to understand and to respond with enjoyment to poetry. All the students were involved in practical, exploratory work that they found very enjoyable – leading to their having excellent attitudes to the lesson and working very hard. Activities were varied, maintaining everyone’s interest, and the very good motivation of students made an exceptionally strong contribution to the quality of learning overall. The whole lesson led to the reading of the poem itself, so that it came as a sort of reward after an almost theatrical build-up. The level of challenge, through carefully planned stages of increasing complexity, was exceptional and resulted in great strides forward in their understanding.

Commentary

27. Much of the teaching is stimulating and enthusiastic, partly because teachers are very knowledgeable in their subject areas. They share their enthusiasm well with their students, who are motivated and interested as a result. Teachers’ planning is detailed and provides for a good range of activities in the lessons, which means that the students generally learn better because their teachers make their lessons varied and interesting. There is a very good range of teaching and learning styles, including opportunities for both independent and collaborative work. These are planned with the requirements of the lesson objectives in mind, so that the sequence of activities naturally leads the students towards meeting their objectives. The teachers enjoy very good relationships with their classes, which leads to students’ enjoying the lessons and working hard to please them. They use praise well to motivate and encourage their students. The levels of challenge are generally high, extending the students and ensuring that they achieve very well in many of their lessons. There are excellent examples of non-classroom based activities that develop students’ skills very well.
28. Examples of very good teaching were observed in almost all subject areas, across all year groups. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed, out of over two hundred observed. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
29. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, many of the characteristics of good teaching are still present. Relationships are strong and positive. Lessons are well planned and prepared and resourced thoroughly. The planning takes account of the needs of the whole class, though not always of all individuals within it. In the few cases where achievement is less than very good, this is because teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, rather than very good. For example, the teaching in physical education and in information and communication technology is not always by specialists. Where non-specialists take classes, they are well supported by good resources and carefully written lesson plans. However, they do not always have the expertise to challenge and extend the higher attaining students. There were also rare instances where specialist teachers planned work that was appropriate for the majority,

but did not meet the needs of all. In English, for example, a lesson was observed where the work – the same for all – was too difficult for some and the teacher had to spend far too long explaining it. This took too much time and restricted the progress that the class could make.

30. Across the curriculum, teaching is at least good in all subjects for Years 7 to 11. Teaching is very good in English and in science. The teaching of mathematics and information and communication technology is good. Art is taught very well. The teachers of design and technology manage classes skilfully and teaching is good overall. Good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject lead to very good teaching in French, German, geography, Italian, drama, music, physical education and religious education. Teaching is good in history and citizenship. There is some excellent teaching of examination classes in drama.
31. The teaching of literacy to students with literacy problems is very good. The teaching of numeracy is good, with a whole-college emphasis on developing numeracy skills. There are no students at an early stage in acquiring English. Students with special educational needs are taught very well indeed. Their learning is very effective, within the limits sometimes imposed by the nature of individual need. The use of assessment data gives a clear picture of their progress. When additional support is needed, students and their parents, as well as teachers and appropriate outside professionals, are fully involved in decisions on targets and objectives.
32. Teaching and learning are also very good in the sixth form. Achievement is very good because the students have great confidence in the knowledge of their teachers. They respect them and are very ready to take part in lessons. The teachers' enthusiasm and the individual interest they take in their students help to create a very positive ethos in class. Independence is encouraged very well and, as a result, students learn very well both in and out of class. They are set challenging tasks for research and respond very well to these, working hard to succeed. Relationships are excellent and the teachers use praise judiciously to encourage their students and get the best from them.
33. Teaching in the sixth form was found to be excellent in design and technology and religious education. It is very good in French, geography, sociology, art, drama, music, media studies and physical education. It was never less than good in any subject observed.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and is very effectively enhanced by the range of extra-curricular activities. Different types of courses are being introduced for students who do not wish to attend further education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent range of extra-curricular activities contributes to students' learning and achievement.
- Provision for special educational needs is excellent.
- All students have the same access to the curriculum.
- Excellent work is done to prepare sixth form students to enter college or employment.
- Senior managers are aware that the curriculum in Years 9 to 13 does not yet suit all students.
- The very good quality of the staffing and accommodation and good resourcing contribute to the effectiveness of the college.

Example of outstanding practice

The college's learning support team implements an excellent and radical vision of inclusion.

The local education authority states that, "the school is an acknowledged centre of excellence in inclusive practice". Believing that inclusion addresses the individual needs of all students, the learning support team promotes this concept and has radically reduced bureaucracy – and the time taken - in order to serve better the needs of the whole college community. As in all good schools and colleges, there is an early identification of students with special needs and an effective use of teaching strategies, supported by the excellent use of data and monitoring to ensure progress is maintained. What is different here is the stress on the responsibility of classroom teachers to meet the needs of all students who are in the college, which includes some with quite a severe level of physical, sensory or learning disability. All play a full part in the curricular and extra-curricular life of the college and are welcomed and valued as full members of the college community by staff and students alike.

Commentary

34. The curriculum offers a wide range of courses for students in Years 7 to 11 who wish to go on to higher education. The college has had a policy of insisting that the majority of students study a language up to GCSE. Students have a choice of four languages, and many study two until the end of Year 9, when most drop one. Almost all students study religious education up to GCSE. A range of courses has been introduced for students in Years 10 and 11 who wish to follow routes other than to university. The ones that are in place are successful in motivating students who are not attracted to more academic courses, but there are not yet enough to meet all the need. More are planned for next September. In one example, a small number of students attends a local college of further education for courses such as motor vehicle studies, construction or catering. The physical education department has successfully introduced a Junior Sports Leaders Award. Difficult choices have had to be made to ensure a broad education for Years 7 to 9, however. Pressure on time has meant that some subjects, notably English and music, have a reduced amount of time for some year groups. Over the whole three years the time is satisfactory, but there is some discontinuity in learning in music and insufficient time for lower attaining boys to develop their writing skills in Year 9 in English.
35. Equality of access and opportunity for students within the existing curriculum is very good. The curriculum is planned to ensure that the majority of students achieve very well. Students are grouped according to their ability for many subjects, and work is carefully matched to challenge and extend all groups. As a result, higher attaining students achieve very well and there is little difference, beyond the national difference, between the attainment of boys and girls. Students who have been identified as having special gifts and talents are offered a four-week extension course of activities twice yearly to challenge and extend their attainment.
36. Excellent provision for students with special education needs is made by the learning support department. It is based on a clear and radical approach that sees inclusion embraced as a full part of the life of the college. Curriculum mapping procedures are used by teachers to plan for and address the needs of all individual students, resulting in the number with individual education plans being restricted to those with statements of special educational needs. At the same time there is clear, detailed and differentiated provision for all, including those traditionally defined as having special needs.
37. The very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances students' learning. The physical education department's range of courses has been recognised by a Sportsmark Award and large numbers of students take advantage of the activities. The music and drama departments put on a very wide range of performances. The 'Challenge Week' in the summer has a very long list of activities, including residential visits (some abroad) that all students can choose from during their time in the college. Canoeing, caving, hill walking and climbing are offered at different times. The modern languages department runs visits and exchanges to France, Germany and Italy and media studies students have visited the United States of America. There have been visits to Ecuador, Iceland, Peru and Bolivia. Homework clubs are held in the town and in centres in two local villages for those in need of support.

38. Senior managers are eager to exploit new arrangements to develop the curriculum. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is used sensitively to meet the needs of students in the college. Pupils from primary schools visit the college each week to take science lessons as part of the specialist college status and master classes are held in mathematics for students in the primary schools. Groups of students from Years 7 to 9 take part in outdoor education to help their personal development.
39. The provision for personal, social and health education in Years 7 and 8 was extensively reviewed a few years ago and tutors, who found the course they were using was unsuitable for their students, began to write their own course together. Since then, it has been reviewed and amended, taking the views of students into account. It is now fully in place and very effective. The same process is now being taken with Years 9 to 11.
40. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when some statutory requirements were not met and some subjects had insufficient time to meet the demands of the National Curriculum.

The curriculum in the sixth form

41. Students have good opportunities to study a wide range of courses for A and AS level and senior managers are planning to introduce more courses at NVQ level. Each Wednesday, the timetable allows for students to take part in enrichment activities and students enjoy taking part in the diverse range of courses that are available. Students in the sixth form who have special educational needs, receive the same excellent support as in the main school.
42. Students receive outstanding support in their quest for employment or university places. Teachers have established very good contacts and they draw on these when necessary. The work is co-ordinated by the *One Stop Shop*, the administrative centre. The members of staff here know each student well and offer the head of the sixth form and the tutors excellent support at this important time in the students' lives.

Care, guidance and support

Systems to ensure students' support, guidance and welfare are very good and students are very well cared for during their time at college. Students have very positive views about the college and appreciate the ways that they are consulted and their views acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good procedures to support students' personal and academic development and to monitor their progress help to promote good achievement.
- Students value the support and advice they receive, the result of the very good rapport established between students and their teachers.
- Students receive good guidance as they move through the college to enable them to make well-informed choices.
- Students think the college listens to them and values their views.

Example of outstanding practice

The college is involving students in its future development, by exploring issues to do with learning and consulting students to ascertain their views.

The Barometer Group comprises a carefully selected group of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 who meet regularly on an individual basis with their head of year to discuss issues relating to how they learn. The college is seeking to discover, from the students' standpoint, what they respond to and what motivates them – what they find difficult, involving, boring or inspiring. Students feel that they can be open and honest and appreciate the interest and trust that the college places in them. They value the fact that teachers want to 'understand how they tick'.

Commentary

43. Students have extremely positive views about the college and the care, support and guidance they receive whilst there. They value the teaching, the huge range of extra curricular activities and the whole learning environment – *'I am proud to be part of this college'*. The induction processes to the college and support for new students is very well structured and developed, enabling them to settle into college quickly. This level of care is continued, with information readily available to help students make decisions at important points as they progress through the college and into the sixth form. The well thought-out pastoral system, delivered through form tutors, the pastoral heads and the student services' office, provides a sense of stability and ensures students have members of staff they can turn to if needed.
44. Specialist advice and additional support are provided at different points through learning mentors, counsellors and local youth and other outside agencies. This helps those who may be having difficulties or are not achieving as well as they could, as well as contributing to the well-rounded development of students in the college. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal and academic development and progress are extremely well developed. Students and tutors meet on a one-to-one basis at points during the year to review progress and set targets for improvement. This is well regarded and helps students to be aware of how they are doing, pinpoints what they need to do to improve and contributes very effectively to their learning, promoting good achievement. Careers advice is well planned and structured and takes advantage of the good resources in the careers library and support from the Connexions advisers. This includes self-evaluation and one-to-one consultations with the careers officer and the Connexions advisers who are available to all, but particularly target students who may be uncertain about future pathways or may be leaving before the sixth form.
45. Arrangements for child protection and procedures relating to health and safety are securely in place with risk assessments regularly undertaken. The college has addressed issues raised at the time of the last inspection but needs to ensure that the outstanding items identified in the last external health and safety audit are dealt with.
46. Parents spoke very positively about the college and feel it treats students fairly. Almost all students like the college. They value the education they receive, feel they are taught well, expected to work hard and trusted to do things on their own. They generally feel they are well consulted and their views taken into consideration through the college council representatives, with a number of issues being addressed following their interventions, such as a focus on healthy eating.

Assessment

47. The assessment of students' progress and attainment is generally good, although there remain some inconsistencies in the way departments apply the school's policies. Fourteen members of staff have taken part in action research on assessment, which has had a beneficial impact on the quality of marking in several subjects. Key pieces of work are assessed in detail, with less emphasis than usual on the awarding of grades, and more on how students can improve their work. The result is that students generally have a good idea of how well they are doing and what steps they need to take to raise achievement.
48. The outcomes of formal testing are published, but subject departments vary in the extent to which they use these data to adapt courses to match the needs of students and to set targets for individuals. Assessment in geography is outstanding in all aspects. The system for tracking the progress of more than sixty students currently being mentored in Year 11 also uses the data extensively. More than forty members of staff each meet with a few of the students to discuss progress and whether up-to-date feedback from the teachers indicates that students are fulfilling their potential.

49. Very good assessment systems are in place to enable the early identification of individual need for students with special educational needs. There are no students at an early stage in acquiring English. All statutory requirements for students with statements of special educational needs are fully met.

