

INSPECTION REPORT

HEANOR GATE SCIENCE COLLEGE

Heanor

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112993

Headteacher: Mr S Spencer

Lead inspector: Marjorie Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: 13th –16th October, 2003

Inspection number: 259229

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1500
School address:	Kirkley Drive Heanor
Postcode:	DE75 7RA
Telephone number:	01773 716396
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr L Needham
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- A fairly equal number of boys and girls attend the college and continue into the sixth form.
- When they join Year 7, students' standards are average; those continuing into the sixth form have above average standards at GCSE.
- The college draws its students from a range of backgrounds which overall show above average levels of social disadvantage; a fair number travel some distance to attend.
- Student mobility – those joining or leaving in mid-course – is low.
- There are few students from ethnic minority families.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, while the proportion is average for those with a statement of specific need. Students' needs relate mainly to learning and behaviour, and for a very small number, physical disability.
- From September 2002, the college was awarded **specialist status for science** and is a Derbyshire **Pathfinder** school.
- As part of its specialist provision there is a family learning programme and community outreach work.
- In 2002 the college received a government **School Achievement Award** and became an **Investor in People**; in 2003 it was awarded **Health Promoting School** accreditation for the second time.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2918	M L Glynne-Jones	Lead inspector	
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English
18886	F Ruggiero	Team inspector	Mathematics
25743	P Butler	Team inspector	Science in the main school
12356	R Dickason	Team inspector	Biology, chemistry, physics in the sixth form
1723	M Milton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship in the main school
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design
3390	K Thomas	Team inspector	Business studies in the sixth form
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology in the main school Health and social care in the sixth form
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography
20716	R Grogan	Team inspector	History
17530	M Cureton	Team inspector	Media studies in the sixth form Special educational needs
23569	J Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages and French in the sixth form
31850	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music in the main school
3534	A Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education and sports studies in the sixth form
20716	D Francis	Team inspector	Religious education in the main school
11300	B Smith	Team inspector	
3735	A Webb	Team inspector	

Unless otherwise indicated, inspectors reported on subjects in the main school, 11-16, and the sixth form.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Heanor Gate is a **good** school. Forward-looking leadership and good subject management ensure that students achieve well and consolidate their average standards when they join Year 7. This is because the quality of education they receive, particularly the teaching, is good, despite inadequacies in accommodation and learning resources. Value for money is good.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ the headteacher's imaginative leadership and strong resolve in developing curriculum opportunities which provide successfully for all students' individual needs and capabilities;
- ❑ governors' effective strategies to make the financial resources available to the college work to the maximum benefit of all students, notwithstanding a number of procedural irregularities currently being rectified;
- ❑ provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across all college subjects is unsatisfactory;
- ❑ the strong sense of community, especially evident in the mature manner in which sixth-formers contribute to daily life in the college;
- ❑ this sense of community does not reach out sufficiently to parents because the manner of communication with them is rather old hat and not very informative;
- ❑ the timetable has major weaknesses for all year groups;
- ❑ unsatisfactory accommodation and resources limit what the college can do to improve.

There has been good improvement **since the previous inspection**. The trend in Year 9 results is above the national trend, and the trend at GCSE matches the national trend. Students' results show very good achievement in comparison with their previous attainment, both by Year 9 and by Year 11. Teaching quality has been maintained, and the curriculum imaginatively developed. The key issues reported last time have mostly been tackled effectively, in a strategic and thorough manner.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	B	C	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/A	B	A	

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

Overall achievement is **good**. Students join the college with average standards. They have built on these to gain above average results in the 2002 Year 9 tests, which show very good achievement from their attainment in Year 6 tests in primary school. At GCSE, the picture is the same: students have built on their Year 9 standards so that their 2002 GCSE results show very good achievement when compared with schools whose Year 9 results were similar. Unconfirmed 2003 results show a rise in Year 9, and for five or more A*-Gs at GCSE; they show a slight fall for five or more A*-Cs and average points. Standards at A-level were maintained.

Students' **personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**, are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education provided by the college** is good. **Teaching and learning** are good throughout the college, although assessment, while good in the sixth form, is no better than satisfactory over Years 7 to 11. The **curriculum** is good at each stage, but inadequacies in accommodation and learning resources hinder students' progress in lessons. There is good **care** for the college's young people who receive good **guidance and support** for their learning.

Partnerships with parents are satisfactory, and **with the community**, good. Those with **other schools** are good, benefiting particularly from the college's specialist status.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good: there is good strategic governance; good leadership, focused on raising achievement; and, overall, good management, with effective self-evaluation and a satisfactory contribution from senior staff. However, the college does not meet the statutory requirement for daily collective worship, nor pretend to, or for ICT in subjects, so that the overall judgement about governance has to be that it is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents have positive views of the college, but are quite critical about the way it seeks and takes account of their views. Students appreciate the good teaching they receive, as do their parents, and the expectation that they will do their best. Both parents and students have concerns about behaviour and bullying, and are critical of the new lunchtime arrangements.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to rectify the timetable weaknesses at the earliest opportunity; this has been tackled since the inspection and will be in place for the start of the spring term 2004;
- to strengthen the partnership with parents by substantially improving the college's communication and consultation with them;
- to develop the role of senior managers so that their contribution is carried out with rigour and drive;
- to continue in the endeavour to provide up-to-date accommodation that is fit for purpose;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the requirements are fully met for daily collective worship for all students, and for ICT across the curriculum in all subjects and courses.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good, cost-effective** sixth form, led well and soundly managed. It provides a good quality of education, with good teaching and assessment. Combined with students' personal maturity and their very positive approach to their studies, these qualities lead to good achievement, and in 2002, led to well above average results at AS- and A-level.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- ❑ the very clear and thorough feedback to students about their work, paving the way for them to make substantial improvements and developments;
- ❑ students' well above average mathematical skills;
- ❑ very good provision in six of the eleven subjects inspected: mathematics, chemistry, history, physics, art and design and sports studies.

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	English: good : good teaching leads to good learning and achievement in a well-led and managed department. French: good : very good teaching, supported by effective leadership and management, leads to very good learning and good achievement.
Mathematics	Very good : very good achievement, due to very good teaching and learning promoted by very effective leadership and management.
Sciences	Biology: good : good teaching results in good learning and achievement; Chemistry: very good : very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement; Physics: very good : very good learning and achievement due to very good teaching; within a very well led and managed science department.
Information and communication technology	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.
Humanities	Geography: good : good teaching and learning lead to good achievement in a well-led and managed subject. History: very good : very good learning and achievement due to very good teaching, supported by very effective leadership and good management.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design: very good : very good achievement resulting from very good teaching in a very well-led and managed department. Media studies: good : satisfactory achievement, although below average standards, due to good teaching and learning and good course leadership and management.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Sports studies: very good : good achievement due to very good teaching and learning, promoted by good departmental leadership and management.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	Satisfactory: good teaching and learning, while satisfactory achievement in a soundly led and managed course.
Health and social care	Good: good achievement results from good teaching and learning in a well-led and managed course.
General education	Satisfactory: satisfactory teaching overall, sometimes very good, results in satisfactory learning and achievement.
<i>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 college. 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'.</i>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive good guidance and support and achieve well as a result. The advice about their options in the sixth form is appropriate, although about half the students do not feel sufficiently well-advised about the options available to them after they leave school. Timetabling arrangements have some adverse effects on students' welfare and personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership is good and the management satisfactory in the sixth form, as for the college as a whole. Subject leadership and monitoring students' progress through tracking assessments are particular strengths in the sixth form. The judgement on management takes account of the weaknesses in managing the timetable.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The large majority of those completing questionnaires indicated their enjoyment at being a student at the college. They find the teaching challenges them to achieve their best. They particularly appreciate the choice of courses available to them, but would like there to be a greater range of enrichment activities. Sixth-formers share the concerns of other students and parents about the new lunchtime procedures, particularly that the arrangements curtail their opportunities to socialise with students in other years as well as with other sixth-formers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Standards are average at each stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students did very well in 2002 in Year 9 tests and at GCSE in comparison with their previous attainment; this was a marked improvement at GCSE.
- Standards have risen in Year 9 tests in each of the three subjects, and in each the rise is greater than the rise nationally; boys' results have risen most in English, girls' results in mathematics, and the rise is broadly equal in science.
- At GCSE, the pattern is one of fluctuation year on year, between average and above average results, while overall standards are keeping pace with the national trend.

Commentary

1. Students' achievement in the work seen during the inspection reflects their achievement in tests and examinations. The picture across subjects is mostly good, and students with special needs make the same good progress as others. The exceptions, where achievement is satisfactory, are:
 - in Years 7 to 9 art and design and citizenship
 - in Years 10 and 11 science, citizenship, geography, ICT and physical educationProvision in citizenship is at an early stage. In the other subjects, the reason is that teaching does not always have sufficient pace and challenge to ensure that students progress well.
2. There is no subject in which achievement is unsatisfactory, and no group of students for whom underachievement is a consequence of the college's lack of attention to their needs. On the contrary, the college's strong commitment to inclusion is reflected in its approach to all areas of its work. However, it has not monitored the results of the very small number of students from ethnic minorities to check that their achievement is equally good to that of all students when compared with their previous attainment. Analysis after the inspection week shows that this group of pupils does achieve equally as well as others.
3. While standards are average overall, students reach above average standards over Years 7 to 11 in the work in about half the subjects seen: mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, modern languages and music. Standards are below average in geography by Year 11, although above average by Year 9, because the work lacks sufficient depth.
4. Students with special needs leave college with at least three or four subject grades at GCSE. No student with special needs who continues to attend further education college leaves without a qualification.
5. At GCSE, the 2003 results show:
 - rising trend continued mathematics, history, physical education
 - standard maintained art and design, design and technology
 - standard improved separate sciences, boys' English literature results
 - significantly improved modern foreign languages
 - a fall geographyOverall the 2003 results continue, but to a lesser extent, the fluctuating pattern evident over recent years. For five or more higher grades, results were broadly maintained (with a slight fall) although not reaching the realistic target. For the total point scores, the picture was much the same. For five or more grades, results improved to recover some of the ground lost in 2002, although not reaching the ambitious target.

Sixth form

6. Achievement in the work seen in the subjects inspected is good overall and very good in mathematics, art and design, chemistry and physics. This confirms the achievement shown by the 2002 A-level results which were well above average, showing good gains from students' above average standards at GCSE.

Across the whole college, Years 7 to 13

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	33.8 (35.3)	33.3 (31.6)
mathematics	35.5 (35.2)	34.7 (34.4)
science	34.4 (34.2)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 242 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52.2 (57.6)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	87.8 (97.1)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94.0 (98)	95 (94)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	39.8 (42.9)	39.8 (39.0)

There were 255 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.6 (n/a)	93.5 (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.0 (n/a)	36.1 (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	294.3 (228.8)	252.6(n/a)

There were 169 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Young people's attitudes and behaviour are good, as is their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Students develop mature attitudes; they accept responsibility well and support a wide range of out-of-school activities.
- ❑ Behaviour in lessons is generally good, although in some lessons a small minority of students show a lack of consideration for others and their behaviour is unsatisfactory.
- ❑ There are few incidents of bullying and racism and these are dealt with well.

- ❑ There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- ❑ Assemblies contribute well to the spiritual development of the students.

Commentary

7. In lessons and around the college, students' good behaviour is in evidence. For example, lunchtimes are very orderly occasions; the end of the college day sees a well-organised exodus, in spite of the large numbers involved. However, where sometimes behaviour is unsatisfactory, this is often linked to weaknesses in the teaching, or results from students showing lack of consideration as they move between lessons. Overall, relationships are good and students respond to the college's high expectations and effective emphasis on managing behaviour. The personal development of students with special needs is very well provided for, the college working successfully to enhance their sense of self-worth. The result is improved confidence and capacity for independent learning. Well-focused and carefully monitored individual programmes are effective in improving students' behaviour and social confidence over the long-term, while the inclusion centre makes a valuable contribution to short-term improvement. Fixed-term exclusions are broadly average for the size of school, while permanent exclusions are low. The extremes of poor behaviour involve only a small minority of students.