Sixth Form

50. Students are very happy at college and have very positive views about the sixth form. They feel they are helped and encouraged to work and study independently, yet teachers are always there if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work. They value the excellent rapport established with their teachers and feel they are regularly consulted with and listened to. Students feel that their views are respected and that the college council gives them a voice and involvement in decision-making processes of the college. Students were eager to dispel any misunderstandings that may have arisen from their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire concerning the support and advice opportunities available. They spoke affectionately of the excellent leadership from the head of the sixth form, as well as the caring assistance available from the other members of staff and the '*One Stop Shop*'. The links between pastoral and careers education are effectively continued into the sixth form. Regular one-to-one reviews take place between tutors and students. Students applying for university receive intensive help with their applications and all students who leave for work or for alternative courses have the chance to see a Connexions adviser before they make their final decisions. This helps to ensure that the transition from college to further/higher education or work is as smooth as possible.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is very good. The links forged with the local and wider community, and partner institutions are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has developed a very strong supportive parent body and consults with them on a regular basis. Parents have very positive views about the college.
- The excellent community links help to enrich students' educational experience.
- The excellent links with partner institutions help to promote students' educational progress.

Commentary

51. The college continues to foster very effective links with parents and the local community. Parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction about all aspects of the college's work in the pre-inspection questionnaire and at the parents' meeting. The parents' positive views are reflected in the fact that the college is over-subscribed. The close liaison with parents provides many opportunities for them to become involved in their child's education. This is having a positive effect on students' learning and their levels of achievement. The college seeks to keep parents fully updated about ongoing activities and events through newsletters and the web site. Regular meetings are held and appropriate documentation is circulated to ensure that parents are fully informed about key events as their child progresses through the college. Good day-to-day home/college links are maintained with the tutorial staff via the homework diaries and parents are contacted when there are problems and if their child has done well. Parents are very supportive and there is always a high level of attendance at consultation meetings and the many concerts, plays and other events. The parents, friends and teachers association is very active: a committed group of parents runs a number of social and fund-raising activities each year that generate money to help provide additional resources for the college.

52. A small minority of parents expressed some concerns about the extent to which they were consulted or were kept informed of their child's progress. This may be the impression of new parents, as it was not borne out during the inspection. Following conversations with staff and parents all the evidence points to considerable amounts of consultation with parents and very good and immediate responses to any concerns raised or suggestions offered. Parents are regularly advised about the progress of their child, with a consultation meeting, an interim progress report or a full report each term. These reports provide a broad picture of the students' current situation and predicted grades, whilst the annual report provides a comprehensive assessment of what students have covered, know, understand and can do. They give grades for effort, attainment and homework as well as an indication of how well students are doing in relation to what is expected from them.
53. Links with the local community are excellent. Local businesses provide valuable support for the college as part of the careers programme, by offering work placement opportunities or involvement in the citizenship project. The college makes very effective use of the facilities at the leisure centre to enhance the physical education curriculum. Similarly, many local residents and members of the wider community make use of the outstanding college facilities as part of the adult education programme run here. The college has excellent links with local colleges, the feeder primary and other secondary schools. The use of the college facilities and expertise benefits these other schools, and the well-structured liaison process ensures curriculum continuity and a smooth transition into the college in Year 7. An effective partnership with Plymouth College provides a more work-based alternative curriculum for some older students, who experience difficulties with the normal college programme.

Sixth Form

54. The college continues to foster very good partnerships with parents and the local community. Links with universities are firmly in place and facilitate students' smooth transition to higher education. Parents are very happy with the sixth form provision for students, which continues to build on the very good achievement reached in Year 11. They value the regularity of communication with staff and the fact that they are kept suitably informed if there are any problems or concerns. The frequent progress reports are well received.
55. The very good links with local colleges and businesses help to facilitate vocational courses and the enrichment programme. These programmes enhance the learning opportunities for students and provide some additional qualifications. There are well-established programmes of visits and links with universities that help students identify and progress on to the next step in their career development. A sixth form committee also co-ordinates fund-raising activities in support of the wider community links with Adumasa school in Ghana, and this has led to valuable gap-year opportunities for some students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The college is led and managed very well and this is a key reason for its success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the college by senior staff are excellent.
- A very effective governing body acts as a critical friend to the college.
- The performance of the college is monitored very well and the information used to raise standards.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent leadership shows itself in the way that this has become a very reflective and self-evaluative college.

The principal has instigated a system of department reviews that are particularly thorough and effective in identifying areas for improvement. He has established a learning community in which all are learners and the senior team lead by example: all are studying for further qualifications that are relevant to their roles. This gives a clear message to all staff that standing still is not an option. All must aspire to improve. As a result, the college has made very good improvement since the last inspection. During the inspection week, the college received an invitation to a national presentation evening, in recognition of the fact that it had become one of the best specialist colleges in the country, in terms of its examination results and the progress that its students make.

Commentary

56. The leadership of the college is held in high regard by the students, staff and local community. The college has a high reputation that is fully deserved. The principal has inspired his staff, driving the college forward towards achieving the vision that has been set of a learning community that inspires and challenges all to succeed. Everyone in the college has been set the target of being outstanding and there is a joint commitment to do everything possible to achieve this goal. The college is reflective, examining its practice and seeking new ideas and ways to improve still further. The whole staff is very receptive to advice and guidance. Much of its work is innovative – as has been recognised in the achievement, for example, of specialist status for science. The senior team provides clear strategic thinking for the future of the college and this is reflected in the quality of planning at all levels – including the very detailed and effective department self-reviews and action plans. Where teaching is not very effective, the senior team identifies this and works to improve it.
57. Performance management is at an advanced stage of implementation. The work in subject areas is regularly monitored. Heads of department have been trained in their role. Most are very effective. They fulfil the expectations of the college very well; to be leaders, managers and role models. There are particular strengths in the management and leadership of many areas, including special educational needs, English, religious education, drama, science, design and technology and geography. The leadership and management of subject areas range from excellent to good. In some cases, heads of department are newly in post and so have yet to make a significant impact. The management of year groups is strong, the year heads giving very good guidance to form tutors and counselling students well. Overall, leadership and management are very good in the college. It is a tribute to the effectiveness of management that the college went so successfully through a lengthy process of relocating and rebuilding without any adverse affect on performance. The management of the implementation of the new behaviour policy has been excellent and has resulted in a marked improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes.
58. The commitment to inclusion lies at the heart of the college, with the governing body and senior management team accepting fully their responsibilities to meeting the needs of all. This permeates all teaching, and staff and students both value and welcome students with special needs in their lessons. There is a planned programme of in-service training and for the induction of new staff that raises awareness of special needs and disability issues.
59. The college is an acknowledged centre of excellence for inclusive practice, and benefits from an outstanding special needs co-ordinator, who provides leadership, vision and clarity of purpose. All staff in the learning support team show a very good subject knowledge and expertise which is used throughout the whole college to maintain access to a full and balanced curriculum for all students, including those with a range of sometimes quite severe physical, sensory or learning difficulties. The excellent use of a committed and experienced team of learning support assistants means that every student plays a full part in the life of the college, both inside the classroom and in the broader life of the institution.

60. All governors are linked to curriculum areas and many visit regularly to monitor and support the college. Many of them have considerable professional expertise outside education that they bring to their role for the benefit of the college – in management, for example, or local government. They take their role seriously and are effective as critical friends of the college, questioning and testing in a number of areas, such as performance in national tests, budgeting and health and safety. They are involved in setting and monitoring the budget and in college development planning. There are areas that have benefited directly from their expertise and direction, such as the improved catering facilities and the emphasis on healthy eating. They have been closely involved in the arrangements for the major new building work. They fulfil their role well and have a very good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The college improvement plans are detailed and have been implemented effectively. The priorities for improvement, including levels of attainment and attendance, are appropriate and there is clear evidence that progress is being made.
61. New technology is used very well, both to assist in the administration of the college and to help in teaching. The administrative and clerical staff and the classroom assistants are deployed very effectively and support the teachers well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff are managed very effectively to ensure that the college buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive.

Leadership and management of the sixth form

62. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent and management is very good. The team of senior managers has created an ethos of high expectations and a highly positive learning environment in which young adults receive excellent support and very good provision. The senior management team of the college gives excellent support to the sixth form.
63. A key strength of the provision is the drive to ensure that students achieve as highly as possible. Information from assessment is analysed rigorously and the information is used to improve the provision. For example, the high drop-out rate in psychology was traced to the need to ensure that students who entered the course had a suitably high grade at GCSE in science to understand all aspects of the course. Future students are now required to gain a minimum of a C grade before they can start the course. The results of each course are examined to see how they can be improved. Teaching in the sixth form is monitored carefully and rigorously, always with a relevant focus in order to improve overall provision. For example, a recent focus has been on the provision for male students.
64. Senior managers in the sixth form keep themselves abreast of developments so they can support students as well as possible, they also have a number of links with colleges and universities so they can seek advice, especially during the period when students are applying to go on to higher education.
65. An excellent feature of the sixth form is the 'One Stop Shop', an administrative centre that is staffed throughout the day. Here, students have immediate access to guidance through the exceptionally knowledgeable and supportive administrative officer.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3683472
Total expenditure	3679568
Expenditure per pupil	2943.65

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	256906
Balance carried forward to the next	260810

66. The management of the college's finances is very good. All the necessary controls are in place, and the college has received a favourable audit report. Governors' expertise, and the knowledge and insights provided by the bursar, ensure that the college makes very good use of its resources. Special educational needs funding and all additional funding is spent very appropriately. The principles of best value are applied well. Significant savings have been made from the repairs and refurbishment budget, for example, by ensuring the best possible value from contractors, which has allowed more funds to be used for resources for learning. Careful financial management led to a large carry forward at the end of the last financial year. This will be spent on additional resources and the carry forward for the current financial year is estimated at around five per cent of the college's total income. Income and expenditure per pupil is close to the national average. Students achieve well in terms of both academic and personal development, and the college is providing very good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 7-9, and well above in Years 10 and 11.
- Students achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Teaching is very good overall, and promotes a very high quality of learning, supported by extremely good relationships between students and teachers.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Teachers are very committed, and the English department forms a highly effective team.
- Marking is usually very good, and targets are set and shared with students, but teachers do not always check that specific advice previously given has been followed.

Commentary

67. Examination results in GCSE English and in English Literature in 2003 were significantly better than the national picture and similar standards were observed in the work seen in the inspection. In the national statutory tests for Year 9, students scored above average points, with girls scoring, on average, four points more than boys. Just over 74 per cent of students gained A* to C passes in GCSE English – well above the national average of 57.8 per cent. The pass rate at the highest grades (A* and A) was almost three times the national average. In English Literature, the pass rate was slightly higher: 75.7 per cent of those entered gained an A* to C pass. This reflects current standards in Years 9 and 11.
68. Students enter the college with levels of attainment in line with the national average and achieve very well, as a result of their own very good motivation and the very good teaching they receive. This includes those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Teachers set challenges skilfully and carefully, so that each student is enabled to respond according to his or her individual capacity. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection. Almost all the lessons observed were good or very good and there was one example of outstanding practice.
69. The difference in the attainment of boys and girls up to Year 9 may be accounted for by a number of factors: the inherent differences in the ways the genders perform; the balance of time in English is weighted towards Year 7 rather than Year 9; and the length of lessons (which at 50 minutes does not allow the opportunities for extended writing which boys need more than girls). The college is well aware of this problem, and is continually seeking strategies that will meet it. There is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls by the end of Year 11.
70. The teachers collaborate exceptionally well in their planning, which is skilled and thorough. Their readiness to share their enthusiasm for their subject produces highly positive outcomes for their students in terms of both achievement and enjoyment. There are occasional lapses in detailed subject knowledge. Nevertheless, detailed preparation means that all lessons have structure, purpose, variety and pace, so that the students succeed in reaching their objectives and are so engaged that there is neither the opportunity nor the desire to go off task. Curriculum leadership of outstanding quality is also a driving factor. The head of department sets out his expectations very clearly, in subject documentation which gives excellent guidance as to the management of teaching, and he offers a fine example himself. The three

years he has been in post have seen a significant improvement in provision. The teachers of the department have come together to form a strong and able team: committed, cohesive and sharing his vision, which is focused upon excellence.

71. The National Literacy Strategy is the model for the planning and teaching of English throughout the college. At the ends of the lessons, however, the opportunity to share judgements about the quality of learning is sometimes missed, and this means that students do not systematically get the chance to evaluate how and why they are making progress. Procedures for the regular formal assessment of students' work are good, and the data produced are well used. Day-to-day marking is thorough, and targets for future improvement are set. Whether or when these targets have been achieved is usually not recorded, and while good advice is very often given, there is no routine checking in subsequent work of whether it has been followed. Although there is some sharing of texts, resources overall are good, with a good variety of books, and ICT resources in every room.
72. Throughout the college, speaking standards are high, and the vast majority listens respectfully and analytically. Students answer questions (which are generally well framed and appropriately challenging) thoughtfully and carefully. In reading, students of all ages engage well with the texts they study, and some sensitive responses were observed in all lessons. Reading aloud is of above average standard, fluent and accurate. Writing is lively and interesting, and students try hard to produce work which will please and hold their readers. Procedures of drafting and redrafting throughout the college, often incorporated in the assessment procedures, mean that from the beginning to the end of their time in college, students are achieving well and continuously improving. The best work by the end of Year 11 is in literature, where students write knowledgeably about the texts they study, and bring mature and skilled judgement to what they wish to say.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Literacy skills are above average across the college. They are developed well in the learning of subject specific vocabulary, which in many cases is highly specialised. Most departments provide a good variety of opportunities for speaking and listening, in group-discussions and in individual presentations. Where appropriate, written work is set; although marking, especially of technical errors, is of an inconsistent standard. Some written work (for example, evaluation in art) is extended and sensitive.
74. The college library promotes literacy well. It is a pleasant, welcoming room, well used for research and study. There is a satisfactory collection of both fiction and non-fiction. It is well staffed by the librarian, and her assistant, who conduct promotional activities to foster the culture of reading.

Modern Foreign Languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**. The focus was on French and German, but Italian and Spanish were sampled.

The languages department has gone through a considerable period of change over the past few years with a series of heads of department and changes of teaching staff. It is now stable and morale amongst the staff is very high because of very good leadership by the enthusiastic joint heads of department. This contributes to the very good learning environment, along with the very attractive accommodation. The department has a high profile in the college because the staff takes every opportunity to promote the languages.

Teaching and learning are very good overall. All teachers are very well qualified and are supported by three foreign language assistants for French, Italian and Spanish. The high level of expertise in the department is used very effectively to plan a range of activities that are interesting and that cover the four elements of language; listening, speaking, reading and writing, very well indeed. Teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements, so students are prepared well.

French

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership creates a cohesive team and high morale and the department is well run and managed
- Achievement is very good for most students.
- Very well qualified and enthusiastic teachers motivate most students so that teaching and learning are very good.
- Languages have a high profile in the college.
- The data about performance are starting to be used to track the progress of students and to set targets, but staff still lack confidence in this.
- The department is developing a range of teaching approaches to motivate all, especially boys.
- Students do not use the language that is taught as a matter of course in the classrooms.

Commentary

75. All students take French until the end of Year 9 and many go on to study it for GCSE. Standards in French by the end of Year 9 are above average and at the end of Year 11 are slightly above average. This represents very good achievement as almost all students take a modern foreign language, and many more able students opt to study German or Italian. Standards in French in Year 10 are relatively higher than in Year 11, reflecting the new stability of the department after many changes in staff over recent years.
76. Standards of listening are above average as every lesson provides very good opportunities to hear languages spoken and the teachers use the languages to teach new ideas and to consolidate previous learning. Most students are reluctant to use the language in the classroom, a point raised in the last inspection, but, when pressed, they are often fluent and accurate. Teachers do not always encourage them to use the languages when, for example, they ask for equipment, but teachers are aware of the need to do this and have displayed key phrases prominently in their classrooms. Younger students read with an English accent but by the end of Years 9 and 11, many read accurately with a good accent and sometimes with expression. They are helped in this by using the library to read from the small, but useful, collection of books.
77. By the end of Year 9, writing is increasingly accurate and students are beginning to use a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of Year 11, writing is more extensive and more complex structures are used.
78. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. The department has additional support for some classes and, when there is no support, teachers are skilled in ensuring that activities are appropriate to move students' learning on. These skills also include very good relationships and excellent management of behaviour, so that the students feel motivated to succeed. The department is working hard to motivate small groups of boys who are not enthusiastic about learning languages. In a very good French lesson with Year 8 students, the teacher set all students a challenge to look for patterns in a list of vocabulary to do with rooms in a house, then went through the list with great expression, exaggerating some of the sounds. When she said '*la cuisine*' she added '*yum yum*'. The boys in the group loved this approach and relished repeating the words. One boy got stuck on '*la cuisine*' and said '*oh, er er, yum yum, I know*', then triumphantly '*la cuisine!*' The learning of the boys in this class was supported well by the use of the teacher's body language and humour.

German

Provision in German is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in German.
- Achievement is very good
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The subject is led very well

Commentary

79. Students can choose to take German in Year 8 alongside French. They achieve very well and standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11. Performance in German has been high for a number of years; last year was an exception when a significant number of boys underperformed. This has been picked up by the department and methods are being introduced to increase the motivation of boys.
80. Standards of listening are above average. This helps students to speak with good accents. Many read accurately with a good accent and with expression. By the end of Year 9, writing is generally accurate and students use a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of Year 11, writing is above average in quality and quantity. Teaching is very good. Higher attaining students achieve well as they are challenged by their work and many enjoy learning languages. The students contribute very well, ask questions and keep the teachers on their toes by their enthusiasm. This is because the teachers are enthusiastic about languages and make learning enjoyable by their brisk and lively approaches.
81. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. A small group of boys, often of average ability, are unmotivated by languages and last year, underachieved in German and Italian, although achieved well in French. Teachers are trying out new approaches to increase the boys' motivation. These are not yet consistently used across the department and in a few classes, boys are passive, although behave very well.
82. ICT is used very well in German: each student has a CD with prompts and activities in German that they can use for their personal study. ICT is not used as well in other languages, although students in Year 9 are taken into the library weekly to read the books and use the computers.

Italian

Provision in Italian is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Italian.
- Achievement is very good
- Teaching and learning are very good.

Commentary

83. Students have the choice of studying Italian alongside French in Year 8. Italian was sampled during the inspection. Students are highly motivated by the subject and achieve very well by the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and above average by the end of Year 9.

84. The department has been trying out a new scheme of introducing Spanish and Italian beginner classes for those students in Year 10 who have lost the motivation to carry on with the languages they have studied up to Year 9. In both of the classes, students are highly motivated and have learnt the rudiments of both languages. Many are interested in knowing more about the countries and about how the language works, as was seen in an Italian lesson when a number of boys asked questions about the structure of the language. Many boys are in these classes. The reason for the success is the choice of activities around a topic that is relevant to the students; for example, in one lesson, a video of Lazio playing football was used. This led on to discussion about Italian football teams taking the names of their colours, which led neatly into an activity consolidating learning of colours.
85. **Spanish** was sampled. It is taught as a beginners' class in Year 10 to students who do not wish to continue with the language they have been studying and who would like to make a fresh start with a new language. Six months into the course, students are highly motivated and enjoying the language. Although standards are below average, the students are achieving well because of their motivation.
86. Teaching is very good. The activities often demand a *hands-on* approach, such as games or sorting, which appeals to the students. The activities are brief and plentiful, so that there is little opportunity to become bored. Another reason is the support of students in Year 12 as part of their activities' choice. The students in Year 10 respect them, listen to and ask questions of them. This also helps the language skills of the students in Year 12.

All languages

87. Senior managers have produced a wide range of data about the performance of students that is now available to the department. Teachers in the department are skilled at assessing students and indicating where they are in relation to the National Curriculum and to GCSE. They are starting to project what students are likely to attain at the end of their course, based on results of departmental tests. Systems are now ready to track the progress that students are making and to record the attainment level that students are expected to achieve at the end of Years 9 and 11, but these are not yet used. Teachers mark work well and often write a target based on the marking. Many students, however, are unclear about their targets and search their books for them when asked, as they are not easily recognisable. The majority of students are reluctant to use the languages they are learning as a matter of course in the classroom; students in Year 7 are more willing than other year groups.
88. The modern languages department is very well led, well run and staff work cohesively and enthusiastically as a team. It has made good progress since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results at the national tests for students aged 14 and very good GCSE results, both a consequence of the very good progress made by students.
- Consistently good teaching that has some very good features leads to good learning.
- The dedicated, committed team of teachers has a common aim of improvement.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students give a positive atmosphere for the teaching and learning of mathematics.
- As a result, students are enthusiastic and hard working.

Commentary

89. The standard of achievement of the current Year 7 students is now slightly above average. It has been below average for many years. Achievement in 2003 national tests for students aged 14 was well above the national average. As the standards of these students when they entered the college were below average, progress made was very good. Results in the GCSE examinations for 2003 were well above average and, when compared to students' achievements at the age of 14, indicate very good achievement. Just over 60 per cent of students attained A* to C grades and the proportion gaining A* or A grades was almost double the national average. These results are in line with the high standard of work seen during the inspection. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because of the good support received during lessons.
90. The very good results achieved by students are a result of the consistently good teaching they receive. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to prepare and deliver effective lessons that interest students. Lessons start well, continue at a good pace, and contain material that is achievable, but challenging. Good relationships and humour help to maintain a positive atmosphere. Teachers use open style question and answer sessions to develop understanding, but some lessons lack the full involvement of students. Best practice was seen in a very effective lesson with higher attaining Year 10 students who were preparing for a GCSE module test. Individuals presented solutions to examination questions on data handling to the whole class. Their solutions were logical and students had good reasons to support their answers. Teachers mark work regularly. Written feedback to students is encouraging, but does not always indicate how a student could improve.
91. The consistently good teaching evokes an equally good response from students. Lessons start promptly; students settle quickly and work hard. They answer questions enthusiastically and politely, giving reasons for answers when required. Students achieve well because they are encouraged to work hard by their teachers. Levels of concentration are high and behaviour is good with students issuing and collecting materials with minimal fuss.
92. An experienced teacher leads the department well. There is an effective scheme of work, based upon the National Curriculum that underpins the work of the department. This provides good guidance to both new and more experienced teachers. Regular assessments not only monitor progress, but also give a basis for grouping students by ability. This means that work can closely match the ability of all students. There is analysis of assessments to decide relevant action to overcome any misunderstandings by students. All attainment targets receive equal coverage. Extension of higher attaining students, including those who are gifted and talented, is part of the normal work of the department. Most, for example, attempt the annual Mathematics Challenge and achieve good results and many attend an extra-curricular class to study GCSE Statistics. This is a very good, mutually supportive department with much strength and a clear vision for future improvement

Mathematics across the curriculum

93. Students' mathematical skills are sufficient for them to access the whole curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place and used appropriately. Mental calculations are a regular part of mathematics lessons and there is no over-reliance on an electronic calculator. All subject areas have charts to illustrate the correct mathematical technique to display in classrooms. There is good use of graphs, charts and diagrams in science and physical education and good use in measuring and weighing in design subjects. In art, there is good three-dimensional development and ideas of perspective, scale and enlargement are developed.

SCIENCE

Overall provision for science is **very good** with excellent features. Able, skilled, caring teachers work with well-motivated and co-operative students in a very good learning environment producing very high standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Students develop very positive attitudes to the subject and so achieve very well.
- The department actively investigates strategies to improve teaching and learning, making full use of science college status and funding to improve pupil learning experiences and the professional development of teachers.
- Very good accommodation provides a good environment for learning.
- Provision of further ICT resources is needed to enhance teaching and learning.
- Further improvements are possible in the procedures for marking.