8. Students' personal development has improved significantly since the last inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. There is a better co-ordinated approach, although as yet no whole-college policy. Spiritual development is satisfactory with assemblies contributing well, although collective worship is rarely observed. Moral development is good with many examples of subjects contributing, for example, through the successful emphasis in the behaviour policy on knowing right from wrong. Such events as deaf awareness days and anti-racism workshops contribute well to students' moral development and they learn to respect the feelings of others. Students' social development is good and enhanced by the strong programme of extra-curricular activities. The college council gives them good practical experience of democracy and involvement in decision-making, and students take part in fund-raising activities for various charities. Citizenship and personal and social education lessons contribute effectively in this area. Cultural development is good. There is a strong focus on cultural activities, to which the performing arts contribute well, providing students with many opportunities to perform in public, both in and out of college. Students are made aware of different cultural traditions through such events as a multicultural awareness day, and some subjects, for example citizenship, explore multicultural issues in the curriculum. In religious education, although students study major world faiths, the programme of visiting speakers has not widely represented different faith traditions.

Sixth form

9. Students show a mature outlook and are very willing to take responsibility. This is reflected in their willingness to take part in activities, and college productions involve a good number of sixth-form students. Students work well together and often take the lead in fund-raising activities for charity.

Across the whole college, Years 7 to 13

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
College data	8.0	College data	0.2
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

Overall, this is a satisfactory picture, while the low rate of unauthorised absence is a good achievement to which parents' contribution is recognised.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1419	131	1
6	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
11	2	0
1	0	0
18	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education is good. This applies to **teaching and learning**; the way **the curriculum** meets individual needs; the college's good **care** of its students; and its good **links** with other colleges and the community. Unsatisfactory **accommodation and resources** restrict students' learning opportunities. Requirements are not met for daily worship or for ICT in National Curriculum subjects.

Teaching and learning

Across the college, teaching and learning are good. While good in the sixth form, assessment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In all the subjects inspected across the college, teaching and learning are at least good, while very good in chemistry, physics, mathematics, history, French, art and design and sports studies in the sixth form.

- ❑ No feature of teaching or learning is unsatisfactory, except the use of resources in religious education; in the majority of subjects there are some very good features.
- ❑ This picture helps to explain why students achieve well in examinations in relation to their previous attainment.
- ❑ However, there are unsatisfactory aspects of assessment in six subjects, and poor assessment in citizenship, while the best features are in geography and history.

Commentary

10. The quality of teaching has been sustained since the previous inspection, with fewer lessons seen that were less than satisfactory. These were in Years 7 to 9; none occurred in Years 10 and 11, an improvement since the last inspection. In response to the key issue concerned with monitoring lesson quality reported then, the college has implemented a thoroughgoing programme of lesson observations in all subjects. The reports of observations are in general suitably detailed and constructive in identifying areas for improvement. Very good or better teaching was seen in lessons in all the subjects inspected across Years 7 to 13. For example, in English in Year 10, mathematics in Year 13, art and design in Year 11, and religious education in Year 8.

English	From the start, students were intrigued by the poem they were studying, written in a Scottish dialect. The teacher's infectious enthusiasm, backed up by good subject expertise, and clear and authentic reading aloud, engaged students' interest – they requested a second reading.
Mathematics	The teacher's enthusiasm and genuine praise for individuals' contributions had formed excellent working relationships so that students felt no constraint when offering suggestions to challenging questions. They achieved better than expected because of the teacher's skill in helping individuals to turn a partially correct answer into a fully correct solution.
Art and design	Very lively teaching responded very quickly and effectively to students' varied needs, sustaining a busy working atmosphere in which everyone was productive. The teacher's brisk approach and very good challenge put the responsibility on students to carry out tasks, which they accepted without question.
Religious education	Stimulating teaching, especially the pace, time targets and skilful questioning, challenged students to deepen their thinking and, particularly, to use their imagination to relate to the story about Christian forgiveness, 'Forgiveness after Enniskillen'.

11. Where teaching was no better than satisfactory:
- a Year 8 lesson challenged students' memory skills by a novel group exercise to reconstruct a handout, but did not go any further than imparting factual information; so students' learning was restricted;
 - the teacher's expectations for the standard of work of an upper Year 11 group were no different to those for a middle group; so they underachieved;
 - in a Year 12 lesson, the strength was the teacher's knowledge and ability to explain it to students; but the weakness was that the teacher did most of the talking without incorporating direct questions to individuals to increase their involvement; so students did not learn for themselves.
- The common feature of satisfactory lessons was that students' learning was restricted in some way by a specific weakness in teaching skills.
12. Where teaching was less than satisfactory in four lessons in Years 7 to 9, weaknesses combined to become a barrier to learning, in particular:
- the teacher could only temporarily manage a Year 8 lower attaining group, although persisting in the endeavour to do so; this led to students ignoring instructions and losing concentration; the result was unsatisfactory learning and achievement.

- a temporary teacher with a Year 7 lower attaining group, not well supported by a teaching assistant, was ineffectual in managing an extremely challenging group of students; the college's temporary arrangements were inappropriate for this group; the students offered their worst and learned nothing.
- the planning of a lesson for a Year 9 middle group was weak: the learning targets were not shared with the students; the work did not build on their previous learning; the teacher talked at the students for too much of the time; and the activities enabled only a small number to participate actively.

Students' learning is affected by weaknesses in teaching across ability groups. The fourth weak lesson was with a Year 9 higher attaining group.

13. Lessons involving students with special needs cater well for differing attainment levels. Good humour and insistence on keeping to the rules of behaviour help students to learn. Staff work well together to overcome barriers to learning and help students to concentrate. Teaching assistants mostly make a particularly valuable contribution to learning because of their knowledge of students and their sensitive and effective interventions. Students usually know the targets on their individual education plans and these are realistic and helpful. In the most effective lessons, these targets are systematically addressed. However, this practice is not consistent across the college, within and between subject departments.
14. Work is marked regularly in all subjects in accordance with college policy. There is particularly useful feedback to help students to make improvements in geography, history and modern foreign languages. However, the practice in science in Years 10 and 11, in art and design, ICT, music and physical education in Years 7 to 9, and in religious education throughout Years 7 to 11, is not helpful enough to students. It does not ensure that they have a clear idea about what to do to improve. There are no arrangements for assessment in citizenship; this is poor.
15. Excellent teaching was seen in five lessons: in English, physics, French and two chemistry lessons, one in the main college and one in the sixth form.

This was a Year 7 French lesson with higher attainers. Its great strength was that it concentrated on developing their reading skills and confidence rather than just on improving vocabulary. The key to its success was the combination of high challenge and effective support which stretched students without discouraging them. The teacher told a story in French in which ninety per cent of vocabulary was new, using visual support and mime to convey meaning. The students were then presented with the written text divided into separate sentences which they had to put into the right order. They were encouraged to look for key words that would give them clues. A discussion followed about how they should approach texts containing a lot of new vocabulary. This focused on using the context to infer meaning, picking out key words and using dictionaries effectively, the teacher skilfully helping students to identify good practice. To finish, students read a variety of short stories to themselves. Observation showed that many had understood and were applying what they had learned.

Sixth Form

16. Over nine out of ten lessons are at least good in the sixth form, and nearly half are very good or better. Students' good achievement reflects the quality of the teaching they receive, but is also a reflection of their maturity as learners which is well promoted by the college. The quality of teaching is very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, science, art and design, history, French and sports studies. Excellent teaching was seen in chemistry.

Sixth-formers made excellent progress in a revision lesson about the reactions of amines. In pairs, they had to research and explain a series of chemical reactions on cards. They drew lots to decide who received which card first and scores were given for correct answers. Cards were then exchanged so that all students could learn about each one. The teacher circulated, sitting on the floor among the students, asking demanding questions. The ensuing discussion showed a high level of explanatory thinking. Students explored and explained their ideas at a level appropriate to the highest A-level grades. Throughout, they were encouraged and congratulated for their efforts. Their response was a high degree of willingness to have a go at explaining really challenging ideas and a very strong interest in reaching a secure understanding. This was a class in which hard work was the norm and achievement high, due to imaginative planning and an atmosphere of mutual trust.

17. The arrangements for assessment at this stage are good. Homework is set on a regular basis and marked constructively with helpful feedback. Major emphasis is placed on planning individual programmes based on assessment results and identified weaknesses. This is particularly effective in health and social care, French and the science subjects.

Across the whole college, Years 7 to 13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 218 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (2%)	54 (25%)	102 (47%)	53 (24%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	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.

The curriculum

The breadth of the curriculum at all stages and the activities for curriculum enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources do not meet the needs of subjects satisfactorily.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ In Years 10 and 11 a very good range of courses is offered.
- ❑ Provision for students with special needs is very good.
- ❑ Accommodation limits what can be offered and achieved in art and design, business studies, design and technology, physical education and science, as well as in ICT within subjects.
- ❑ Resources available for ICT in subjects are unsatisfactory.
- ❑ The requirements for ICT within National Curriculum subjects and for a daily act of worship are not met in full.

Commentary

18. The college is active in reviewing and developing the curriculum to meet the needs of its students and raise standards across the college. Innovative changes have been made, such as the 'tiering' system in place for three years in Years 7 to 9, that have been successful in achieving this aim and have contributed effectively to raising standards. Innovations are reviewed and refined to good effect. For example, in the current year, a pilot course has been introduced for the Year 7 foundation tier students that focuses on English, mathematics and science. A fast track initiative helps to provide for the most capable students in Year 9 by enabling them to begin GCSE courses early. In Years 10 and 11 the range of options includes vocational and work-related courses. The college makes good arrangements with local schools for an alternative programme that better meets the needs of a small group of students in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for enrichment are very wide in music, drama and dance

and are well supported by students who are currently rehearsing for 'Les Miserables'. These activities make a significant contribution to students' confidence and personal development.

19. Students with special needs are provided with a wide range of learning activities, well suited to their individual needs, including additional support in a special Year 7 programme, and good opportunities through after-school and homework clubs. Their literacy and numeracy skills are well supported by a range of strategies including interactive computer programs. In Years 10 and 11, support for ICT is a particular strength. Accommodation is suitable and provides a welcoming and safe haven for some vulnerable students, away from the hurly-burly of the college day. Although the building is ramped, allowing wheelchair access to the first floor, there is no lift. To remedy this, the college takes the trouble to site lessons for wheelchair users where they are accessible. There is a toilet for disabled students and a suite of rooms in which therapies are provided, but no shower. The college does not possess a minibus in which disabled students can travel safely in their wheelchairs.
20. The new timetable introduced with the recent changes to the college day is complex. While it works well in some respects, there are too many instances of very short lessons (single 25-minute periods) or very long lessons (triple periods or longer), as well as unsuitable distribution of lessons across the week, for it to contribute successfully to effective learning. The college is moving quickly to redress these weaknesses.
21. The inadequacies in the accommodation have adverse effects on students' learning. There are not enough teaching spaces for ICT and access for other subjects is very limited, one of the factors contributing to unsatisfactory provision for ICT across subjects. Many design and technology rooms are too small and art and design rooms are small and poorly lit and furnished. In wet weather there are not enough spaces to teach the physical education curriculum. There is no specialist base for business education, so that teachers are not able to create a business-style environment. Lack of space for lunches leads to timetable arrangements that limits achievement, for example by splitting lessons, and drama lessons are made less effective by noise from the adjacent hall. The inclusion centre is too small to provide for its planned expansion.
22. In most subjects, resources adequately provide for the curriculum. However, the limited number of computers severely restricts their use by subject departments and is unsatisfactory. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is never less than satisfactory and often good and there is a good complement of support staff. The use of advanced skills teachers in most subjects is having a positive effect on standards.