Commentary

94. The attainment of students on entry is similar to that nationally. There is a rising trend, the current intake has more higher ability students. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average and has risen faster than nationally. Compared to schools with a similar intake, attainment is very high, with no consistent difference between boys and girls. GCSE attainment is very high compared with national standards. Just over 84 per cent of students gained A* to C passes in GCSE combined science – well above the national average of 51.2 per cent. The pass rate at the higher grades (A* and A) was almost three times the national average. Science is the best performing subject in the college for both boys and girls. Progress from Year 9 to GCSE is very good.
95. By the end of Year 9, students have a good understanding of national curriculum science. Higher attaining students show a good understanding of the factors affecting pressure and the effects of forces. Lower attaining students understand the causes of acid rain and the pH scale, but some students' work is incomplete. Higher attainers in Year 11 show well above average GCSE standards in genetics and heredity, chemical bonding, chemical and physical calculations, power and energy. Many students of lower ability demonstrate understanding of at least average standard; reflected in the very good GCSE results and the 100% pass rate.
96. Overall teaching is very good - with examples of excellence. Teachers consistently produce good lessons. This, combined with very positive pupil attitudes and very effective preparation for tests and examinations, produces very good attainment. Where teaching was excellent, the whole lesson formed an exciting learning activity. A fun starter was used to challenge students to identify musical instruments. Learning objectives were effectively introduced. Key words were well used during the description of ear structure. An ear was 'made' using students and artefacts. This was effectively carried out, was good fun and clearly illustrated how the ear worked. Students who had impaired hearing were used sensitively to explain their hearing problems. A worksheet consolidated learning. The department is trialling strategies to involve students more in their learning; this risk-taking and forward-looking approach leads to interesting work. Students appreciate this, apply themselves well and are successful. Teaching and learning rely on the use of well-sequenced worksheets; however there is sometimes overuse, which is not helped by the limited number of textbooks for class or home use. Some, but not all, have revision guides they have purchased, some forget them and this constrains learning opportunities. The department supports the college in integration of all students. All students show good achievement and support assistants make an exceptionally good contribution to the department's work. Teachers use ICT in their teaching and the recently developed suite of computers helps. Year 8 students showed they had very good skills in the use of computers allowing them to locate information and create new documents from different sources.

97. Students' attitudes to each other and their work are very good. No instances of poor behaviour were seen during the inspection; students help each other, co-operate with teachers, show good motivation for their studies and demonstrate responsible attitudes during practical work. This contributes to the very good standards achieved by the department.
98. Leadership of the department is very good. The way the head of department has steered the bid for specialist college status is excellent. There is good vision and new facilities are planned. There are extensive links with primary schools, partner colleges, FE establishments and the community. The department runs a science week and other activities that broaden the curriculum and make science more interesting for students and staff. The national strategy for science has been followed well. Starter and plenary activities have been given emphasis and the second in department is working at local authority and national level in this area and developing materials in the college – this is an area of potential excellence. Good use is made of data on students' attainment on entry to the college and of frequent tests, which give national curriculum levels and enable tracking of pupil progress. GCSE students are also tracked well. The department identifies students causing concern and takes effective action to support them. There is some inconsistency in the frequency, rigour and quality of marking; some scientific errors and spelling of technical words are overlooked and this will affect the learning and attainment of these students. The department makes a conscious effort to prepare students well for examinations and this, coupled with good classroom practice, helps to produce very good results.
99. Since the last inspection, progress has been very good. The use of ICT has improved but needs to continue to do so. The new buildings are a significant improvement. Science college status has had a real impact. Resources and accommodation have improved significantly since the last inspection, contributing to rising standards of attainment. Many additional opportunities have been created and effectively followed up for very good staff development, which is an area of excellence.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress in Years 7 to 9 from highly variable standards on entry.
- Assignments, tasks and resources are very carefully planned to interest students and ensure they all get comparable experiences.
- Teachers who are not ICT specialists teach the majority of lessons and this particularly affects the achievement of higher attaining students.
- There is insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 for students to make the same progress they make in earlier years.
- Very good use of assessment ensures that students know how to succeed.
- Good leadership has effectively addressed the main weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, resulting in very good improvement.

Commentary

100. As well as providing National Curriculum ICT for all students, the college offers applied GCSE. This was only introduced last September so there are as yet no examination results.
101. Students' standards on entry are highly variable. A significant minority have not used common software packages, whilst others have considerable experience and skill. Standards of work seen are above average and represent good achievement in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, more than three-quarters of students are working at or above the expected level. Teacher assessments are accurate and show that boys' and girls' standards are comparable. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards are higher in researching,

presenting and communicating text and images than in handling numbers, modelling and control. In the recently introduced examination course, standards are above average with about three-quarters of students working towards higher level (A* to C) GCSE grades. Their achievement is good. For example, students with little previous experience of databases learn to successfully link tables and create multimedia entries.

102. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is good in the GCSE course. Assignments and tasks are carefully planned, interesting and relevant. They enable students to develop skills to the expected level, even when non-specialists teach the lessons. For example, in Year 8, students design and test a programme to mimic a local lighthouse in different conditions. Each assignment has a clear assessment grid, which ensures students and teachers know what is expected, when they have succeeded and what to do next. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and by well-designed help sheets, so they learn well. However, where more gifted students complete the prepared tasks, some teachers' subject knowledge is not secure enough to provide suitably challenging extension work, so they achieve less well than their peers. In Years 10 and 11, the assignments include researching and presenting information. There is insufficient time allocated in Years 10 and 11 for students to develop skills in all aspects of ICT. While resources are well used in other subjects to enhance students' learning, their ICT skills in modelling and control are not sufficiently developed to compensate for the lack of taught time.
103. Leadership and management are good. Very well structured assignments, tasks and resources support many non-specialist teachers and help students to achieve skills at the expected level. Students' work from ICT lessons is monitored and there is good communication across a diverse team, most of whom teach very little ICT. At the time of the last inspection, there were many weaknesses in students' work, provision and management. Improvement since then has been very good. Achievement has improved, work is thoroughly assessed and teaching is never less than satisfactory. Accommodation, resources and infrastructure are greatly improved and are now very good, with one computer for every four students and a networked computer in every classroom. Computers are available outside lessons, in very well ordered sessions supervised by the students themselves. This has had a significant impact on usage and therefore achievement. The college has plans to address the remaining weaknesses from next September.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

104. The provision of ICT across the curriculum was heavily criticised in the previous inspection report. The college has worked hard to rectify the weaknesses identified and provision across the curriculum is now satisfactory, with many strengths. Many teachers use recently purchased projectors and interactive whiteboards to improve presentation of information to students and to involve them in the lessons. In most subjects, students use computers to research information and to present their findings to different audiences. For example, in religious education, students make very good use of ICT to prepare presentations and revision guides. In art, students can confidently use digital cameras, scan pictures and manipulate them in order to produce the desired image. In music, students compose and notate electronically. This regular use helps students to consolidate research and presentation skills. Other skills are less frequently used, so students' standards are not so high. For example, other than for coursework, students make comparatively little use of spreadsheets for modelling or handling data in mathematics.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Varied lesson activities are taught by enthusiastic teachers, making learning enjoyable and successful for students of all capabilities.
- Well structured lessons ensure that students' learning is purposeful and focused.
- Fieldwork, the use of ICT, and teachers' high expectations, all help to raise students' achievement.
- Ambitious content means that lessons are sometimes rushed, leaving too little time for a thorough evaluation of learning.
- High quality resources are used effectively to help students use geographical enquiry and skills to increase their knowledge and understanding of topics.

Example of outstanding practice

There are instances of excellent teaching in geography that move the students on very rapidly in their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

In a Year 10 lesson on river features students enjoyed a variety of activities and learning styles which resulted in excellent achievement. The teacher used lively descriptions, personal experiences, and a digital projector display to catch students' interest and to review previous work on the upper course. They were constantly involved in very practical and interesting ways. A memory challenge on waterfalls was followed by lively work in pairs. Then the teacher organised a small group of students to move around the room, following the course of an imaginary meander. There was an air of suspense and, as students watched intently, they were able to work out the different rates of water flow and associated areas of erosion and deposition. Learning was reviewed and reinforced immediately, with students explaining key terms to each other.

Commentary

105. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed students attaining well above the national average in 2003. Girls performed better than boys, as is the case nationally. The GCSE results for 2003 were well above the national average, with nearly a quarter of students gaining A* or A grades. The difference in gender performance was much less than that nationally, especially at these higher grades. Students performed better in geography than in many of their other subjects.
106. Lesson observations and work scrutiny showed standards in all years to be well above average. Students achieve very well and are particularly proficient in using geographical enquiry and skills. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students completed a complex task to a high standard, as they analysed the economic importance of tourism in different countries.
107. Students' achievement is very good. All students, including those with special needs and those who are gifted and talented, make very good progress. This is because lesson and homework activities are planned carefully to cater for students' different capabilities and learning styles, and they are encouraged to aim high. All year groups do fieldwork and it is a boost to achievement, as is their very good use of ICT, which is used considerably for teaching and learning.
108. Overall, teaching and learning are both very good. Nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed were very good and one lesson was excellent. The most effective lessons had clear objectives and a format that included a lively starter activity, developmental main tasks and a plenary session to check what students had learnt. The teachers' obvious enjoyment of the subject and the use of stimulating resources were key factors in sustaining students' interest

and concentration. When teaching is less successful it is because teachers feel pressured to cover a large amount of work. Then they run out of time and curtail the students' opportunity to evaluate their learning.

109. Leadership and management are excellent. All members of the department are committed to improving the provision for geography. There is an innovative approach. Strong team spirit and the sharing of good practice are very evident, and departmental documentation shows that these strengths are a key feature of successful strategic planning, review and evaluation.
110. Standards have improved since the last inspection and so has the quality of teaching and learning. The use of ICT has increased especially, with the development of the geography web site on the college intranet and the use of digital projectors in lessons. The provision of up-to-date textbooks has improved, particularly for younger students. The department is now well accommodated in a purpose-built suite of rooms that are alive with displays of students' work and have a stimulating subject identity.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching by specialists, committed to the effective teaching of their students, results in good learning.
- Excellent accommodation is used to create a first class environment for the teaching of history.
- The use of a variety of teaching strategies and the effective use of learning support assistants enable a high degree of effective learning and inclusion to take place.
- There is a good appreciation that the recent underachievement of boys at GCSE needs to be addressed through a variety of strategies.
- There is a need to adopt a common style of marking and assessment within the department.
- There is comparatively little use of ICT in classroom teaching and over time this may lead to a reduction in the effectiveness of teaching.

Commentary

111. In recent years there has been a marked underachievement by boys, particularly at GCSE. In large part this has been the result of staffing difficulties. For example, one group had five teachers over the two years of their course. Partly as a result, there was a sharp drop in the numbers opting to take history at GCSE and A-level. The department has a good range of strategies to address this issue and numbers are now picking up. The data on pupil progress suggest that results should now improve. The department can look to the future with some confidence and attainment is now above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, with students achieving well.
112. Teaching is good and, in some cases, very good. Lessons are prepared thoroughly, based on good schemes of work and supported by a good level of written and visual resources. Teachers use their subject knowledge and effective questioning to engage students, so maintaining their interest and improving their learning. A variety of teaching styles is used, such as the use of role play, video clips and card sorting, all of which help to reinforce learning. One very good example was in a GCSE lesson. The class watched a dramatic piece prepared by sixth form drama students on the Suffragettes that was an accurate, yet very moving, piece on the lengths to which some women went in their campaign for the vote. Students are able to use source materials with confidence, as was seen in work undertaken by one group analysing why Hitler was able to rise to a position of absolute power.

113. Students have a positive approach to learning. There were no instances of unacceptable behaviour. On the contrary, there was an atmosphere in which hard work was clearly the norm. Students are helped to remain on task through the variety of styles of teaching and by the pace that is maintained in lessons. Some interesting introductions to lessons ensured that students were engaged from the outset, such as the lesson on cholera, in which the teacher pretended he was becoming ill from drinking infected water at the start of the lesson! However, sometimes too much is crammed in, leaving insufficient time for recap and reinforcement at the end.
114. Aspects of the leadership of the department are effective. The teachers are beginning to work as a team in which collaboration is the norm. Strategies for taking the department forward have been implemented (such as changing the GCSE course to one that better meets the needs of students) and these should now enable the department to make good progress. However, there is a need to adopt a common approach to marking and assessment. Similarly, there is a comparative under-use of ICT software in teaching, which needs to be remedied, since over time this might reduce the efficiency of the teaching and learning within the department.

Religious education

The quality of provision in religious education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well as a result of enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching.
- Curriculum leadership is excellent because it focuses on enabling students and teachers to achieve their best.
- Religious education makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development.
- The curriculum is very well designed and gives students opportunities to study a wider range of faiths than is usual.
- Excellent use is made of information technology to enhance students' learning.

Commentary

115. All students at the college are entered for an examination course in religious education, the vast majority for the full GCSE course. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were above average. A small number of students sat the Certificate of Achievement course and all passed.
116. When students enter the college, standards are broadly average. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9, representing very good achievement for all groups of students. By Year 9, students show very good knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of the major world religions. They have a strong understanding of what such beliefs mean to people of faith. They understand moral complexities and show high levels of tolerance for the views of others. Throughout the age range, there are examples of accurate, sensitive and thoughtful writing.
117. By Year 11, standards in the GCSE groups are well above average and all groups of students make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding, building very well on the work they have done previously. All students move beyond the externals of religion to probe deeper questions of meaning and morality. It was not possible to observe any lessons for those students who are entered for the Certificate of Achievement, but other evidence suggests that their standards are at least in line with course requirements and that they also achieve very well.