Sixth form

23. The good range of courses available enables students to follow their particular interests and aspirations, and incorporates appropriate courses for a wide range of previous attainment. All students have access to the good range of enrichment opportunities offered. However the personal development course, currently under review, is only just beginning to encourage students' involvement and to keep track of this. Sixth-form accommodation is unsatisfactory. Students' social and study areas are too small. Some classes, particularly in science and sports studies, are taught in unsuitably small classrooms that limit the use of practical and research activities and so restrict learning.

Care, guidance and support

The college cares well for its students, provides good information and support for them and is beginning to involve them well in its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Arrangements for students' welfare and safety are good, although their best interest is sometimes poorly served by the new timetable.
- ❑ The care for students with special needs is very good, and there is good, targeted support for students with behaviour needs, both highly effective examples of the college's inclusive approach.
- ❑ Recent moves to consult more with students are helpful, although students would like feedback about the views expressed and the action taken in response.

Commentary

24. The college's arrangements for welfare cover all the required areas, with sufficient staff trained in first aid. Governors' responsibilities are carried out well and issues identified at the last inspection have been resolved. There is good mentoring support for targeted individuals and all students benefit from regular interviews with tutors. Most students are confident that there is an adult they could talk to if they have a problem. Learning support assistants and the special needs co-ordinator provide good support for students with additional needs. The new post of inclusion co-ordinator is proving effective in helping individuals to control their own behaviour.
25. A varied range of support programmes is available for students with additional needs. These include:
 - physiotherapy in the department's personal care suite, following exercises aimed to keep students mobile and in college;
 - students are physically aided to attend lessons and field trips;
 - those who cannot access physical education lessons attend a local gymnasium;
 - very good organisation of examination concessions and a high level support for external examinations, enabling students to leave with appropriate qualifications;
 - valuable pre-and post-lesson tutorials when required, which improve students' confidence in the learning process;
 - the work of external agencies and support services is particularly well co-ordinated and has a positive effect on the college's provision.
26. Students across the age groups are concerned about behaviour and bullying, as are their parents. After careful analysis of behaviour patterns, action was taken to alter the timing and length of the college day, including arrangements for the lunch period. New procedures from the start of the current term have resulted in a calm, efficient and civilised lunch break for students, which is of benefit to all. However, a consequence of the simultaneous changes to the timing of lessons is that sessions now contain too many periods without a break. While going some way to resolving immediate issues about behaviour, there are some adverse effects on students' well-being, a concern of parents that inspectors find to some extent justified. The situation is rightly under review by senior staff with the involvement of the college council. A series of workshops and training is planned to enable staff and students to formulate a college-wide response to bullying issues.
27. Students' confidence that the college listens and acts upon their opinion declines somewhat as they get older. They feel their voice is not always heard and that feedback on suggestions and opinions is not always forthcoming. However, the recent re-launch of the council has already seen consultation take place in Year 11 over the rewards system, the choice of music played during the lunch break and, during the week of the inspection, the task of reviewing the college day and finding possible solutions. Students speak appreciatively of these developments.

Sixth form

28. Students' good achievement benefits from the quality of support they receive. Their subject teachers monitor their progress systematically and set targets for improvement. Students value this help but do not feel sufficiently well advised about the options available to them when they leave school. Helpful arrangements are being set in place following the recent appointment of a dedicated careers adviser, and the profile of careers advice is being raised by colourful displays around the college and a dedicated area in the library.
29. Some students have no opportunity for a lunch break at all due to the new timetabling arrangements. This is unacceptable. Of concern to them is the effect this has on their personal and social development, as opportunities to interact within friendship groups and across year groups are curtailed.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with other schools and the community are good and there are sound links with parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents appreciate the good teaching and the progress their children make, although they do not feel the college takes account of their suggestions and concerns.
- They receive satisfactory information about their children's progress, although the quality varies between subjects and year groups. Sixth-form reports are good.
- Good links with other schools are extending learning opportunities for both students and staff.

Commentary

30. Parental support is readily given on occasions such as parents' evenings, shows and sports fixtures and parents are generous in their provision of ingredients for food technology lessons. The student support department involves parents very well. They are appropriately consulted with regard to their children's education as part of the requirements of the Code of Practice and almost all attend annual reviews. Helpful information is available through the website, prospectus and governors' annual report, although written communications to parents are mainly limited to brief factual information about trips and visits. Parents feel they do not always receive the information in enough time to attend meetings or return reply slips. Their children's reports do not all give a clear picture about strengths and weaknesses, or how improvements can be made. Although the college seeks the views of parents where required, such as over the recent changes to the timing of the college day, many parents feel their views are not given due consideration. The college acknowledges the need to strengthen its communication with parents in its work to raise achievement.
31. Links with primary schools have been enhanced through the college's specialist status and the appointment of advanced skills teachers, both of which require some sharing of expertise in the local community. For example, science staff regularly participate in lessons in primary schools and art and design teachers provide lessons in local residential homes for the elderly. A good induction programme and liaison between schools ensure a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Arrangements for students with special needs are particularly effective. Their individual needs are identified before they start Year 7 so that from the outset the curriculum can be tailored to their needs. The college co-operates with special schools in the area to provide physical education for some students. Local business supports the college by providing work placements for students, and volunteer engineers from the community built movable steps to provide access for disabled students.

Sixth form

32. The strengths and weaknesses in the college's links with parents and the community apply equally to the sixth form. However, exemplary practice is evident in some sixth-form reports, for example in French, which give very clear messages regarding achievement, progress and targets for development. Solid links with local business and the community support students'

development and plans are already in place to extend the connections with further education establishments. Students spoke of their enjoyment at being a member of the sixth form and their appreciation of the opportunities available to them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good: there is good governance, good leadership and, overall, sound management. However, because not all statutory requirements are met in full the overall judgement about governance has to be that it is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ The headteacher's vision for a forward-looking college, run flexibly enough to meet varying individual needs effectively, is being established with imagination and some thoroughness.
- ❑ Development planning, evaluation and review are sharply focused and demanding.
- ❑ The roles and responsibilities of senior staff are not carried out with sufficient rigour and drive to ensure consistent quality of provision across the college that meets both requirements and college expectations.
- ❑ Governors take a strong strategic role and have a good working knowledge of the college's main strengths and weaknesses.
- ❑ However, statutory requirements are not fully met for the curriculum and daily collective worship; some procedures in financial management do not fully comply with requirements.
- ❑ Subject management is nearly always good, with particular strength in science and very good management of special needs.

Commentary

33. The college is being successfully led and managed to ensure that it moves with the times and that all avenues for enhancing its funding are explored in order to achieve this. Being granted specialist college status for science in a challenging timescale is a good example. It is held back by the accommodation and resources, although a coherent refurbishment programme is in process and making a difference – but not to the size of working spaces. By contrast, the strategy of developing strong staff teams is having a positive effect on the work of the college, and consequently on students' learning and achievement, and is strongly enhanced by the complement of recently appointed advanced skills teachers. There is a highly effective team of teachers and teaching assistants for special needs, strongly committed to providing the best possible opportunities for students. They are very successful. Good attention is given to the principles of best value in relation to costings and through analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' performance. However, not enough attention has been given to developing communication and consultation with parents, although these processes are now underway with students.
34. Procedures for reviewing both established provision and how well new provision is working out are a strength. This is clearly evident in the way key issues from the last inspection were tackled, in the current development plan, and in the programme and reports of lesson monitoring in the foundation tier. However, although there is daily supervision by senior staff of the new lunchtime arrangements, the new timetable has not been monitored to ensure that it is supporting students' learning effectively. From evidence during the inspection, the same is true for the cover arrangements for the foundation groups. Despite the arrangement linking senior staff with heads of subjects and courses in order to ensure consistent quality of provision across the college, there are unsatisfactory features of assessment in about half the subjects in Years 7 to 11. These are the weaknesses which reduce the judgement of management to sound rather than good, despite other strong features. There are comprehensive procedures for performance management which are effectively implemented and monitored. Very good opportunities for professional development and induction of new staff incorporate a good focus on additional needs, although there is scope for improvement in the systems for evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.

35. Governors have a strong commitment to the college, which shows particularly, for example, in their contribution to making improvements since the last inspection. They regularly attend events and undertake governor training. With the headteacher, they are ambitious for bringing about improvements which provide young people with the best possible opportunities for personal, academic and skills development. The budget is managed to effect this quality, with some success, although affected by the interim funding arrangements for the sixth form. It is currently operating with an agreed deficit. Some irregularities in procedure, identified in a recent audit, are being rectified.

Sixth form

36. The college is successfully managed to ensure an inclusive approach to its work at all stages, and spending on the sixth form has no detrimental effect on the work of the main school. The quality of subject and course leadership and management contributes significantly to students' good achievement.

For the whole college

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,403,344
Total expenditure	4,417,126
Expenditure per pupil	2,944

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-146,610
Balance carried forward to the next	-117,749

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers' shared commitment has led to improved standards, particularly for boys.
- ❑ The uneven distribution of lessons for some classes impedes learning.
- ❑ Teaching and learning are well adapted to students' differing capabilities, so they make good progress.
- ❑ The programme of study is varied and challenging, and sustains students' interest.
- ❑ Teachers' skills and enthusiasm make most students keen to succeed.
- ❑ Marking does not always give students clear advice on how to improve which slows their progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- ❑ Students have too little opportunity to enhance their work with ICT.

Commentary

37. GCSE results in 2002 in English and literature were close to the national average, with girls significantly outperforming boys. In 2003, boys' results in literature were substantially better than in previous years. Over time, results in both subjects have steadily improved from below average. In the 2002 Year 9 test, results were average and above those for similar schools. Since the last inspection test scores have been variable.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

38. Students enter the college with below average literacy skills; their reading and writing skills are below their oral ability. By Year 9 most have made good progress, and careful teaching enables them to enjoy challenging literature such as 'Macbeth'. Those with special needs do well because they are known well and receive effective support. Although the least capable students' written work is brief and inaccurate, most can use different styles for a range of purposes and audiences, for example when writing a letter of complaint. Those from ethnic minority groups are fully included in lessons and make good progress. By Year 11 the most capable students use persuasive language effectively, speaking in extended sentences, for example when debating animal rights. They listen closely to the teacher and to each other. Nearly all students speak clearly but some do not extend their ideas. Their responses to literature vary in depth and perception but most have a good grasp of the plot and the characters in 'Of Mice and Men' and 'An Inspector Calls'. Their written work is often lively and original. Talented students write highly entertaining pieces. Standards in Year 11 reflect recent performance in the GCSE examinations.
39. Teaching shows that:
- careful planning enables students to build on previous knowledge and skills in a good variety of activities;
 - effective 'starter' activities quickly engage them in the lesson;
 - good management, including mixed-gender seating plans, creates a purposeful atmosphere;
 - challenging time-limits set a good pace of work;

- teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, and their good subject knowledge wins students' confidence;
 - students' individual needs are well known to the teachers, who work in effective partnership with support staff;
 - relationships between teachers and their classes are generally positive, making students keen to succeed, which they often do;
 - clear instructions and skilful questioning help students to tackle tasks with confidence and extend their thinking;
 - when students are allowed to choose their own gender or friendship groups some of them become distracted from the work;
 - students lose concentration in a few lessons where the teacher talks at them for too long.
- Overall, students of all ages respond well to this good teaching and their attitudes and behaviour are good. In a minority of lessons, the poor behaviour of some students, usually boys, impedes progress.