118. Teaching and learning are very good with some excellent features. Teaching is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and very well planned. Intellectual demands are high and students rise to the challenges set for them. Students are taught to think beyond the obvious and, as a result, clearly enjoy their lessons and show very high levels of concentration and motivation. A significant strength of the teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, is the use teachers make of their examining experience – students are very well equipped to write answers of a high standard.
119. Curriculum leadership is excellent. There is a clarity of vision and a shared commitment to improve. Teachers, all of whom are specialists, are excellent role models for the subject. Religious education makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development. The curriculum is very well designed so that students have excellent opportunities in Years 10 and 11 to study faiths such as Buddhism. Excellent use is made of information technology to enhance students' learning. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is above the national average in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teaching is good, sometimes very good, and teachers have high expectations of their students.
- Students achieve very well, in response to these expectations.
- The department needs to do more to extend the use of computers particularly for computer-aided design and manufacture.
- The department should consider the provision for more work-related courses in the 14–19 curriculum.

Commentary

120. In work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average. Students make very good progress. In lessons, teachers provide planned opportunities for them to reach higher levels expected by the National Curriculum. Students produce articles of very good quality, they express their ideas very well and communicate their designs clearly. Good use is made of computer-aided design and manufacture for project work. The students benefit from the very good links with local manufacturers, who give support with project work.
121. By the end of Year 11, students have achieved very well. They are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and very well presented project folders for textiles and their very good practical project work. Where students use ICT, the quality of course work is improved. In product design lessons, students make good use of computers - particularly computer-aided design and manufacture - but not enough of this is done. Students are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. They understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades.
122. The strengths of the good teaching are in subject knowledge, high expectations and effective pupil management. The teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage students. The higher attaining students are sufficiently challenged. All members of staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this helps them to challenge and extend students. They ensure that key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are interested in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed, so

that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. The purposes of the lessons are sharply focused and the objectives are shared effectively with the students. The department places an emphasis on speaking and listening and writing skills, along with the good use of numeracy in calculations. Teachers work well with students with special educational needs.

123. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging and motivating comments. In Year 11, the good quality marking provides a commentary that shows students how to improve their work. The process in place for assessment of students' attainment is good. Assessment results are used effectively in planning and teaching to raise standards. There is a good level of student self-evaluation and assessment together with teacher moderation.
124. The head of department provides excellent leadership and manages design and technology very well. There have been improvements in teacher assessments and examination results, but he is aware of the changes that need to take place to improve results further. This will include a more rigorous approach to teacher assessments and extending the curriculum offer. There is some provision for work-related courses in the 14–19 curriculum but further consideration needs to be given to the courses that the department can offer. The department needs to do more to extend the use of computers particularly for computer-aided design and manufacture. The technicians make an excellent contribution to the work of the department and support teachers very well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2003 GCSE results were outstanding.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and the department makes a very good contribution to their personal development.
- Achievement is very good in both key stages, and students across the attainment range make very good progress.
- Teaching and learning overall are very good, and never less than good.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- ICT provision and the use of computer-aided design are developing well, but further staff training and resources are needed.

Commentary

125. The department offers a good range of art and design aspects and contextual studies in all years, including the use of a wide range of media, and work in two and three dimensions. By the end of Year 9 standards overall are above the national expectation. In recent years GCSE results have been very good with the number of A* to C grades being well above the national average. Results in 2003 were very high indeed, with A* to C grades of 90 per cent; 26 per cent above the national average. Boys' results were also excellent, with A* to C grades 32 per cent above the boys' national average. Current levels of attainment in Year 11 are very high.
126. Students' achievement overall is very good. Throughout the college, there is a high standard of expressive drawing and painting, and a good understanding of colour. Very good progress is made, and students build successfully on their prior knowledge and experiences. Year 7 students understand how to use warm and cold colours to create mood, they also show an above average knowledge of proportion when figure drawing and painting. Very good use is made of pattern quality and cross-hatching to convey light and form in lino cutting and printing

designs by Year 8 students, and Year 9 students showed good knowledge of the properties of clay, and construction techniques. Year 10 students showed well-advanced study skills when researching carvings for a sculpture project. Finished art work by Year 11 students is rich and colourful, and the excellent attitudes of students enable high achievement and standards. Students are keen to learn and they work purposefully and productively, both in lessons and independently.

127. All teachers are experienced and have expertise in a wide range of aspects of the subject, including an extensive knowledge of art history and appreciation. Assessment is related to National Curriculum levels from Year 7, and effectively linked to examination assessment criteria in Years 10 and 11. Marking is constructive and carefully recorded. All students are given regular written and verbal feedback on their work. Assessment and self-assessment make a major contribution to students' learning. Teachers set exciting, challenging tasks and have high expectations of students. They are very enthusiastic, good role models, and give very generously of their time to students at all attainment levels. Excellent working relationships have been established and the use of independent learning promotes high standards. There are no major weaknesses in teaching. However, there are two areas for further development. One is the need for more discussion at the end of lessons to assess what students have learnt and to develop their understanding further. The second is a curriculum issue: the amount of time for teaching art in Years 7 to 9 is low and the two-week timetable, which means that students can go for more than a week without an art lesson, affects progression and continuity.
128. The department makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through links with local artists, visits to art galleries, and the many links with other educational establishments, industry and the local community.
129. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is clarity of vision, a strong sense of purpose, and high aspirations for success in all areas of the department's work. Teamwork is very strong. Development plans address the important issues. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 9, and well above in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good overall, and excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers plan and work together very well.
- Relationships between students and teachers are extremely good.
- The contribution which the subject makes to the extra-curricular life of the college is very high.
- There is a need for an improvement in some of the equipment and accommodation.

Example of outstanding practice

In two excellent lessons, two drama teachers put their classes together to share their skills. They worked as a team to inspire the students, helping them to make great progress in their drama skills.

These lessons shared the same excellent characteristics:

- warm-ups were structured and designed to engage interest and to establish co-operation and control;
- preparation had been very detailed, so that each lesson was extremely well structured and developmental;
- co-operation was of a high order, and links between activities led by different teachers were seamless, and the whole complex operation looked effortless;
- while each combined class was taught as a whole, with directions from the front, students had many opportunities for individual, paired and small group work, and all were fully involved;
- activities were very varied, students were very interested and fully engaged, strong motivation was shared between students and teachers and, as a result, achievement was at a very high level.

Commentary

130. Students' attitudes to drama mature well through Years 7 to 9. They demonstrate a steep curve of progress from the time they enter the college. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, they show that they understand that drama demands very specific skills, which they have been quick to learn. Attainment is above national expectations at this stage, and by the time students reach the GCSE examinations in Years 11, it is well above.
131. Very good teaching ensures that students achieve very well. This includes students with special educational needs or who are gifted or talented, because teachers provide them with the right opportunities and with challenges that are well adapted to their capabilities. Another strong driving factor in students' achievement is their own very good motivation. In a Year 9 lesson, the class was asked to assume the role of a committee of medical and social services managers discussing a case brought to them by a social worker (played by the teacher). Students took the exercise very seriously, and entered into their roles faultlessly, so that the lesson was highly successful.
132. Subject leadership is very good. Resources are good, and accommodation is very spacious, in the form of two large studios. One of these, however, while equipped for lighting, has no lights, and could not use any because there is no blackout. As a result, a valuable tool in drama teaching is only available in one studio.
133. Drama provides a very good additional enrichment to the curriculum, particularly to students' personal, social and moral development, through its focus upon interactions between people and the collaboration that is part of every lesson. It contributes well to language and literature skills. Its contribution to the quality of life of the whole college is very strong, involving students in a very full programme of drama productions to which many teachers willingly and generously give of their own time.

Music

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards in GCSE classes are above expectations and improving.
- In classwork, teaching is often very good and sometimes excellent; it enables students to learn and achieve very well in examination classes.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental tuition is excellent and teaching is very good.
- Teaching in extra-curricular work is usually very good and often excellent; standards are outstandingly good and bring much credit to the college.
- Very good behaviour and enthusiastic attitudes reflect the trust, respect and close relationships between students and staff.
- The excellent accommodation and resources are used fully.
- Leadership and management, and the support given to music are excellent and have allowed the department to improve since the last inspection.
- The below average time given to music in Years 7-9 does not allow the curriculum to be taught in sufficient depth.

Commentary

134. Students enter the college with variable musical experience related to the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, instrumental tuition experience, interests and level of home support. Most instrumentalists enter with above average attainment, but many students enter with below average attainment.

135. By Year 9, standards are broadly average. Most students show standards approaching or at the expected standard; many talented students reach higher levels. Students make good progress in lessons, but achievement over time is lessened by the shortage of time to teach the subject in Years 7, 8 and 9. Most students compose imaginatively; some use computers well to help them but music-reading skills are below average. The more experienced use technical vocabulary in appraising, but general musical knowledge (of instruments, composers, forms and well-known pieces of music) is less well developed.
136. Recent GCSE examination results have been above average. In 2003, all students obtained grade A to C passes. Current standards are also above average. Students enjoy singing and many show high level instrumental skills. They show understanding of harmony, devices and structures and create imaginative compositions. They use music technologies (including computers at home) to develop pieces and notate work. Students' attitudes are commendable and they achieve very well.
137. Teachers teach confidently; they use musical skills well to demonstrate, accompany, direct or conduct. Lessons are lively and instructions are clear; students understand the objectives and what to do. Expectations are usually high and students enjoy lessons. Students with special needs are well integrated and make good progress and higher attaining students are stretched. Homework is set regularly in GCSE work, but irregularly with the younger classes. Students are good-humoured, work productively and are supportive of each other. They respect and trust the staff and relationships are excellent. In GCSE work, attitudes are mature and most students take advantage of opportunities in instrumental or voice tuition and extra-curricular work. This strengthens their achievement.
138. The excellent head of department is enthusiastic, committed to raising standards further and extremely hard working. She is well supported by other staff and the college. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement, but the time for teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 remains low.
139. Approximately 85 boys and 85 girls (approaching 14 per cent, a high proportion) receive instrumental or voice lessons from 12 visiting teachers. Standards are above average and the achievement of students is very good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. Teaching is very good in wind tuition; some excellent work was seen in percussion tuition.
140. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is excellent. Standards and the quality of teaching are very good and often excellent. Visiting teachers give excellent support to these groups. The college promotes many musical events; there were 28 public performances last year, including a trip to Holland and a production of *Grease*. These involve large numbers of students. Music makes a most valuable contribution to students' personal development, especially their social and cultural development. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, the commitment of parents and the enthusiasm of the many talented musicians whose performances and successes bring much credit to the college and this outstanding department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the head of department are very good with a clear vision for the development of the subject and high expectations of students.
- Teaching and learning are very good and, as a result of this and the students' very positive attitudes, achievement is good.

- The assessment and monitoring of student progress is thorough and clearly linked to the National Curriculum.
- The provision of extra-curricular clubs and teams is very good.
- The college's links with primary schools are excellent.
- The development of the outdoor curriculum is hindered by the lack of appropriate facilities.

Commentary

141. The standard of performance in PE is above national standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, although there is a wide range of ability across all year groups. Many of the highest attaining students have gained representative honours at county and national level. By the end of Year 9, most students select and combine skills and perform with control and fluency. When given the opportunity, students can analyse and comment on their own and others' performance. In Years 10 and 11, students have developed very good evaluative skills and many use these to improve their performance. In the GCSE course there is a wide range of ability, which teachers accommodate with carefully constructed lessons. The GCSE results of 2003, where only 44% of students achieved grades A*-C, below the national average, was a disappointing outcome compared to 2002 when 82% achieved these grades. However, the department has in place a number of key strategies to ensure that current students do not underachieve.
142. The head of department has made significant and effective improvements to the delivery of PE at the college since the last inspection, with a clear vision for developing the subject and setting high expectations of students. The introduction of GCSE PE and dance has broadened the curriculum offered to students in Years 10 and 11.
143. Teaching and learning overall are very good. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers deliver well-prepared lessons that are well structured, brisk and authoritative. Students participate with commitment and enthusiasm in lessons and work co-operatively in groups, as seen in a good Year 8 gymnastics lesson where students succeeded in producing a paired sequence incorporating extension and linking movements.
144. The provision of the many excellent extra-curricular clubs and teams provides opportunities for students of all abilities to participate in sport and for the most able to extend their skills development. The very well organised Junior Athlete Education Programme ensures talented students are able to combine a fulfilling academic and sporting career. Internal facilities for the delivery of the subject at the college are very good, with the students able to take advantage of the excellent gymnasium, the community sports hall and the dedicated PE classroom. These provide an excellent learning environment for theory lessons. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
145. The large team of full-time and part-time staff is effectively deployed. There could, however, be more opportunities developed for the sharing of the very good practice observed during the inspection and to provide a more consistent approach to lesson delivery. Appropriate schemes of work for each activity have been designed that provide a clear structure for delivering the subject and are clearly referenced to the national curriculum requirements.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The practical project undertaken in Year 9 gives students an excellent chance to become involved in a range of community activities and leads to above average attainment.
- There are some very good examples of citizenship topics being taught in subjects across the broader curriculum, helping students to achieve well.
- A thorough audit of curriculum provision has been undertaken to ensure that the full requirements of the syllabus are being met and sustained.
- The provision of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is less good than for the earlier years, a situation that the college accepts and plans to change.

Commentary

146. Citizenship became a compulsory subject of the National Curriculum from August 2002. Prior to its introduction, the college undertook an audit of its provision to see which areas of the syllabus were already being delivered and those for which a new scheme of work would need to be developed.
147. Teaching is good, overall, with much that is very good. In the first two years at the college, students are taught citizenship by their form tutors as part of the tutorial programme, and reporting on progress is a part of the tutor's responsibility within the annual report to parents. It is in Year 9 that the practical activity takes place, the outcomes of which form the basis for that year's reporting. Students achieve very well and their attainment is well above average. In the final two years of compulsory education the subject is taught in its own right as part of the personal, social and health education programme of the college. It is this part of the teaching that is the least effective and some teachers are less willing than others to be fully involved in the subject. Nevertheless, attainment is above average at the end of Year 11 and students achieve well, overall.
148. There were some very good examples observed of citizenship being covered in the broader curriculum. One was in a PE session in which Year 10 students worked with local primary school children. Another was in a history lesson about the suffragettes, where issues about the morality of breaking the law on some occasions were discussed. Opportunities are also taken to develop key skills in the subject through the development of social, academic and personal skills, and in areas such as making objective decisions, problem-solving and planning.
149. Following the successful introduction of the subject and the very good overall provision that is made (including the excellent project work undertaken in Year 9 that was the subject of a presentation at last year's Specialist Schools' Trust conference), it is right that the college should now be reviewing the nature of its provision for older students. This reflects the positive approach to getting things right that has epitomised the development of citizenship at Kingsbridge.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses (Year 12)

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	25	68.0	90.0	20.0	42.7	24.8	39.0
Biology	30	93.3	81.6	43.3	33.2	40.3	33.2
Chemistry	11	90.9	84.8	18.2	36.39	35.5	35.2
Business Studies	10	50.0	94.2	0.0	36.1	15.0	38.5
History	11	90.9	91.8	27.3	37.2	35.5	37.8
Information Technology	26	69.2	78.2	3.8	20.6	23.5	28.5
Mathematics	28	93.0	74.2	46.4	34.3	40.4	31.3
Other Social Studies	23	78.3	83.2	13.0	32.5	26.5	33.6
Product design	21	100.0	93.7	33.3	33.6	41.4	33.8
Drama & Theatre Studies	5	100.0	86.5	0.0	18.6	35.0	30.6
English Language	20	83.3	82.9	16.7	17.5	28.3	28.7
English Literature	9	88.9	85.9	11.1	19.1	28.9	30.2
French	6	100.0	78.2	83.3	18.9	50.0	27.6
Geography	29	96.6	74.3	72.4	19.8	48.6	26.5
German	6	100.0	81.5	33.3	19.3	36.7	28.9
Media Studies	27	92.6	N/a	51.9	N/a	41.1	N/a
Music	4	100.0	86.5	75.0	21.4	45.0	30.7
Music Technology	3	100.0	N/a	0.0	N/a	40.0	N/a
PE Studies	10	80.0	73.2	50.0	11.4	38.0	23.1
Physics	7	85.7	68.6	42.9	14.4	40.0	22.7
RE	13	100.0	80.2	46.2	27.6	43.1	29.8
Italian	4	50.0	N/a	0.0	N/a	15.0	N/a

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	20	100.0	96.1	45.0	48.7	82.0	85.1
Biology	18	96.9	91.6	44.4	36.3	85.6	74.1
Chemistry	5	100.0	94.0	60.0	45.9	92.0	81.1
Drama	8	100.0	98.1	50.0	41.5	92.5	82.9
English/English Language	7	100.0	98.3	28.6	36.5	80.0	80.1
English Literature	8	100.0	98.5	62.5	43.7	97.5	84.3
Design and Technology	10	100.0	95.3	80.0	35.5	104.0	76.5
Geography	21	100.0	97.1	57.1	40.5	92.4	80.9
History	6	100.0	97.1	50.0	41.0	90.0	81.2
Information Technology	6	100.0	89.1	16.7	22.4	70.0	64.1
Mathematics	11	100.0	93.3	90.9	52.2	107.3	84.7
Other Social Studies	19	94.7	94.3	36.8	38.9	77.9	77.7
Physics	10	100.0	92.8	70.0	42.8	88.0	78.6
Sociology	3	100.0	95.4	100.0	39.6	106.7	79.1
Sports/PE Studies	6	83.3	95.4	33.3	29.5	63.3	73.2
Business	8	100.0	87.1	37.5	16.5	72.5	60.1
Travel and Tourism	10	100.0	88.1	60.0	15.7	88.0	61.4
French	5	100.0	98.8	60.0	51.5	96.0	87.6
German	2	100.0	98.4	100.0	47.9	100.0	84.8
Italian	4	100.0	N/a	0.00	N/a	60.0	N/a
Media Studies	21	100.0	N/a	38.1	N/a	84.8	N/a
Music	1	100.0	98.8	0.00	38.9	80.0	81.1
RE	9	100.0	98.8	55.6	46.7	88.9	85.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English language and literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above national expectations.
- Subject leadership is very good.
- Teaching is good, and promotes effective learning.
- Students are well motivated, work hard and achieve well.
- There needs to be a greater variety of teaching approaches in some lessons.

Commentary

150. In the past, the numbers taking the advanced and AS courses in English and English Literature have tended to be low - below ten in 2002. The introduction of a language course for 2003 has been successful, attracting 20 students, while nine still opted for English Literature. The small numbers taking examinations limit the validity of national comparisons, but the fact that over half of students taking AS English Language in 2003 achieved grades A - C is a good result. Many students see their courses through, and most move from AS to A2. Over 20 embarked on the language course for the current year.
151. The work seen during the inspection was of standards above national expectations. Students talk confidently in their teaching groups, and share and justify interpretations of a wide variety of texts. They discuss with confidence the kinds of language used and their applications, as well as literary form and meaning. Some of the best Year 13 work in both language and literature demonstrated lively, personal responses, packed with well organised detail and featured a mature, assured and sensitive use of language. Teachers' strong subject knowledge supports students' acquisition of key linguistic concepts, many of which are unfamiliar, and broadens their knowledge of literary texts.
152. The quality of the collaboration between teachers and students means that learning is good. It is even better when the most varied and student-centred teaching approaches are used, as in a language lesson in conference form, sharing a video and studying kinds of spoken exchange. The final plenary was very developmental, with students providing firm, well-justified judgements after a tentative beginning. By contrast, a literature lesson was seen which differed little from traditional advanced level teaching, in which the teacher explained the text and students took notes.
153. Teaching is good overall, and marking is careful and detailed. The head of the English department provides very good leadership by example and precept, with strong and useful written guidance for teachers. He maintains a careful overview of the development of English teaching in the Sixth Form, applying a clear and innovative vision for the future.

French

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall, based on very good planning and very good relationships with students.
- The quality of marking and day-to-day assessment is very good, so that students know how to improve their work.
- The department makes a very strong contribution to cultural education.
- The results of assessment could be used more fully to develop longer-term targets for individual students, especially the boys.

Commentary

154. In the A and AS level examinations in 2003, all candidates gained a pass grade, and the majority reached grades A and B. Over the last few years, results have been generally well above the national average. Students usually complete their courses and fulfil the predictions based on their GCSE results.
155. Standards by the end of Year 13 are, like the examination results, well above average, with particular competence in listening, speaking and reading. Students have a very wide range of vocabulary and a very good grasp of grammar as a result of studying a rich variety of texts

and a strong grammar programme. Achievement is very good overall. However, not all the boys are doing as well as they could, because their files are not well organised and complete, and work is not always finished.

156. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. The teachers are both native speakers of French and draw on their perfect mastery of the language and impressive knowledge of French culture to extend students' vocabulary and broaden their cultural horizons. There is a very close study of language: the 'recherches de vocabulaire' result in students' learning a multiplicity of words based on the same root. With vivacity and good humour, teachers establish very good relationships in the classroom, so that students are motivated to work very productively. The planning of courses and lessons is very good. Lessons include a wide variety of activities, frequently prepared by students at home, so that the very best use is made of time in the classroom.
157. The resources are topical and relevant, designed to interest and engage students. Well-focused material is practised in all four skills, with a careful build-up to extended writing. Written work is marked very thoroughly with detailed comments on how to improve grammatical accuracy: to this extent, the department shows the positive impact of its participation in the college's 'assessment for learning' project. There could be greater focus on setting longer-term targets for individual students, especially the boys, and stimulating their ambition.
158. The department is well managed in a thorough and conscientious way, with a keen awareness of the requirements of the examinations. There is a good enrichment programme and a constant reinforcement of the importance of foreign language learning: the recent 'European day of languages' brought former students back to the college to tell of their successful careers, often founded on their foreign language skills. The visits and contacts abroad supplement the already strong cultural education provided by the courses and the presence in the college of effective and charming French nationals.
159. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The high standards have been maintained. Teaching and learning styles have improved, with a consistently high level of challenge in current work. The marking of students' work is now much better developed.

German

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the A and AS level examinations are above average.
- There are innovative teaching methods and stimulating resources that engage and motivate students.
- The very good relationships in the classroom inspire students to work with interest and enthusiasm.
- The courses could be better co-ordinated to ensure continuity and increasing depth in students' learning.
- Not all work is marked carefully enough to provide individual targets for improvement.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to cultural education.

Commentary

160. In the A and AS level examinations, all candidates gain a pass grade and most gain grades A and B. There are too few entries to make valid comparisons with national figures. Results in the AS level have improved steadily since the introduction of the new examination. Most students complete their courses and do as well as can be expected from their GCSE results.

161. Standards by the end of Year 13 are above average and achievement is good. The exclusive use of German in the classroom means that students understand very well German spoken at normal speed. Students appreciate the very good progress they make in this area, and enjoy having the skills to eavesdrop on conversations between their native speaker teachers! Most students have a very wide range of vocabulary and can express their views with impressive accuracy. A more structured approach to planning the courses, and closer marking and monitoring of written work and the students' files, would enhance achievement still further, especially that of the boys.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teacher uses his knowledge of language and culture constantly to enrich students' vocabulary and promote awareness of German-speaking countries, their society, politics and culture. The teacher establishes very good-humoured relationships in the classroom, with the aid of topical material of interest to young people, and innovative methods that keep students on their toes and fully absorbed. Many of the activities involve movement and puzzles. There is a very wide range of resources with challenging content: films, videos, newspapers, and so on. Students use computers for research on their individual topics and for presenting their findings in preparation for the examinations.
163. The written work of most students is marked, but too many errors go uncorrected and there are few detailed indications of how improvement could be achieved. There could be more coherence and depth in the courses to ensure that all students, especially the boys, make steady progress and study topics thoroughly, recording and storing new material in an orderly fashion for later consolidation and revision.
164. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The foreign language assistant makes a very strong contribution to learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. High standards of attainment, teaching and learning have been maintained. Work with computers has expanded, but there is still room for improvement in assessing students' work and setting individual targets.
165. The provision in **Italian** was sampled. Although results in the 2003 GCE A2 level examination were low, standards have risen. One lesson in Year 12 was observed. Teaching and learning were good. Clear objectives to the lesson and innovative teaching methods resulted in well-motivated students and good achievement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results are achieved in GCE A level examinations.
- Consistently good teaching by knowledgeable teachers helps students to achieve well.
- Large numbers of enthusiastic and diligent students start and complete the course.