Curriculum leadership

40. Teachers share a commitment to high standards. Improvements are supported by appropriate strategies that are already having a positive effect. The curriculum is broad and balanced except that students have few opportunities for using ICT, so that National Curriculum requirements are not met. By discussing issues such as war and social justice, students develop their social, moral and cultural awareness and understand their responsibilities as young citizens. Their experience is enriched by poetry days and theatre visits. However, the use of data from assessment is not sufficiently refined to enable staff to track individual progress well. The timetabled distribution of lessons across the week for some classes is unsatisfactory and adversely affects students' learning. Nonetheless, improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have risen at GCSE, and boys' achievement is better. Students' attitudes are more positive in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality of teaching is better, and lessons now have more pace and purpose.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. In subjects other than English, standards of literacy improve from Year 7 to 9, and they are average in Years 10 and 11. On entry, students are generally more competent in the spoken than in the written language. The department has effectively implemented features of the national strategy for English in Years 7 to 9, which are supported by a focus on language in other subjects such as history and modern foreign languages. This ensures that the reading and writing requirements of GCSE are met.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations by most teachers ensure that students achieve well.
- Standards are rising. GCSE results are improving as are the standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11.
- The leadership ensures that there is a clear focus on raising standards.
- Inconsistencies in expectations and, in a small minority of lessons, poor planning, mean that a minority of students do not achieve as well as the rest.

Commentary

42. GCSE results in 2002 were average for French and Spanish, although students did not do as well as they did in their other subjects. German results were above average but this was based on low numbers of students. The results for 2003 show a marked improvement, although the number of students entered was lower. Students still performed less well in languages than in other subjects. Teachers' Year 9 assessments have remained consistently above average over recent years.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

43. Students enter Year 7 with average attainment. They make good progress because there is a strong emphasis on the teaching of grammar so at all levels they learn to write accurately. Higher attainers adapt grammar rules so that they write independently. In Year 9, these students have already begun their GCSE course, an example of high expectations leading to rising standards. Most students with special needs are achieving as well as other students. However, in a small minority of lessons, these students are not making good progress because their particular needs are not being tackled. Standards in Year 11 are above average in French and German. In both subjects, students achieve well. High expectations by the teachers mean that students have to handle a wide range of grammar and structure, which in turn means that their written work has greater variety. Standards in Spanish are average but this represents satisfactory achievement because Spanish students have a lower level of attainment at the start of Year 10. The standard of work in lessons is better than the examination results for 2002 because new leadership in the department is establishing a clear sense of direction and higher expectations. Concentration on grammar and accurate writing means that students have a good understanding of how language is constructed and think carefully about their spelling. Consequently, they are developing good literacy skills in language lessons. However, ICT and mathematical skills are not being well developed because of the lack of a structured approach to teaching these skills.
44. There are a number of features which lead to students' good learning.
- High expectations by most teachers are resulting in more challenging work to which students respond well.
 - Good relationships between teachers and students in nearly all lessons mean that students enjoy the work and are keen to succeed; behaviour is always good and attitudes are usually positive; however, there is no structured approach to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - Good planning in most lessons ensures that students build on previous learning to improve their vocabulary and develop their language skills.
 - Regular and effective assessment of work helps raise students' expectations – as well as their teachers' expectations; thorough marking helps students to improve the quality of their written work.
 - However, in a minority of lessons, low expectations and inadequate planning lead to achievement that is occasionally unsatisfactory. In a minority of lessons, for example, teachers do not use the target language enough.
 - Targets set for students are not explicit enough so they do not understand how they can make progress.

Curriculum leadership

45. There is good emphasis on the development of language skills rather than improving vocabulary. The department's work is effectively evaluated and planning is good. There has been good progress since the last inspection. However, problems with the timetable are adversely affecting progress, particularly for students in foundation groups in Years 7 to 9. Planning for the range of attainment in the mixed-ability teaching groups in Years 10 and 11 does not always meet the needs of all students.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Leadership and management are focused effectively on raising students' attainment.
- ❑ Well-structured activities lead to good progress in lessons.
- ❑ There is good achievement when teachers use challenge and pace well.
- ❑ Insufficient use of ICT prevents students from developing their understanding sufficiently.
- ❑ Directed whole-class teaching sometimes restricts students' progress.

Commentary

46. Results in 2002 in GCSE were above average when compared to all schools. The gap between boys' and girls' results has steadily narrowed and the target for boys' achievement of the highest grades was well exceeded in 2002. There is an improving trend over time, although in 2003 the proportion of students gaining the higher grades fell. In 2002 the Year 9 test results were above average and compared with similar colleges were well above average. The trend in Year 9 tests is above the national trend.

Achievement

Standards

Teaching and learning

Leadership and management

good

above average

good in Years 7 to 9

satisfactory in Years 10 and 11

both good

47. Students learn and use skills well in number, algebra, graphical work and handling data. By the end of Year 9, the more capable students rapidly perform complicated calculations. In Year 8 they discover, discuss and describe number patterns which effectively introduce them to functions. The Year 9 average attainers compare data, develop their understanding of correlation and draw accurate graphs. Lower attainers achieve very well in Year 9 because of effective teaching. However, Year 8 students make slow progress in their understanding of the properties of quadrilaterals. Students with special needs make similar progress to other students. With effective support they achieve well and calculate a series of additions mentally, make reasonable estimates and use bar charts. Higher attainers in Year 11 achieve well when they quickly and accurately perform algebraic manipulation, but in Year 10 they are not stretched when performing calculations using percentages. Lower attainers with five lessons on one day make slow progress. Students' use of ICT is limited and restricts learning. Their competence in English is satisfactory and teachers promote literacy by highlighting and displaying key words and by implementing the college's spelling policy.

48. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 shows the following features.
- Good planning, high expectations, structured activities and good use of positive relationships which lead to greater student participation.
 - Good marking and feedback help students improve.
 - The best lessons combine these features with challenge and pace that require students to raise their achievement.

However, some whole-class teaching is at best only satisfactory, because there is:

- excessive time spent on the poor behaviour of a very small number of boys; or
- insufficient challenge for a significant number of students during class discussion so that they lose interest and achieve below their capability.

There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching across different groups.

Curriculum leadership

49. Across Years 7 to 13 the head of department provides the drive to monitor and improve standards, a sustained focus on teaching and learning, resourceful, efficient and supportive management, and leadership by example. Other teachers with responsibilities and teams are

also effective. There is a focus on curriculum development and its review, systematic scrutiny of students' work and well-founded target-setting. A homework club for Year 11 and involvement in the UK Mathematics Challenge enrich the curriculum, and early GCSE entry is planned for the highest attainers. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have risen faster than the national trend, assessment is effective and contributes to future planning, and good monitoring now takes place.

Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Overall provision for mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum is good. Students demonstrate the skills to enable them to access the whole curriculum and show a good level of competence in a number of subjects. Through their mathematics lessons they learn good numerical calculations, mental mathematics and estimation, problem solving strategies, basic algebraic manipulation, graphical representation and mathematical vocabulary. Students are taught well how to present and set out their work.
51. There is a college policy on numeracy which resulted from the curriculum audit and an INSET day. The guidance on graphs was observed being followed in several departments. Good work in numeracy occurs in other subjects. For example, younger students in science confidently use graphs and bar charts, and in geography bipolar graphs are used to evaluate a site quality. In design and technology, students make good use of tally charts for a survey, as do students with special needs in mathematics. Older students in science use mathematical terms and vocabulary well, and record readings and draw graphs accurately and neatly for their GCSE investigation. In music, students understand note values, proportion and graphic scores, and those with special needs in design and technology understand oven temperatures well.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond positively to the good teaching and behave well.
- Leadership and the shared commitment of staff have identified and implemented actions for improvement effectively.
- Resources, particularly those for ICT, are unsatisfactory thus limiting the range of experiments and investigations carried out by students.
- Marking is regular but often the comments are not diagnostic and do not help students to understand how to make the best progress they can.

Commentary

52. GCSE double science results in 2002 were broadly average for both boys and girls. The 2003 results are similar. Results in the separate sciences were below average in 2002 but show improvement in 2003. The 2002 Year 9 test results were above average and well above average in comparison to similar schools. Boys and girls do equally well in these tests, and results have been maintained over the last three years.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good in Years 7 to 9</i>
	<i>satisfactory in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average by Year 9</i>
	<i>average by Year 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

53. Students enter Year 7 with average standards. They settle quickly, as seen in a Year 7 group who showed good scientific ideas when confidently discussing issues surrounding the demand for fossil fuels. A 'fast-track' Year 9 group showed a very good theoretical

understanding of electrolysis and a genuine enjoyment of science in a role play involving students as atoms and ions. Staff have recognised that students in Years 10 and 11 are not always sufficiently inspired by the teaching or helped by the marking to want to improve their work. Teachers are responding to this as evident in a Year 11 lesson on cracking hydrocarbons where students were challenged to make sufficient intellectual effort to develop ideas - and did so. Students with special needs receive good support, participate fully in lesson activities and progress as well as others.

54. The key features of teaching which help students to learn well are:
- teachers' good subject expertise and their skills in presenting information to students;
 - effective planning with the setting and checking of clear objectives; for example in a Year 9 lesson on preparation of salts, a missing-word starter activity and a self-evaluation questionnaire extended the learning by looking at the objectives in a fresh way;
 - the use of a variety of teaching approaches with an emphasis on practical work; for example, prior to experimental work, good use was made of a micro-camera and TV monitor allowing students to get a clear view of the teacher's demonstration;
 - good response and behaviour by students who are really interested in their work, for example a Year 11 group of middle attainers took part in a lively discussion session on the formation and uses of limestone; they remained attentive and totally focused because the largely theoretical exercise was made interesting by the teacher's skilful involvement of all the group;
 - constructive relationships between staff and students which lead to a good atmosphere for learning.

Curriculum leadership

55. Although there is a high proportion of inexperienced staff, all have the same clear sense of direction for science. Schemes of work are systematically reviewed and cater well for different levels of attainment. Literacy skills in oral and written work are good. Numeracy skills adequately support work in Years 7 to 9 and there is good graphical work in scientific investigations at GCSE. Wall displays in laboratories are impressive but, generally, accommodation is inflexible in use and does not support the commendable practical approach to work. Only a minimum use is made of ICT across the curriculum. This remains an issue from the previous inspection, although now being tackled by a recent staff appointment with responsibility for ICT across science courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students in Years 10 and 11 take specialist ICT courses, and the vast majority take GCSE.
- Self-contained ICT courses are taught by teachers with good levels of ICT expertise.
- Most subjects, however, including English and mathematics, do not ensure that students make the required use of ICT in their subject work.
- The co-ordination of ICT across all subjects is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

56. In 2002, a relatively small number of students took GCSE, making comparison with national results unreliable. In 2003, all Year 11 students took a GNVQ Intermediate course and the proportion gaining merit and pass grades reflected the proportions in previous national results.

Achievement
Standards
Teaching and learning

good by Year 9, satisfactory by Year 11
above average by Year 9, average by Year 11
good

Leadership and management **satisfactory overall and for 'self-contained' ICT**
unsatisfactory co-ordination of ICT in
subjects

57. Students enter Year 7 with broadly average standards. Their achievement is good because teaching is challenging to students of all abilities and provides effective support for individuals. Most students are motivated and keen to do their best. In Year 11, many students achieve well, but a significant minority are content not to do their best. Sometimes, teaching does not challenge students enough to help them achieve well.
58. Strengths and weakness in the teaching which support or hinder learning are:
- clear, step-by-step instruction about new ICT skills followed by tasks that require the application of these skills;
 - teachers and support staff monitor and support the progress of individual students carefully;
 - effective class management and good relationships which create an ethos that encourages learning;
 - high but realistic expectations of what the students can achieve;
 - effective use of ongoing assessment to modify the teaching as the lesson progresses.
- In about half of the lessons, weaker aspects of teaching limited students' learning to a satisfactory level because:
- the same learning objectives were provided for students in the upper and middle tiers so there is not enough challenge for some students;
 - there are few displays of students' work to demonstrate the characteristics of good quality work;
 - the concluding plenary sessions in lessons are often rushed and do not add enough to students' learning;
 - students are not clear about how to improve their standards.

Curriculum leadership

59. There is a clear direction to the work of the department with a focus on raising standards. However, there is insufficient monitoring and support of teaching and, consequently, teachers have not been helped enough to improve their skills so that they can ensure that the learning challenges all students. Specific curriculum responsibilities have not been allocated to each of the specialists within the department. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in improving students' ICT knowledge and skills because of improvements to the curriculum, although the progress made for other subjects to use ICT as part of their teaching is unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. The college is making a priority of improving the use of ICT in science teaching, and a member of the science department has the responsibility for leading and managing this initiative. Science makes satisfactory use of ICT and this includes data logging and research. Physical education teaching also makes satisfactory use of ICT. In other subjects, students have the necessary ICT skills but do not have the opportunity to use them because there is insufficient access to the ICT rooms, which are used to teach 'self-contained' ICT lessons for about 80 per cent of the time. Some subjects have yet to incorporate the use of ICT into their curriculum planning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work hard and take great care with their written work but the depth of their understanding is insufficient.
- Marking and assessment procedures are good but National Curriculum levels are not used to grade all longer pieces of work so that students do not understand clearly how they are progressing.
- Improvement priorities for the short- and long-term development of the department have not been identified clearly to tackle the falling GCSE results and low subject take up which have continued since the last inspection.

Commentary

61. GCSE results in 2002 were below average and continued a falling trend. Students did less well in geography in comparison with their other GCSE subjects. However, results rose in 2003 and the majority of students reached their expected grades. Teachers' Year 9 assessments have remained consistently above average over recent years.

Achievement	good by Year 9
	satisfactory by Year 11
Standards	above average by Year 9
	below average by Year 11
Teaching and learning	good in Years 7 to 9
	satisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Leadership and management	both satisfactory

62. Entering the college with an average understanding of geography, all students make good progress over Years 7 to 9. Boys and girls achieve equally, as do those with special needs. Students contribute well to class discussions when, for example, empathising with mothers faced with China's 'one child' policy. The numbers choosing to study the subject in Years 10 and 11 are relatively small. Students have good factual knowledge, but their understanding of geographical concepts is not secure and they have difficulty applying their knowledge. This limits their ability to reach higher grades in GCSE examinations.
63. The main features of the teaching are:
- students are expertly managed so that they have the confidence to ask questions in order to clarify their understanding;
 - clear expectations are set for behaviour so that students learn effectively by concentrating on their work, although strategies which ensure depth in their learning are insufficient;
 - lessons are generally planned well, but introductions are often too long and lessons usually end without any summing up of what has been learned;
 - homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend learning;
 - in the marking, evaluative and helpful written comments ensure that students know what they have done well and how they can improve, but there is no reference to National Curriculum levels and not always to GCSE grades;
 - fieldwork is used well to enhance students' understanding of environmental and geographical features;
 - the planned use of ICT is insufficient, reflecting the paucity of the department's equipment and the difficulties of accessing college facilities.
- The good features are best evident in Years 7 to 9 where they lead to good achievement. In Years 10 and 11 there are not enough strategies to ensure that students learn in enough depth and this restricts their progress and their ability to answer questions in sufficient detail.

Curriculum leadership

64. Although there is a shared desire to raise standards, the department has yet to complete a rigorous evaluation of its work. The development plan identifies the need to combat falling numbers in Years 10 and 11 and to market the subject more strongly, but staff have not considered how teaching and learning can be improved in Years 7 and 8 in order to attract students in Year 10. Since the previous inspection, attainment at GCSE has fallen, although there has been an improvement in the use of GCSE grades to inform parents about students' attainment. Overall improvement is unsatisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Stimulating teaching equips students with the historical skills for thinking critically about the past.
- Good leadership and teamwork among teachers are maintaining high standards.
- Thorough marking and assessment of students' work helps them improve.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent enquiry through using reference books and ICT.

Commentary

65. There has been an upward movement in GCSE results over the last three years, peaking in 2001 and maintaining above average standards in 2002, with little difference between boys' and girls' performance. Students did as well in history as in the average of all their other subjects. The 2003 results are slightly higher. Teacher assessments of students' attainment by the end of Year 9 indicate above average performance.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership	very good
Management	good

66. By Year 9 students show good acquisition of historical skills for explaining the causes of events and examining historical evidence. Higher attainers successfully link the different reasons for the abolition of the slave trade and reach conclusions about which were most important for change. Students with special needs receive extra help from teaching assistants which ensures they make the same progress as others. Careful guidance over planning essays and regular practice have raised the standard of students' writing. However, enquiry skills for researching information from reference books and websites are not developed in a systematic way over Years 7 to 9. Students enjoy history and many choose it as one of their options in Year 10. Work by Year 11 students is similar in quality to that achieved at GCSE in recent years. Good academic standards are evident in their coursework. Most students keep well-organised files, but some, mainly boys, are not monitored on a regular enough basis to check their completion of notes. Motivation and productivity over work vary between classes but are generally good. Lower attainers are given added incentive to raise their standard of work in the mixed-ability groups. Rigorous assessment and constructive comments on work by teachers are helping all students to achieve well. Students benefit greatly from their teachers' command of the subject and expertise at preparing them for examinations.
67. The quality of teaching in the subject is characterised by an emphasis on historical skills and encouraging students to think for themselves at all levels.
- Expectations are high and the work is challenging in well-planned lessons that move along at a brisk pace.

- Teachers manage their classes well, building good working relationships and creating the right atmosphere for learning.
- Skilful use of questioning is promoting good class discussion in lessons and probing for deeper understanding, although this is not always extended by small-group activities.
- Teachers assess students' work regularly and accurately against the subject criteria for courses and their comments are constructive in guiding students on how to improve.

A couple of lessons in each year are planned to use ICT but its potential for learning in the subject, especially for promoting skills of independent enquiry, is not really being tapped. Similarly, not enough use is made of the college library's collections of reference books to supplement the department's basic textbooks.

Curriculum leadership

68. This is a well-organised department, committed to continued improvement and the achievement of high standards. The curriculum is well planned but insufficient time in Years 7 and 8 leads to brief treatment of the unit on Islamic Civilisation and the omission of local history. Teachers are extending their professionalism effectively through sharing ideas and participating in training and higher degree courses. Development planning tends to be only short term and lacks specific targets for history because it takes a general humanities approach. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have improved at GCSE and numbers have increased, maintaining the subject's popularity despite increased competition. As yet, not enough is being made of ICT to support students' learning. Plans are well advanced for recording data from assessments electronically, so that the information can be used in planning the teaching and setting academic targets for students.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are planned to include a variety of activities which engage students' interest.
- Care is shown by members of the department for individual students' progress.
- Tasks and feedback to students are not linked consistently to subject targets.

Commentary

69. The 2002 results for the short course were well above average; the examination was taken by 55 students. The numbers taking the full course were too few for reliable national comparisons, although students' results compared favourably with those in other subjects. In 2003, the whole year group took the GCSE short course.

<i>Achievement Standards</i>	<i>good average in Years 7 to 9 above average in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good overall satisfactory learning in Years 7 to 9</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

70. From Year 7, students show insights into religious teaching about how people's beliefs can affect their moral decisions. By Year 11, they use appropriate skills, particularly those of empathy and evaluation, in developing their views in the light of previous learning. All students develop the skill of seeing more than one point of view on an issue, for example expressing a Muslim perspective on euthanasia. They develop good literacy skills, for example by writing creative responses to human rights issues. Satisfactory standards are not reached in ICT, however, as there are few opportunities for students to use computers in researching, refining and evaluating their work.

71. The main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching are:
- enthusiasm and expertise which challenge students to deepen their thinking on religious and social issues;
 - the care teachers take to ensure that all students, boys and girls and higher and lower attainers, are clear about what they must do and how to do it;
 - students in all year groups apply themselves well to the work being set, for example in making detailed responses to a story of Christian forgiveness;
 - students' enthusiasm in the classroom is not consistently followed up with extended activities which broaden their skills or deepen their thinking;
 - assessment of work does not consistently tell students how they can make further progress.

Curriculum leadership

72. There has been considerable improvement in provision. Well-balanced schemes of work now meet requirements and all students in Years 10 and 11 take the GCSE short course in religious studies. Temporary teachers are provided with lesson plans that do not unduly disrupt students' progress and the successful inclusive approach means that no parents choose to withdraw their children from religious education. The department does not do enough to support students' cultural development, for example by failing to provide opportunities for them to meet representatives of local faith communities, but it does contribute well to their spiritual, moral and social education.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

- ❑ Achievement of both boys and girls is high in most materials areas.
- ❑ Teachers' skills encourage good learning and achievement.
- ❑ Students have positive attitudes to their work and behave well so that good learning takes place.
- ❑ Insufficient use of ICT, especially CAD/CAM, largely due to lack of access to equipment, restricts learning and limits achievement.
- ❑ Students are not clear enough about how well they are doing so they do not always know how to improve.

Commentary

73. GCSE results in 2002 were above average. The 2003 results are similar, in most materials areas. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2002 show above average standards.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>good</i>

74. Students in Years 7 to 9 follow the design process well and use a wide range of materials, tools and processes. Practical work is linked appropriately to their understanding of the materials they use. For example, Year 9 students learn about the properties of food and the underlying principles associated with preparing and cooking it. Higher attainers in Year 9 show good understanding of the work they did in previous years, drawing on it when completing projects that test the range of their skills and knowledge. This prepares them effectively for examination courses in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve well in food, textiles, resistant materials and electronics because teachers plan work to match individual needs and support

individual learning well in lessons. Because teachers know those with special needs well and ensure that they participate fully in activities, they make the same good progress as others. Support staff give good assistance, for example with cutting out materials, and helping with reading and the use of technical terms. Students listen carefully to teachers and write clearly. Oral work is good, although, on occasions in Years 7 to 9, they are not given opportunities to give full answers to teachers' questions. Mathematics is used appropriately to measure wood precisely in practical sessions in resistant materials and to weigh out ingredients in food work. Students' ICT skills are satisfactory but not developed enough for design and technology purposes.

75. The main features of the teaching are:

- teachers' good subject knowledge and competence in practical skills;
- staff show enthusiasm for their subject and provide stimulating opportunities to which students respond with enthusiasm and interest;
- students' willingness to learn and good behaviour in lessons lead to good achievement;
- lessons are well planned, begin promptly, proceed at a good pace and teachers often use time targets so that no time is wasted;
- subject vocabulary is introduced when relevant to new work so that students regularly acquire new information.

Curriculum leadership

76. Teachers work together as an effective team, sharing good practice and their knowledge of students. Day-to-day organisation is good. Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not yet in place, but the need is recognised. Accommodation is used well, although limited in space and rather run-down in the workshops for resistant materials and textiles. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Boys' achievement is now above average although below average at the last inspection. Skilled teaching and the development of topics that appeal to both boys and girls have brought about this improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff offer a broad range of expertise, enabling GCSE students to work confidently in a broad range of media.
- Teachers' challenging approach results in students' good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good teamwork by key staff leads to a very clear direction for the department.
- There is no collection of work, matched to National Curriculum levels, to standardise teachers' assessments and set targets for students in Years 7 to 9.
- Lack of sufficient and adequate ICT equipment limits the development of GCSE courses.