Commentary

166. Results in GCE A level examinations have been high for a number of years, although there have been variations over time. In the 2003 examinations, nearly all students gained grades A or B. Students start the course with very good grades at GCSE level. This provides a sound foundation for the course ahead. They are very confident algebraically and this stands them in good stead through the initial modules. Students work hard and make detailed notes to aid revision, annotating their work to emphasise important points. Appropriate selection of modules gives students a course suited to their needs. The very able students also study for the further mathematics examination. Very few leave the course after one year.

167. The very good results are in line with the high standard of work seen during the inspection. The results from module tests taken so far are very encouraging and reflect high standards of teaching and learning. All students are confident in the advanced algebra topics they encounter and those who study statistics can analyse complex data. There are students who also study physics who find the two courses complementary and mutually supportive, especially as they also study mechanics and can apply their knowledge of mechanics to a range of different situations.
168. These results stem from the consistently good teaching that all students receive. Teachers have a very good command of their subject. This means that lessons are well planned and delivered in a clear manner, appropriate to students' abilities and building upon their prior knowledge. Resources are good and used well. In one lesson, graphical calculators and the computer were used very effectively as the class investigated exponential functions. Part of the lesson involved students discussing their suggestions for gradients of these functions and trialling their answers to arrive at a solution to the problem set by the teacher. This investigational approach develops a capacity for individual study that is beneficial for the future. There is a good balance of exposition and practice in lessons. Teachers know their students well and these good relationships mean that the atmosphere in lessons is one of mutual support and respect.
169. Management of the sixth form courses is good. Good advice to students means that there is a wide range of modules to suit all students' needs. Regular assessments support the modular tests. Students receive good feedback on their work and know what they have to do to improve. Much of this feedback is oral so that all students in the class benefit from the ensuing discussion.

Mathematics across the curriculum

170. Students' mathematics skills are sufficient for them to access all courses and there are no formal timetabled courses to support mathematics across the curriculum. However, there is an extra-curricular course for any students who need to improve their mathematics for their sixth form courses. This is beneficial for students who study physics, and for students studying geography who need skills in statistics to enable them to analyse information. This course is restructured each year to suit students' needs.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision for biology is **very good**. Very good teachers teach well-motivated students who are keen to learn and obtain very good results.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good, effective teaching helps students to learn.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and so can challenge and extend students' learning.
- Students want to learn, work hard and achieve very well, reaching well above average standards.
- Examination success gives confidence to students and teachers in the work of the department.
- A very good working environment makes students and teachers feel valued and engenders respect.
- There is a need to consider the balance between theory and practical work and the role of worksheets in relation to using a wider range of alternative teaching and learning strategies.
- There is opportunity to further extend the use of ICT.

Commentary

171. 2003 biology results for AS and A2 were well above national standards, following a rising pattern of attainment. Boys' attainment has been below that of girls, but in 2003 both boys and girls attained results well above the national average at AS level. The number of students starting biology and completing the full award is increasing. Progress from GCSE is very good, indicating very good achievement. Year 13 work shows good understanding of terminology. Folder work is of high quality. Students in Year 12 follow practical instructions accurately and show good understanding of experimental principles in explaining anticipated results.
172. All teaching seen was good or better. Where teaching was particularly good, lessons were well prepared and progression was logical, moving from simple to complex ideas. Starter activities are used well to challenge students' understanding. In all lessons, questioning techniques are good, because teachers have a good command of the subject. Lessons have appropriate challenge. Care is taken, through selection of materials and monitoring of work, to ensure all students have a good set of notes for learning. The use of worksheets that save time and effort and challenge students' understanding is frequent and, though effective, tends to produce a similarity in approach to teaching. There could be more open-ended work to allow students to develop ideas and consolidate understanding. ICT could be used extensively. Coursework support and pre-examination revision lessons raise students' achievement. Tests are regularly set and results used for monitoring against predicted grades. Action is taken where problems are identified. Work is marked and errors corrected, with useful, written feedback. The department encourages students to become more independent learners through small group work, presentations and developing use of ICT. Coursework provides good opportunities for individual study.
173. Year 13 students apply themselves well to their work. They respond well to questions with well-developed answers – especially from more highly attaining students. Year 12 students have very good working relationships with the teacher and each other. Practical work is carried out well, with little need for teacher intervention. All students are enjoying their course. Students find teachers very helpful: they give time freely to improve coursework and help after school with revision or guidance on future courses.
174. Management is good. The head of department has organised a programme of activities, including a trip to Nottingham University to see the plant science department, and there are links with and visits to Plymouth University. Accommodation is good.
175. Lessons were sampled in **physics and chemistry**. Provision is **very good**. In 2002, students performed less well in **chemistry** than in other advanced level subjects in the college. However, when compared to national figures, attainment was above national standards. In 2003 attainment rose and students attained well above national standards. Chemistry has shown a consistent rise in standards since 1998. Teaching is very good.
176. In **physics**, on a small number of students, attainment in 2002 was well above national standards. 2003 results show standards above the national average. Since 1989, standards have shown no consistent pattern, but have always been above or in line with national standards. Teaching is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

177. The college offers an AS and an A2 course in information technology and a key skills course for those studying NVQs. Work was sampled. A2 results in 2002 were in line with the national average and 2003 results were slightly better. At AS level, 2002 results were above the national average, with similar results in 2003. Analysis carried out by the college shows that these results were better than expected from students' standards at the start of the course. The subject is growing in popularity and retention rates are high. Virtually all students are

male. One lesson was observed and teaching was good. Students were designing databases and made good progress as a result of a helpful prompt sheet and good individual tutoring to provide challenge. Standards were above average in practical work and average in theory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the classroom and in the field challenges students intellectually and promotes high levels of achievement.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to produce a range of activities that encourage different learning styles and academic rigour.
- Learning is a very enjoyable experience for students because the relationships between teachers and students are founded upon mutual respect and humour.
- Students rate the provision for geography highly and this makes it a popular choice for sixth form study.

Commentary

178. In 2003, GCE A level examination results were well above the national average, with well over half the students attaining A or B grades. The girls outperformed the boys, particularly at these higher grades. Geography performs better than many other subjects do. The number of entries has doubled over the last three years.
179. Standards seen in lessons and in the students' work were well above the national average in both Years 12 and 13. Students have very good recall of previous knowledge and understanding and are keen to extend it. They do this by using their good communication skills to share findings and ideas and to produce fluent extended writing. The students work hard and achieve very well throughout Years 12 and 13.
180. High standards are particularly evident in students' fieldwork, which is carried out in Year 12 during a five-day residential course in Pembrokeshire. Students' investigations are incisive and evaluative, covering human and physical geography topics that range from the effects of pedestrianisation to the comparative study of embryonic and mature dunes.
181. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. All the teaching observed was characterised by a brisk pace from the outset, the sharing of ambitious objectives with students, and intellectually stimulating tasks, delivered to students with very secure subject knowledge and a sense of humour. Two excellent lessons illustrated the strength of the teaching in physical geography and its impact on learning and achievement. One of these lessons was on the vertical circulation of the atmosphere, which often poses conceptual difficulties for students. The teacher overcame this by being very adventurous in the use of teaching and learning strategies. Students began with a memory task, which measured their factual recall. The first activity used the airflow in the room as a small-scale aid to understanding. Then students worked collaboratively to construct a tri-cellular model for the atmosphere. Students checked their work against the textbook model and assessed their personal level of understanding. In the lively plenary each student formulated a question to ask peers and learning was further extended and evaluated.
182. Leadership and management are excellent. There is an ethos of pursuing the highest standards and all aspects of the department's work are well organised. Responsibilities are clearly defined and the teachers work together to ensure that curriculum coverage is

comprehensive and balanced. There is excellent use of assessment and very good support for students. The accommodation is good for the number of students involved, as are the resources.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**. The college offers both AS and A level courses which were the focus for inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of experimental studies within the classroom helps students to learn.
- Teacher expectation is good and well-matched to examination requirements.
- Students' attitudes to learning are often very good and help achievement.
- The use of information and communication technology is insufficiently planned for within the curriculum.
- Whilst assessment arrangements are developing, they do not yet sufficiently inform teaching and learning strategies.

Commentary

183. As a result of good teaching and attitudes, students' achievement at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 is good and, in some cases, very good. One student in 2003 was in the top five students nationally for performance in the A2 examination.
184. Attainment on entry to both courses is below average overall and well below average for a minority of students. Because of the commitment of the department and the college to inclusiveness, some students are given the chance to take the course who have not got the initial entry qualifications that would be needed elsewhere. They make good progress and the result is that GCE A2 level results were above average in 2003. The overall pass rate, ignoring grade levels, is around the national average in both courses. Standards seen were close to average overall.
185. The proportion of students progressing from Year 12 to Year 13 is satisfactory but the proportion of students who leave during the AS course is relatively high. Because the admissions criteria are low, a significant proportion of students proceed to both AS and A level who are unlikely to obtain more than a basic pass.
186. Teaching and learning are good. Emphasis on case studies, reinforced by classroom role – play, ensures good progress in students acquiring knowledge and understanding, as was seen, for example, in work observed on social conformity. Teaching is often very well planned and focused. Learning is effective in both years because lessons are challenging. Students of all abilities work hard to explain concepts and theories, as in project work associated with the effects of questioning eye-witness testimony. The lack of wider contextual knowledge limits the understanding of weaker students of both the purpose and outcomes of some seminal research studies, for example those dealing with authority and obedience.
187. The good response of the great majority of students is an important factor in their achievement. They are committed to their studies, showing interest and effort in lessons, with most being willing to take part in extended and thoughtful discussion on the theories of Zimbardo, Haslam and Reicher.
188. Day-to-day management is good and accurate assessment and records are maintained, but more use needs to be made of performance data in refining teaching and learning strategies, particularly in Year 12. There are good arrangements for continuous professional development.

189. Leadership is good. There is a clear vision for the subject but there are insufficient opportunities available to deepen knowledge and understanding using information technology, particularly in the use of aggregate data and the graphical representation of findings. It is recognised that more needs to be done to secure greater representation of boys in both subject options.
190. Resources for learning within the department are good.

Religious education

The quality of provision in religious education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is excellent and motivates students to learn very effectively.
- Students cope very well with high levels of intellectual challenge. Religious education is growing in popularity as an option choice.
- Marking is excellent and enables students to evaluate and improve their work.
- Leadership is excellent with a strong focus on enabling students to reach their full potential.
- The curriculum is very effective and makes excellent use of information technology to enhance students' learning.

Commentary

191. Until recently, numbers opting for A level religious education have been too small to make meaningful statistical judgements. However, results in 2003 show that the subject is growing in popularity and standards are well above average.
192. Current standards are also well above the national average. Students of all abilities achieve very well and in many cases exceed their expected grades based on their attainment at GCSE. Essays show considerable depth of understanding – students write with confidence and express their views clearly. They participate very well in discussion and debate. They respond very well to the increased challenges presented by the greater complexity of ideas studied in the sixth form.
193. Teaching and learning are excellent. A particular strength of the teaching is the level of intellectual challenge with which students are expected to cope. At the same time, teachers work very hard to make lessons accessible and enjoyable. Students react to the enthusiastic, highly knowledgeable and lively teaching with excellent attitudes and the determination to succeed. Teachers combine high quality support with excellent opportunities for students to develop independence. A further noteworthy feature of the teaching can be seen in the marking of students' essays. Comments are very detailed and provide excellent guidance for students on what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve.
194. Curriculum leadership and management are excellent and mirror the situation found in main-school religious education. Teachers work very well together showing a very high team ethos that means ideas and resources are energetically shared. Statutory requirements to provide religious education for all sixth form students, raised as an issue in the last inspection, are now met. The curriculum is of a very high standard, providing students with excellent opportunities to study Hinduism in depth and also with the chance to visit India. Excellent opportunity is made of information technology to enhance and develop students' learning.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in sociology achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are enthusiastic about their lessons and the subject is growing in popularity.
- The subject is very well led with a strong focus on improvement.
- A small number of students lack confidence in verbal discussion.