Commentary

77. GCSE results in 2002 were average. In comparison to their other GCSE subjects, students did slightly better in art and design, although against national comparisons they attained almost half a grade lower than average. 2003 results show similar standards. Teachers' Year 9 assessments have been above average in recent years. However, in the light of work seen and the absence of rigorous assessment procedures, these assessments appear to be generous.

Achievement

good overall and by Year 11

Standards

satisfactory by Year 9

average overall and by Year 9

above average by Year 11

Teaching and learning**satisfactory in Years 7 to 9****Leadership and management****good in Years 10 and 11****both good**

78. Students enter Year 7 with below average standards. In Years 7 and 8, as a result of tightly structured projects, they make sound progress in developing skills in drawing, painting and decorative design. There are, however, few opportunities for them to investigate the qualities of materials or evaluate their work against clear criteria. This limits the achievement of higher attainers. Projects in Year 9 are pitched well to the age and attainment range of the students and present appropriate challenge and opportunities to attain the higher National Curriculum levels. Students taking GCSE art and design and GCSE photography show good achievement through well-structured projects that allow for a good range of outcomes in both two and three dimensions. Drawing and painting from direct observation are particular strengths along with good examples of ceramics and sculptures using recycled materials. However, there is insufficient equipment to teach or develop ICT skills which limits the scope of some projects in photography and art and design. Boys and girls achieve equally well and the achievement of students with special needs is similar to that of their peers.
79. The good teaching shows a number of features.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject provide a broad range of expertise to support individual students' development at GCSE.
 - Well-pitched challenge and opportunities for decision-making in Years 9 to 11 encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and lead to higher achievement.
- Where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the reasons are:
- the focus of the projects planned across Years 7 and 8 is too narrow and restricts achievement at this stage through guiding students to refine technical skills rather than develop the ideas and concepts expected at this stage;
 - procedures for end of Year 9 assessments are being reviewed but the lack of levelled examples leaves students without clear targets.

Curriculum leadership

80. Good teamwork and effective delegation among key staff are having a good effect across the age range with an appropriate emphasis on Years 7 to 9. Recent reviews of what is taught are providing a more balanced range of activities, but a lack of sufficiently clear assessment of students' attainment on entry to Year 7 weakens the match of projects to students' capabilities. Although it is too soon for recent developments to have a positive effect on examination results, sufficient preparatory work has been done to indicate good improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned with a good variety of activities.
- GCSE results are well above average, with most students achieving high grades.
- Resources for ICT are inadequate and limit what students can achieve when composing.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment, so there is a lack of knowledge of trends and the comparative performance of different groups of students.

Commentary

81. The number of students entered for GCSE in 2002 was too small for valid comparisons with national averages or identification of trends. However, a very high proportion of students gained grades A*-C and this maintains the standards achieved in recent years. The 2003 results show a dip in comparison to previous years but still indicate above average standards.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

82. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls, and all attainment groups achieve well. Students perform well when playing and singing. They have a good grasp of the elements of music and apply this knowledge when listening to music. Composition work is satisfactory. Students understand chord structures but tend to base their melody-writing too much around them. They have a good theoretical knowledge of notation but lack fluency when performing from it. Students' literacy and numeracy standards are adequate for the requirements of the subject.
83. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups, with many strengths such as:
- good planning and a wide variety of activities;
 - good management and control of students, leading to productive working;
 - effective use of resources engaging students' interest;
 - teachers' musical skills used well to illustrate teaching points and to demonstrate performance techniques;
 - students work well both independently and collaboratively showing a mature attitude when working without direct supervision.
- Areas for improvement are:
- insufficient use of ICT as a result of inadequate resources; this means that students in Years 7 to 9 do not gain sufficient experience in the use of computers for composing;
 - marking, though conscientious, is insufficiently diagnostic and does not give students sufficient information on ways to improve; this leads to slower progress.

Curriculum leadership

84. Although responsibility for the leadership and management of the department is now shared, the quality is not adversely affected. This is because of good relationships and effective collaboration, with responsibilities well apportioned. There is innovative curriculum planning involving an additional performing arts course, which enables higher attaining students to take an additional GCSE. However, there is insufficient use of information from assessments to identify trends and help planning. The department contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both through the curriculum and through the extensive amount of extra-curricular work. Students' personal development is enhanced as a result and they show great enthusiasm and good attitudes. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of planning and teaching has improved, leading to higher standards in Years 7 to 9. The time allocation for music has been increased and the accommodation improved. However, although there has been some improvement in resources, they are still unsatisfactory, particularly with regard to ICT equipment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching motivates students to do their best.
- High expectations for good behaviour and hard work promote a good response from students.
- Good relationships and individual support ensure students of all levels of attainment do equally well.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and limits the activities that can be offered.
- Assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not accurate enough to give a true picture of the standards achieved.

Commentary

85. GCSE results in 2002 were average. The proportion of higher grades is rising and unconfirmed results in 2003 maintain this trend. In recent years, all students taking the examination have gained a grade. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 have remained above average in recent years but are too optimistic and do not relate accurately to National Curriculum levels.

Achievement	general PE	good by Year 9
	GCSE PE	satisfactory by Year 11
Standards		good by Year 11
Teaching and learning		average
Leadership and management		good
		both good

86. Students in Year 7 enter with average standards overall; their experience of activities differs widely. Both boys and girls reach average standards in Year 9. The strongest element in their work is in performance. Their skills of planning and judging the quality of their work are satisfactory but teachers do not always encourage these aspects sufficiently. In general physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11, students make satisfactory gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. In GCSE classes, achievement is better because of greater pace and focus to the teaching. Few girls take this examination option: they prefer the dance course. In 2002, boys achieved as well in physical education as in the other subjects they studied and in 2003 better than in many.
87. The main strengths and weaknesses of the teaching are:
- high expectations for behaviour and involvement, so lessons proceed at a good pace;
 - teachers have good relationships with students and give good individual advice and support that help students of all previous attainment;
 - teachers use a good range of practices that carefully build students' skill and confidence;
 - in the best lessons and especially with examination groups, teachers challenge students with questions that make them think about their work and how to improve;
 - assessments in Years 7 to 9 are not shared with students so they know for themselves what to do next to improve.

Curriculum leadership

88. The curriculum leader is building a strong team and students throughout the college enjoy physical education lessons. The department makes the very best of the unsatisfactory accommodation. Despite their best efforts, its quality and range restrict the range of activities staff can offer. This is particularly a problem in wet weather. There are very good alternative curriculum arrangements for students with particular special needs. However, the department plan for improvement does not focus sufficiently on raising standards in general physical education lessons. The college timetable results in some students having lessons that are too long. Improvement since the last inspection is good. There is now a greater proportion of good teaching and results have risen to above average.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Very good improvements are being made to the planning and teaching of PSHE and citizenship to ensure that all the necessary elements are taught to all students.
- ❑ An excellent project in collaboration with Amber Valley Primary Care Trust involved about 100 students from across the college.
- ❑ All subjects make a planned contribution to citizenship, and this is particularly good in geography, history and religious education.
- ❑ There is a good variety of citizenship activities within the college and the local community for some students resulting from the work towards the Eco Colleges' Award.
- ❑ However, there is no assessment of progress to ensure that teaching is matched to students' differing learning needs.
- ❑ The requirement to report to parents on students' progress in citizenship is not fully met.

Commentary

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

89. Standards are high in some aspects, such as the work in care homes, and the students' knowledge and understanding of voting systems in the 19th century, part of their work in Year 9 history. However, a small minority of students in different year groups show limited personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others. The absence of a formal assessment system makes it difficult to ensure that students cover all of the required learning.
90. There were no significant weaknesses in the lessons seen, and the strengths of the teaching and learning are:
- teachers' effective use of questions to encourage students to make and justify their choices about preferred lifestyles;
 - staff make the work interesting and relevant to the students' needs;
 - deliberately controversial statements secure a very positive response from the students in discussion;
 - effective group work involves all students, including those who are reticent, and gives group leaders clear responsibilities;
 - there is rigorous scrutiny of moral viewpoints by both students and teachers;
 - concluding, plenary activities that effectively review students' learning, including their personal development;
 - there are carefully planned, valuable opportunities for students to learn important ideas about citizenship in some history lessons.

Curriculum leadership

91. New management for PSHE and citizenship is providing purposeful, well-informed leadership based on a clear vision for the development of the courses. Very good improvement in curriculum planning is already evident. The improvement of PSHE and citizenship is rightly a college priority for development. All subjects have identified how they contribute to the development of students' knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship. The college's Health Promoting School award is linked closely to students' learning in PSHE about healthy eating, the environment, and sex and relationships education. Year 9 students are working with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to develop a nature trail and improve the college's environment. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. The college has maintained its good provision for PSHE, and has made a satisfactory introduction of citizenship into the curriculum.

As part of the work in citizenship, during the spring term 2003, over 100 students in different year groups took part in and evaluated a community-based project.

The students were trained by experts from the community to work in four residential care homes to improve the well-being of their elderly residents. The project was planned in collaboration with Amber Valley Primary Care Trust. The training equipped the students to provide dance, art, music and alternative therapies for the residents. Other students designed and made resources that were used on visits to the care homes. The students worked with the residents throughout the spring term when about 25 visits were made. At the end of the project, the evaluation process involved all participants including the residents, trainers, students and residential home staff. Both the college's staff and students learnt a great deal through the project, although the staff had not anticipated the wide range of issues they would have to deal with during the visits. A student commented: 'I felt awkward sometimes, especially when certain people wouldn't join in and made it difficult. After the visits, I felt a sense of achievement and did enjoy taking part, especially when I got good feedback from the clients.' An elderly resident commented: 'The choir was the best hour I've heard for a very long time.'

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eleven 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 table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Art and design	6	100.0	90.0	33.3	42.7	38.3	39.0
Biology	9	100.0	81.6	11.1	33.2	32.2	33.2
Business studies	5	100.0	89.1	0.0	31.7	28.0	35.4
English literature	7	85.7	94.4	14.3	37.9	30.0	38.9
General studies	18	50.0	78.6	11.1	25.7	16.1	30.0
Mathematics	9	88.9	74.2	11.1	34.3	24.4	31.3
Other social studies	10	50.0	83.2	0.0	32.5	14.0	33.6
Physics	5	100.0	82.0	40.0	36.2	40.0	34.3

Level 3 GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Art and design	9	100.0	96.1	55.6	48.7	88.9	85.1
Biology	10	100.0	91.6	10.0	36.3	72.0	74.1
Chemistry	9	100.0	94.0	33.3	45.9	80.0	81.1
Drama	7	100.0	98.1	42.9	41.5	82.9	82.9
English language	18	100.0	98.3	33.3	36.5	78.9	80.1
English literature	10	100.0	98.5	50.0	43.7	88.0	84.3
General studies	34	94.1	90.1	20.6	29.1	63.5	69.3
History	10	100.0	97.1	40.0	41.0	84.0	81.2
Mathematics	13	100.0	93.3	61.5	52.2	95.4	84.7
Other social studies	15	100.0	94.3	40.0	38.9	82.7	77.7
Physics	8	100.0	92.8	37.5	42.8	87.5	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English language, English literature and French.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and convey it well to the students.
- Students develop into independent learners through group discussion, research and presentations to the class.
- A good range of A-level courses enables students to build on their strengths and interests.
- Students like their English studies and show a very positive attitude.
- A few students are not always drawn into class discussions, so they are less challenged to form and justify their opinions.

Commentary

92. In 2002 the results in both A-level English language and English literature were average. Over time the language course has become increasingly popular, and performance in the subject has improved. Results in literature have been consistently at the national average. In relation to their prior attainment, students achieved better than expected in 2003.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

93. Standards seen during the inspection reflected recent performance in examinations. Most students are articulate and work together well in group and paired discussion. They listen to each other's ideas with respect. In language they use linguistic terms accurately and the more capable students make appropriate references to research by Chomsky, Piaget and Skinner. They make perceptive commentaries on the development of language in early childhood. In their original writing they recognise and reproduce different levels of formality. Those studying literature produce well-structured essays that make close reference to the text to support their points. They show good understanding of the themes and characters in a wide variety of books from Shakespeare to Margaret Atwood. A small number of students do not analyse the text in sufficient depth, or make the best use of quotations. Students have a high regard for both English subjects, often studying them in conjunction with other related subjects such as media or theatre studies. They value their English course for its interest, usefulness and enjoyment. They respect their teachers and appreciate the guidance they receive.
94. The teaching of English is good because:
- using their very good subject knowledge and skilful questioning, teachers extend the students' thinking and draw out more complex thoughts;
 - students test out their ideas in pair and group discussions, and respond well to the discipline of organising and presenting their responses to the class, often using visual aids;
 - relationships are very positive, and in most lessons there is a good level of involvement;
 - in a few lessons, however, the more reticent students are not sufficiently encouraged to develop and articulate their own viewpoints.

Curriculum leadership

95. Teachers who share the teaching of groups show good awareness of the whole programme of study and track the progress of individual students closely. Resources produced by the department are of good quality and enhance students' understanding, for example an anthology of texts with differing levels of formality. Assessment is regular and detailed and

students are given a clear picture of how they can improve. For some classes, however, the distribution of lessons is unsatisfactory, with the odd single period being too short for any useful activity. Examination results and the quality of teaching have improved since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

96. Students' communication skills are above average, and enable them to cope well with the requirements of AS- and A-level courses.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations and good knowledge of students' needs are ensuring good progress.
- Very effective monitoring of students' work means that teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Standards are improving because good leadership and management are leading to a clear focus on achievement.
- Students' oral skills and confidence are not secure enough.

Commentary

97. Numbers of students entered for examinations in French have been very small over the past few years and results have been inconsistent but generally below average. They were below average in 2002.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

98. Students achieve well compared with their GCSE performance. They practise and use a wide variety of tenses, improve their knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and develop good listening skills. However, they lack oral confidence and find it difficult to produce sustained oral responses. While higher attainers are relatively confident orally, average and below average attaining students find oral expression difficult. Standards of work seen are better than the examination results because new leadership in the department is ensuring that there is a strong focus on raising standards.
99. The significant features of the teaching are:
- high expectations by teachers are leading to improved performance by students;
 - very good monitoring of students' work, especially in Year 13, means that teachers are well aware of students' strengths and weaknesses and are able to target individual needs;
 - very good working relationships between students and teachers lead to students being very committed to their work;
 - good resources, combining authentic texts with effective support materials, help maintain the ethos of challenge within a supportive environment;
 - teachers do not encourage students to use French as the normal means of communication in lessons.

Curriculum leadership

100. This is a very effective team with a clear vision for the future. There is very good evaluation of examination results and good planning which is leading to improved performance. There has been good progress particularly in the last two years. However, the lack of a foreign language assistant limits opportunities for oral practice and there is not enough emphasis on oral skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ The head of department provides an excellent role model for teaching.
- ❑ Very high expectations are set which help to raise standards and students' achievement.
- ❑ The teaching demands high levels of independence and participation of students.
- ❑ Very good academic guidance leads to effective support for individual students.
- ❑ Insufficient use of software and ICT applications restricts the development of aspects of the subject.

Commentary

101. Results in A-level mathematics in 2002 were well above average with a good proportion of the highest grades. Students achieved better than expected on the basis of their attainment at GCSE. At AS-level, results are not quite as good but still above the national average. In 2003, the results were again high. Over time, results have been well above average with boys being more consistent than girls, whose results fluctuate. The numbers that take further mathematics A-level are very small and this makes comparing the very good results unreliable.

Achievement	very good
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	both very good

102. Students in Year 13 show advanced algebraic skills, an ability to generalise and a well-developed understanding of proof. They also sometimes appreciate elegance and sophistication in solutions they produce and are highly competent in using analytical skills and deductive thinking.
103. Teaching has the following features:
- very high expectations for students to develop considerable independence in how they learn;
 - challenge, rigour and pace deepen students' understanding and raise their achievement;
 - highly competent, searching and open questioning ensures that students fully participate in lessons;
 - students develop very good attitudes, respond enthusiastically, and discuss their ideas with the teacher or with each other, thus helping them make very good progress;
 - at its best, a lesson involves students making rapid progress because of the teacher's highly skilful orchestration of contributions and answers, so that any derived result is almost exclusively produced by students.

Curriculum leadership

104. The leadership and management have a positive influence on how students are taught and learn. Targets set for results have almost always been met or exceeded except for the recent A-level pass rate. Assessment is effective, and monitoring of teaching also contributes to raising standards. There is particularly effective use of resources. However, insufficient use is made of ICT, which prevents students accessing powerful methods that lead to greater mathematical insight.

Mathematics across the curriculum

105. Students are very well equipped with a range of mathematical skills and use them confidently to help them make good progress in other subjects. They show well above average competence; for example in physics when drawing graphs and working with vectors, in

chemistry when calculating atomic mass and chemical equilibrium, and in art and design when working with scale and perspective.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on biology, chemistry and physics.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New high quality teaching plans include scientific and key skills and students learn well.
- Leaders are very well informed about teaching methods and this leads to improvements in teaching and standards.
- Records of marks are used well to support students and set targets for them.
- ICT is not used often enough and opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning are missed.
- Unsuitable rooms and lesson lengths have a limiting effect on students' learning.

Commentary

106. A-level results were broadly average in 2002; AS-level results were well above average, and in 2003 all gained a grade, some, the highest grades. However, in 2003, students did not gain the grades predicted using their GCSE performance and their progress was unsatisfactory. In the 2003 AS-level examination students did better than was predicted and their progress was good. Most students complete their AS- and A-level courses.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both very good

107. Students' understanding of glycosidic links is good, but limited by the accommodation that makes it impossible to carry out practical and research activities. Students evaluate and present data about sand dunes very well. Their understanding of the ornithine cycle is very good and they have the good practical skills needed to carry out food tests.
108. There are real strengths in the teaching.
- Teachers use a variety of problem-solving and research activities so that students become confident learners.
 - Demanding exercises on interpreting data are used to extend learning.
 - On occasion, the pace and demand of a lesson is too slow.
 - Marks and test results are used very well to identify students who need extra help and support is very good.
 - Lessons incorporate demanding opportunities for students to acquire study skills and improve their literacy.
 - The impediment to learning caused by the lack of opportunity for students to use ICT is now resolved by the arrival of new equipment.

Curriculum leadership

109. Current students are achieving better in the work seen than is suggested by recent examination results. This is a consequence of additional staff and because the new leadership has a clear vision about how to raise standards through improving the teaching. Numbers have risen because good teaching and information make it attractive. However, there are not enough laboratories, and small unsuitable classrooms are barriers to learning because teachers

cannot use the teaching methods they judge to be most effective. Some unsuitable lesson lengths prevent students reaching high levels of understanding because the lesson is too short. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Chemistry

Provision for chemistry is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Teachers' excellent knowledge of their subject together with demanding teaching leads to very good achievement and sustains interest.
- ❑ Inspiring leadership is founded on a well-informed view about improving teaching.
- ❑ Records of marks are used well to support students and set targets for them.
- ❑ ICT is not used often enough and students miss opportunities to learn independently.
- ❑ Unsuitable classrooms restrict the range of activities that teachers can use.
- ❑ When students are not given enough encouragement they are less willing to ask or answer questions.

Commentary

110. Until 2001, A-level results were either very high or well above average. In 2002, they were about average. In 2003, all gained a grade, many with the highest grades. These results were higher than predicted from students' GCSE performance so that students' progress in 2003 was good. Most students complete their AS- and A-level courses.

Achievement

very good

Standards

well above average

Teaching and learning

very good

Leadership and management

both very good

111. Students have a good understanding of the reactions of amines and the practical techniques needed to demonstrate them. Students' calculations using relative atomic masses show well above average skills. Written work about chemical equilibria shows that literacy skills and understanding of these demanding ideas are very good.
112. There are real strengths in the teaching.
- Demanding teaching about hydrogen bonds leads to good achievement, but use of a classroom because there are not enough laboratories prevents teachers from demonstrating some of the features of water.
 - Highly demanding teaching leads to a high level of explanatory discussion by students.
 - Very thorough teaching about ionisation energy prepares students well for examinations.
 - Very good subject knowledge and clear explanations ensure that students make very good progress.
 - Sometimes students need more encouragement to improve their confidence, at other times they are very willing to ask and answer questions.

Curriculum leadership

113. Thorough records are used to identify students whose progress should be better. Very good support in the form of counselling sessions and extra teaching sessions are used to help them. Students know their targets and have good opportunities to discuss them with teachers. Leaders have very well-informed views about how to improve teaching and standards and succeed in doing so. Management in the form of very thorough plans for teaching is very good, the plans emphasise opportunities for research or presentation by students and include teaching literacy and numeracy skills. Numbers studying chemistry are increasing because teachers ensure that students are well informed about the subject. ICT is not used often enough but new equipment has arrived recently. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Physics

Provision for physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very challenging and promotes learning very well.
- Teachers' expectations are high and students work hard and are very interested in learning.
- Raising standards by improving teaching is done very well.
- ICT is not used often enough and students miss the opportunities for independent learning it provides.
- There is a shortage of equipment for practical work and some unsuitable rooms are used for teaching physics; this limits the range of teaching activities that can be used.

Commentary

114. A-level results in 2002 were above average and AS-level results were well above average. In 2003, all gained a grade, many the high grades. However, in 2003, most did less well than was predicted using their GCSE grades so that their progress was unsatisfactory, AS-level results were very close to students' predicted grades and their progress was satisfactory. Most students complete their AS- and A-level courses.

Achievement

very good

Standards

well above average

Teaching and learning

very good

Leadership and management

both very good

115. Students' understanding of electromagnetic induction is well above average: they understand work about vectors, and calculations of acceleration and velocity are done accurately so that numeracy skills are very good. In Year 12, achievement in a lesson about magnetism was excellent because teaching was demanding, and very good use was made of a model to explain difficult ideas about flux density.
116. There are real strengths in the teaching.
- Questions are used skilfully to ensure that students can explain Lenz's law, although lack of equipment to demonstrate the effect of the law made it more difficult for some students to understand.
 - Very good use is made of information sheets and questions to support learning.
 - Teachers encourage students well so that they work hard and have the confidence to answer difficult questions or to ask them when necessary.
 - Students learn quickly and their achievements are therefore very good.
 - The shortage of equipment for practical work and use of some unsuitable rooms limits the range of teaching activities that can be used so that some students learn slowly.

Curriculum leadership

117. Both achievement and standards in lessons are better than in recent examinations due to additions to the teaching staff and very good management strategies introduced to support students who encounter difficulties. Progress is recorded and checked thoroughly and regularly. Students know the grades they should aim for and this information is used very well to support them and ensure that progress is good. The department has a very well-informed view about how to improve teaching and is doing so. Recruitment onto courses has improved because students are well informed about physics courses and encouraged to choose them. Since the last inspection improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The advanced vocational course was not a focus for the inspection. A lesson in Year 13 was observed in which standards were average and students' achievement good. Teaching and learning are good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Students have better opportunities to use ICT in their sixth-form work than in Years 7 to 11 and show good levels of competence.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history. Two lessons in religious education and one in sociology were sampled. Standards in religious education are average and teaching is good. In sociology, students show above average standards and good achievement. The teaching and learning are good.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ❑ Good teaching methods encourage students to conduct thorough research of case study material.
- ❑ Well-planned lessons involve students actively in their learning.
- ❑ There is good use of examination exemplar material, although the criteria for high standards are not emphasised enough.
- ❑ Very good assessment arrangements ensure that students are very clear about their progress.