Commentary

195. The number of students who sat for the A level examination in 2003 was too small to make meaningful statistical comparisons. However, all 3 gained A or B grades. Similarly, in 2002 only a few students opted for A level but all passed and an above average proportion gained A or B grades.
196. There are no students currently studying sociology at A2 level in Year 13. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students have made a very good start to their course. Their achievement is very good – they have not previously studied this subject and they have already made clear and rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding. They are beginning to develop a good understanding of different theoretical traditions and can define and illustrate key concepts by reference to the family and to education.
197. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are challenging and carefully planned. Students are encouraged to become independent learners within a supportive framework. Teaching is very enthusiastic and good-humoured. Students react positively to this and show very good levels of concentration and perseverance. As a result, students show enthusiasm for the subject. Sociology is an increasingly popular option for both boys and girls, and it recruits a wide range of ability in line with its inclusive ethos. A small number of students lack confidence in discussion, tending to answer briefly rather than at length.
198. Curriculum leadership and management are very good. The head of department makes the most of opportunities to share good practice with colleagues in other departments and with other sociology departments. This is particularly important because she is the only sociology teacher in the college. Planning for improvement is strong – there are plans, for example, to introduce AS sociology in Years 10 and 11.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The provision for design technology in the sixth form is **excellent**.

The focus was on AS and A2 level design technology. Four sessions were observed. The teaching was excellent. During the lessons there was very good use of questioning and explanation, regular review of students' progress and a very well structured sequence of activities. This led to students' gaining a secure knowledge and understanding of the design process and manufacturing. The standards achieved were excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them very well in classwork, in answering questions, during discussions and overall are achieving very well.
- Teaching is excellent: the sessions very well structured with a range of activities that effectively help students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students work very well together.
- The courses are very well led and managed.

Commentary

199. Students study textiles and product design at AS and A level. The GCE AS and A level results were excellent. All students who took the examination gained a grade. Significant numbers achieve very high grades
200. The standard of work of current students is excellent. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing very well as a result of very effective teaching that demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focus their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it in a range of contexts. Their project work is excellent and shows the same confidence as their class work.
201. Teaching is excellent and students learn very well as a result. The principal features of the excellent teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very well in discussion, questioning and demonstration. The lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and their skills and techniques improve as the lesson progresses. The department makes very good use of local business to support project work and in an excellent lesson students were producing packaging for local produce, working very closely with the owners of the company involved. Students have opportunities to carry out detailed research working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications.
202. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. They rise to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. Time is used very well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. They are always very confident when offering ideas in more open discussion.
203. The excellent teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being very well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Recording of progress and target setting (based on careful analysis of student performance through review, evaluation and assessment) are well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Provision in art is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Management and leadership of the courses are excellent.
- Standards are well above the national average.
- Students achieve very well.

- Teaching and learning are very good, and there is some excellent teaching. Courses are extremely well planned and presented.
- Independent research is of high quality and this contributes effectively to the personal development of students.
- Very good use is made of the department's resources to enhance learning.

Commentary

204. Students follow well-planned courses in AS and A2 art and design. A2 examination results are very good and high grades are achieved. Year 12 practical work demonstrated high achievement and standards. Expressive paintings and sculpture are excellent illustrations of independent thinking and creativity. One such example was a very large dramatic sculpture of a wave. Year 13 students also work extremely well on diverse projects. They have a very good understanding of the styles and techniques of well-known artists and art movements, and this improves their own work. Good use is made of the Internet for collecting appropriate images. Practical work in progress shows a high standard of observational drawing, use of colour and composition. The creative use of computer-aided design is very effective; producing visually powerful images, rich in pattern quality, and strikingly unique.
205. Students have excellent attitudes. They are very keen to learn about art and design concepts, artists, and the aims and objectives of art movements. They work extremely well together and independently, leading to very good achievement.
206. Courses are extremely well planned. Good student numbers allow for valuable interaction between them, diversity of subject matter and approach, and keen evaluation and competition. Teachers are very enthusiastic; they have a very good command of the subject and a good knowledge of the examination requirements and assessment criteria. Students are encouraged with high quality individual feedback, and inspired by exciting tasks. There is an insistence on high standards of conduct and a very productive, purposeful atmosphere in lessons.
207. Leadership and management of the courses are very effective indeed. There is clarity of vision, a strong sense of purpose, and high aspirations for developing post-16 visual education. There are many links with other subject areas, and social, moral, and cultural connections through extra-curricular activities. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, and the number of students wishing to join the AS course is increasing.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above expectations; students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good, and promotes a high quality of learning.
- Leadership is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very rich.
- There is a need to find strategies to compensate for low numbers and girl-only classes.

Commentary

208. On the basis of relatively small cohorts studying drama in the sixth form, attainment in examination has overall been above national expectations and this is borne out by the quality of work seen.

209. Standards are good, with students achieving well as a consequence of very positive attitudes and good teaching. They have very good understanding of a wide variety of theatrical approaches and their acting skills are very well developed. Written work is of a high standard, indicating great care: the background to each topic is very thoroughly researched, exploring associated texts, different treatments, before developing delightful storyboards. Self-evaluations take the same approach: they are detailed, self-critical and well structured. Teaching is intensive, well prepared, and objective led, with the result that there is clear evidence of strong progression through the four examination years (10 to 13), culminating in one Year 13 coursework file which attained the maximum possible marks in the A level examination.
210. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and they work hard to prepare their students to meet their own high expectations. There is, however, a serious disadvantage: numbers in sets are low (three and five), and all are girls. This means that the scope for practical work and the range of discussion are automatically limited, and strategies to meet this problem need to be sought. Also, students find some texts - particularly those in language of past times - difficult. Here again, strategies need to be found other than the very time consuming procedure of detailed paraphrase by the teacher while students take notes. Marking is very detailed, helpful and thorough. Lesson preparation is very careful, with the result that lessons have a clear developmental structure.
211. The subject is very well led, and the two teachers of drama make a very effective team.

Media studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching challenges and inspires students.
- Students' positive attitudes ensure that their achievement is very good.
- A rich programme of extra-curricular activities provides invaluable media experiences.
- Links with the local community are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

212. Results in A2 and AS examinations in 2003 are well above average. Inspection evidence shows that current standards are also well above average in both Years 12 and 13. There are several students, male and female, in both years whose attainment is very high.
213. All students readily identify social, cultural, moral and ethical issues that emerge from their studies and evaluate how these affect the media. They also understand some difficult media concepts and theories, and can exemplify them by referring to a range of texts and practitioners. For example, in a Year 12 lesson looking at the fantasy genre, students' understanding and discussion of director Peter Jackson's interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy were of a high standard. Students also show very good information and communication technology skills: they use the Internet for independent research and presentations, and manage video cameras and the editing suite with ease. They are particularly strong when analysing moving image productions and show very good awareness of cinematograph techniques and how these influence audiences. They use this knowledge in their own project work very effectively. Most write accurately and perceptively, although some lower attaining students are not concise enough in their commentaries, and tend to be descriptive, rather than evaluative, in their writing.
214. Achievement is very good overall. Students soon become adept at using media studies' specialist language and understanding its underlying concepts because they enjoy the subject's constant challenges and opportunities. Achievement is also helped by their close

collaboration and the way that they can work, successfully, independently of their teachers. There is a very good library of videos, magazines and books to support and extend their research. A very rich programme of extra-curricular activities offers memorable and invaluable experiences, including annual visits to London television studios, newspaper offices and film and other exhibitions, as well as to America to study international ideologies and cultures. However, the college has yet to develop effective links with their own community, such as with local broadcasting and advertising.

215. Because of very good teaching, learning is also very good. Teachers have impressive subject knowledge and are able to guide and challenge students well. Working relationships are excellent. Teachers' love of their subject inspires students; and there is a suitable blend of good humour and academic rigour in all lessons. Marking is excellent: it is accurate and very supportive, and comments often include useful suggestions that encourage students to consult additional texts and websites and explore topics more widely.
216. The leadership and management of this relatively new department are very good. There is considerable vision and commitment, and best practice is regularly shared within the whole team. Monitoring of teaching and assessment is very effective; and the innovative scheme of planned work ensures that all students experience a full range of media.

Music

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and often excellent; lessons are well matched to the needs of the students.
- Learning is secure and very well supported by the wider opportunities offered including instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work.
- Students show mature attitudes and relationships are excellent
- Assessment is very effective in helping students improve their work.
- Facilities, including those supporting learning in music technology, are excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- The amount of teaching time is less than average.

Commentary

217. Examination results in recent years have been broadly average with small numbers taking music in the sixth form. Results in 2003 at AS level and A level were slightly above average. Music technology will be taken this year at A level for the first time. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment and standards are above average and rising.
218. Most students are working for grade 6, 7 or 8 examinations and some talented students have higher grades on two or three instruments. Their instrumental and vocal work is very well supported by the high quality tuition they receive and by the wide range of opportunities offered by the extra-curricular groups. Students show good composition skills and use ICT effectively to develop and notate pieces. They show good understanding of harmony, although students with less experience find the theory challenging. Aural work is secure, supported by students' instrumental skills. Students' good general musical knowledge and overview of musical history supports their learning.
219. In **music technology**, students show competent use of music programmes, which have only been used this year. Students can sequence, multi-track and use the impressive facilities confidently, for example when producing their own arrangements of *A Whiter Shade of Pale*. They show a good understanding of different styles of music and of theory and good levels of technical vocabulary, for example when analysing *Dark Side of the Moon*.

220. Teaching is mainly very good, sometimes excellent, and students appreciate this. Planning is very well matched to the needs of the students; objectives and explanations are clear, because subject knowledge is secure and communication skills are strong. Lessons are lively and often entertaining. Students are motivated and learn well; they enjoy their lessons and have much confidence in their teachers. Assessment is very supportive in identifying students' individual needs and setting clear targets for them to improve. Expectations are high and students enjoy the challenges offered.
221. At all levels, work is supported by the mature attitudes and excellent relationships shown by students who are keen to learn and spend much of their time being involved with music. Students learn very well and enjoy the opportunity to work as a class, in groups and at their own pace supported by the expertise of the teachers. Students are fully focused and hardworking. Their work is further supported by activities such as the visits to concerts. They are articulate and most are well organised.
222. Students are very appreciative of the quality of the provision and cite
- very good teaching characterised by the energy, expertise and enthusiasm of the staff matched to the individual needs of students
 - the excellent facilities and the open access to them
 - the good mix of theory and practice, and of hard work and fun
 - opportunities in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work
 - the personal support given by staff. 'We respect the staff as teachers and musicians. We're like a family.'

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

223. One **physical education** lesson was sampled in the sixth form. This was not a focus subject and so no main judgements were made: nor is it possible to list strengths and weaknesses.
224. A very good Year 13 GCE A2 lesson was observed. It involved expert coaching and support of two students preparing for their external moderation. One student was expertly guided through the analysis and evaluation of a student swimmer. He was able to demonstrate a very high knowledge of the mechanics of the front crawl stroke. Students generally achieve well at A level. Students currently on the course have produced work that covers in depth the major topics required, including the more difficult anatomy and physiology aspects that relate sporting activities to body functions.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

The provision for business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good and underpin a pleasant, but productive, working environment in lessons.
- Teaching is good and, as a consequence, students make good progress in class - although students are not always sufficiently challenged.
- The new head of department has made significant efforts to stabilise the department after a period of staffing problems.
- The necessary coursework assessment requirements are very well understood, and so students receive excellent guidance on assignments.

Commentary

225. The department has recently undergone tremendous upheavals with staffing of the subject. Despite this, the nine students completing the Business VCE in 2003 all passed, including four with B grades (two of whom achieved considerably better than their GCSE results predicted). Currently, students are achieving well, as a consequence of good teaching founded on pleasant and productive student-teacher relationships. These promote a positive response from students. The newly appointed head of business studies is now ensuring that current Year 13 students, whose studies were disrupted last year, are very well catered for and have a programme of work which ensures they have every opportunity to complete the course and perform to their full potential. Attainment is slightly above average. Students appreciate the support and access to the new teacher and work co-operatively and productively in class.
226. Teaching is generally good, with the teacher having a very good knowledge of the assessment requirements of the subject and producing excellent writing guides for assignment completion. In two good Year 12 marketing lessons, students were successfully prompted to identify their chosen product for the assignment and described the related market sectors, target audience and product development areas. In a Year 13 lesson on human resources, students were guided through the interpretation of data in preparation for their assignment on the role of the human resources department and explained the various functions of the department.
227. The department is being led and managed well. It is now entering a period of stability, in which more productive planning can take place - including the preparation of detailed schemes of work, closer monitoring and evaluation of individual student attainment and progress and the formal integration of more outside business visits, contacts and speakers into the course. Teaching is carried out in a very well equipped dedicated business classroom. There is a good number of computers and these give students good access to the Internet for research. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	1	1
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		1
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	2	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	1	2
The effectiveness of management	1	2

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