Commentary

118. In 2002, the number of students taking A-level was very small and it is not possible to make secure statistical comparisons. However all students gained a grade. In 2003, all students gained their anticipated grades.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

119. In Years 12 and 13, students adopt very productive attitudes to their studies and consequently make good progress through the course. Essays generally contain sufficient details from case study material because research tasks have been completed conscientiously. Higher attainers, when making presentations, show a wealth of understanding and effectively share their knowledge with the whole group, for example in an analysis of responses to the Kobe earthquake.
120. Students' interest and enjoyment are maintained by good teaching.
- Throughout Years 12 and 13, students learn well in a supportive and caring atmosphere in which learning and humour are shared.
 - Teachers use their comprehensive knowledge of the subject to provide a good range of learning activities.
 - Case study evidence is taught well so that students are able to use the material well in formulating hypotheses.

- Very good fieldwork opportunities develop students' understanding of physical and human geography.
- The evaluative and helpful comments on students' written work direct their work to improve but do not directly refer to examination criteria.
- Homework tasks extend students' learning of geography and their use of ICT.

Curriculum leadership

121. There is effective liaison between the teaching staff to ensure that students' learning is well integrated. The department has satisfactorily resourced the courses in spite of budgetary constraints.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a stimulating range of methods that involve students actively in learning.
- Results are rising.
- Thorough assessment of students' work gives them clear guidance on how to progress in their studies.
- There is scope for further development of students' research skills, making use of ICT.

Commentary

122. The number of students taking A-level has nearly doubled in the last three years. Results rose above the national average in 2001, then improved further in 2002, when all students gained a pass grade, nine out of ten gaining B or C. The 2003 results were even better; all students gained an A to D grade, half gaining A or B.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>above average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>very good</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>good</i>

123. Year 13 students show good understanding of different interpretations by scholars. Their analysis of sources is confident and accurate, although this was a relative weakness at AS-level in 2003. Students' marking of each other's answers to examination questions on historical sources is helping to heighten their awareness of what is required. However, they do not receive sufficient individual criticism of their work. Most students produce well-written essays setting out the case for both sides of an argument, with appropriate references to views of historians, and they reach sound conclusions. Their files of notes are thorough, as are their research proposals for the independent investigation.
124. Teaching is characterised by:
- clear learning objectives and a brisk pace to lessons;
 - active involvement of students in individual and group activities that require them to think critically about the topic being studied;
 - very effective use of group work, even in a class of five students, to develop skills of essay construction;
 - skilful structuring of students' learning that expects them to find information from the primary and secondary sources provided and demonstrate their understanding in group discussion.
- However, although wider independent enquiry is required in the Year 13 coursework investigation, over the two years it is not being developed progressively through research in selected reference texts and Internet sites.

Curriculum leadership

125. All aspects of advanced studies in history are managed well and teachers are committed to helping students achieve high academic standards. The strong leadership has recognised the pressure of competition for students at this level and has recruited successfully to courses. More students are taking history at A-level and achieving higher results than at the time of the previous inspection. Effective management has built upon the foundations for advanced work laid down at that time and has achieved notable success.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects in this curriculum area were a focus for the inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and media studies.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject results in a very high standard of work at A-level.
- A very clear direction is set for the department by key staff.
- Accommodation for the sixth form is not conducive to large-scale work.

Commentary

126. A-level results in 2002 were above average, extending a trend of consistently high results that continued into 2003. All students in the art and design, photography and art textiles groups passed in 2002, with art and design and photography students attaining well above national averages for the higher grades.

Achievement	very good
Standards	well above average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	very good

127. Students enter Year 12 with above average technical skills and a good knowledge of artists and cultures. In the art and design course, they further develop skills in painting, drawing or sculpture, according to their interest, and often to a very high level. Although the department's facilities for ICT are inadequate, with teachers' encouragement, some students show considerable initiative by using their own resources at home to create sophisticated imagery that they can access from the Internet in college. There is some outstanding work by higher attainers. There is no specific studio space for sixth-form students, which presents difficulties for storing and protecting work in progress and larger pieces.
128. The significant features of teaching are as follows:
- the breadth of teachers' expertise supports students in exploring a wide range of media and techniques;
 - very good individual tuition through personalised projects encourages students to take responsibility for their learning;
 - students' personal involvement leads to greater self-motivation and higher achievement;
 - the A-level courses are enhanced by frequent visits to galleries and exhibitions enabling students to research artists' work at first hand.

Curriculum leadership

129. The leadership of the department ensures a common understanding of art and design at this level that aims to develop the individuality of the students. The head of department manages the courses effectively and successfully delegates specific initiatives to the newly appointed advanced skills staff. New formats for recording students' progress are well devised and an audit of ICT in the subject reveals the significant gap between the department's aspirations and the capability of its equipment. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Results at A-level have risen from average to well above average and have subsequently been maintained at this level.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good level of equipment to support practical work and independent learning.
- The high level of expertise on offer to students helps them to learn practical skills well.
- Teaching of theoretical skills fails to deal effectively with the low standard of literacy of some students.

Commentary

130. In the AVCE Media Communication and Production examination, results were below average in 2002. Students did best on the practical and modular parts of the examination. There were no failures. Students generally did less well in the subject than in others that they took.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>below average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both good</i>

131. In the present Year 13, standards are improving, although they remain below average. Achievement in practical skills is better than in the theoretical aspects of the course. In Year 12, students' written work is weak. There is no significant difference between the achievement of male and female students.
132. The important features of the teaching are as follows:
- preparation is carefully focused on the requirements of the examination;
 - students learn well in practical lessons, where they respond with enthusiasm to the good level of knowledge and superb equipment available to them;
 - class management in practical lessons is of a high order and maximises the effective use of resources;
 - independent learning skills and awareness of good design as an important contribution to production are strong features of students' attainment;
 - students do not do as well in the theoretical aspects of the course because some of them have difficulty in dealing with the reading and writing requirements;
 - although knowledge, pace and planning are good, lessons in theory do not help students to learn through a variety of activities.

Curriculum leadership

133. Departmental management is skilful and well informed. Planning for the monitoring of teaching is well advanced. Staff are aware that the theoretical aspects of the course do not fully complement the practical provision, and must be adapted and further developed in order to raise standards further. Assessment is good, but student targets have not yet been set. The subject has been recently introduced and did not form part of the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on A-level sports studies.

Sports studies

Provision in sports studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching has real pace and effectively challenges students to learn so that they achieve well.
- Standards are improving in Year 12.
- Sports studies make a significant contribution to students' personal development.
- However, individual differences are not recognised clearly enough in teachers' planning.

Commentary

134. Results at A-level in 2002 were average and much the same as in recent years. Students taking Year 12 examinations in 2002 reached the standards expected given their previous results at GCSE. Standards in the current Year 12 are above average.

Achievement	good
Standards	average
Teaching and learning	very good
Leadership and management	both good

135. Students make good progress in lessons because they work hard and are motivated by the teaching. Students of all attainment levels do as well in sports studies as in the other subjects they study. Satisfactory skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT support students in their studies.

136. The main strengths of the teaching are:
- a very wide range of methods and materials that help students understand current issues in sport;
 - up-to-date examples from current sporting events and newspapers capture students' interest;
 - very good class discussions around current issues that make a significant contribution to students' ability to think independently;
 - very good quality questions by teachers which prompt and extend such discussions in a skilful way.

These features make clear the links between theoretical principles and practical performance and so promote very effective learning. The main weakness is that the tasks and written work set by teachers do not sufficiently reflect the range of attainment in the groups and so do not extend learning as much as they could.

Curriculum leadership

137. Improvement is good. Since the last inspection both A-level and AS-level examinations have been successfully introduced. Students report that they enjoy the courses and find them challenging. They feel well supported and have a good understanding of how well they are doing. Numbers taking sports studies courses are rising. Teachers work well together to achieve high standards and share successful teaching ideas. Results are carefully analysed to check the performance of the subject overall and improvements made where necessary.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was A-level business studies.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work well as a team and make effective use of their very good subject knowledge to support students' learning.
- Students are well motivated and their attitudes are good.
- A-level results show a rising trend.
- Not enough use is made of the information from assessments to set targets and monitor students' progress.
- It is not possible to develop a stimulating 'business-learning' environment because lessons are taught in too many different classrooms.
- Library resources are inadequate to support students' independent study.

Commentary

138. The 2002 AS- and A-level results were above average. These results were above predictions based on standards on entry to the sixth form and represent good achievement. The 2003 results are comparable with those obtained in 2002. There are no significant differences in the standards of female and male students.

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>satisfactory</i>
<i>Standards</i>	<i>average</i>
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	<i>good</i>
<i>Leadership and management</i>	<i>both satisfactory</i>

139. The strength of students' work lies in their written assignments and the steady accumulation of knowledge which is well organised in their files. This is seen, for example, in their increasing understanding of topics such as the product life cycle in Year 12 and the principles and functions of marketing in organisations in Year 13. However, they do not apply their knowledge effectively when engaged in small group discussions.
140. The significant features of the teaching are as follows:
- because teachers have very good subject knowledge and extensive working experience in large companies, they are able to provide students with clear explanations linked to practical examples;
 - lessons are carefully prepared and students respond well to the structured learning activities;
 - however, in some lessons there is too much talk by teachers and students are only passively engaged;
 - work is marked regularly and students are well informed about where improvement is needed;
 - although progress is monitored through the grading of students' work, it is not possible to identify if a student is underachieving because targets based on attainment on entry to the course are not set.

Curriculum leadership

141. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator is working hard to ensure consistency in teaching and learning. However, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is no dedicated teaching room so that lessons are taught in several different classrooms, preventing students from working in business-style surroundings. There are too few library books and not enough use is made of the library to support teaching and learning. Teachers work well as a team and are

keen to share ideas and to further improve provision in the subject. Little reference was made to business studies in the last report. Examination results have risen sharply since 1999 and this makes progress over recent years good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was on the advanced vocational course in health and social care.

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is well matched to students' needs so that they achieve well.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- ICT is not used sufficiently as a tool for learning.
- Numbers opting for the course are small and there are no male students.

Commentary

142. Comparison of students' results in 2003 with their GCSE grades shows that they achieved well. This was the first group to take the examination.

Achievement	good
Standards	above average
Teaching and learning	good
Leadership and management	both good

143. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics are secure. Years 12 and 13 students express themselves clearly and enthusiastically when discussing findings on their work experience. Those in Year 13 show higher level speaking skills and the ability to ask detailed questions. In both years, students understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care. Students' work shows good use of the Internet for research and good word-processing skills, but other ICT skills are not widely in evidence.
144. The good teaching helps students to learn quickly.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment inspire students who respond well to the challenges set for them.
 - The range of teaching methods is varied and students develop different ways of working.
 - Students make particularly good use of the opportunities offered by carefully chosen visiting speakers and work placements.
 - Assessment is well organised, with useful teacher comments on written work, so that students know how well they are doing and how to improve further.
 - Teaching promotes independent research, good working relationships and the productive use of students' time.

Curriculum leadership

145. Students and their achievement are the main priority, and monitoring of their progress is carried out regularly. Health and social care was not reported at the last inspection. A good range of courses is now offered, with good achievement at higher grades.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Personal, social and health education and general studies

Lessons were sampled in personal and social education. Standards are as expected, sometimes better. This is a consequence of the quality of teaching, which on occasion is very good and at other times satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

