

INSPECTION REPORT

HORNDEAN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Waterlooville

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116437

Head teacher: Glen Strong

Lead inspector: Grace Marriott
Dates of inspection: 12th – 16th January 2004

Inspection number: 259282

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11-19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1665

College address: Barton Cross
Horndean
Waterlooville
Hampshire
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Ann Lotinga
Date of previous inspection: March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

Horndean is a large, mixed, community and technology college near Waterlooville, in Hampshire. There are over 1600 students on roll including a very small sixth form of 32 Year 13 students. The sixth form is due to close at the end of this academic year, when the college will become an 11-16 college. Students come from a wide area and a wide variety of backgrounds; many are from advantaged homes, but a significant minority come from disadvantaged homes. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below average. Almost all students are of white UK origin and very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs is broadly average. The main areas of need are learning or behaviour difficulties. Students join the college with broadly average knowledge, skills and understanding. Their attainment on entry is not quite as good as it was at the time of the last inspection. Community use of facilities is extensive.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Horndean is an effective college providing a wide range of educational opportunities.

Standards are in line with national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, and above average in Years 10 and 11. Most students are achieving well. Teaching is good overall, particularly in GCSE classes and in the sixth form. The provision for the very small sixth form is satisfactory. Very determined leadership and management are focusing sharply and very effectively on raising standards and improving achievement. Parents and students views are mixed, but most appreciate what the college has to offer. The college provides good value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results are above average, as are current standards overall in Years 10 and 11
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and geography is very good and students achieve very well
- Some students are underachieving because of their negative attitudes to learning
- The head teacher provides highly effective leadership and his vision for the college is fully supported by a very good leadership team
- Community provision is excellent; so too is the support for other local schools through Technology College status
- Teaching is good in a wide range of subjects
- Staff turnover has had an impact in a few areas on standards and behaviour in lessons
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are generally good
- Some relatively new systems and policies are not being implemented consistently enough

The improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. Technology College status has led to major improvement in ICT and has also had a positive effect on design and technology, mathematics and science. Community links are even better and benefit the college as well as the community. Standards have risen, with a higher proportion of students achieving five or more A* - C grades at GCSE. Boys' results have improved but they are still not achieving quite as well as girls. The college has tried to improve communication with parents, with some success.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Students achieve well overall. Attainment on entry to the college is now average compared with the above average attainment reported at the last inspection. By Year 9, achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are average, though in science, design and technology, geography and ICT students achieve well and are doing better than expected. In English, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Progress and achievement are greater in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have been consistently above the national average and in 2003 were better than similar schools. The work seen during the inspection was also above average overall, which confirms that students are achieving well. Standards in geography and ICT are well above average. Achievement in English, mathematics and science is good in Years 10 and 11. Sixth form students are achieving well.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and well promoted by the college. Most students have positive attitudes to the college and their work and relationships are good. Behaviour in classrooms and around the college is good.

A small minority, mostly boys, have more negative attitudes and this is reflected in their behaviour and progress. Attendance levels are above average throughout the college.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college is providing a good education.

Teaching is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 9 it is sound overall. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic, which means that students are interested in what they learn and make good progress. Teachers manage and motivate students well so that they make good progress. The teaching of ICT and geography was particularly good, but there was some very good teaching in almost all subjects and all year groups. In a few lessons where the teaching and learning were less than satisfactory this was mainly because teachers did not match the work well enough to the students' needs or because they did not deal effectively enough with some poor behaviour. Many teachers make effective use of assessment, marking and homework to raise standards, but this is not consistent enough in all classes.

The curriculum provides a good range of worthwhile opportunities and a wide-ranging enrichment programme extends the curriculum well. The college takes very good care of its students and provides excellent careers guidance, combined with good support for personal development. The links with the community are extremely effective and contribute a great deal to the quality of education the college offers. The college works hard to maintain and develop links with parents and most respond well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are very good at all levels. The headteacher, staff and governors focus very clearly on enabling all students to achieve high standards. The college is working hard to recruit and retain high quality staff and has made a number of very successful appointments. New policies such as target setting with students and developments in assessment are promoting and supporting higher standards but are not always implemented securely enough. The commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community is very strong and the joint facilities are very well managed. Governors are very effective in their support of the college and the part they play in strategic planning. They have ensured that the college complies with all statutory requirements except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents and their children think that the college expects students to work hard and that they make reasonably good progress. A significant minority of parents and students have concerns about the impact of staffing changes on standards, teaching and students' behaviour, and parents also have concerns about the quality and consistency of information. The information for parents is good overall, but communication with parents has been affected by staffing changes. The inspection evidence indicates that college governors and staff share the parents' concerns and are working hard to recruit and retain good staff, and to improve consistency, but some parents remain to be convinced that this is the case.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to raise the achievement of those students, mainly boys, who are underachieving
- Ensure that systems and policies, for example, on assessment, marking and homework are implemented more consistently
- Ensure that all departments have the subject planning and support seen in the best departments to help staff manage behaviour effectively and minimise the impact of changes

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students

THE SIXTH FORM AT HORNDEAN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

OVERALL EVALUATION

Horndean provides a satisfactory education for sixth form students. The sixth form is very small and has not been cost-effective for some time. The closure of the sixth form is being well-managed so that current students have not suffered. Academic standards are average overall and the amount of individual attention students receive means that they are achieving well. The teaching and learning are good though the small group sizes limit the opportunities for discussion and exchange of ideas. Sixth formers can take advantage of a similar range of enrichment and extension activities as the rest of the college.

The main strengths are

- Good teaching enables students to learn effectively
- Students are mature in their attitude towards work and college activities

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. Four subjects in the sixth form were inspected in depth.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English. Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of exam requirements enables students to make good progress. German was sampled. Standards seen were above average with very good speaking and listening skills. Very good teaching provided very good support for individuals' learning.
Mathematics	Very good. Very good teaching results in very good achievement.
Science	Very good in physics. Standards are well above national averages and teaching is very good. Other sciences were sampled and students were seen achieving well in biology, human biology and chemistry.
Information and communication technology	Students' use of ICT in their studies was good though opportunities were not fully exploited in all subjects.
Humanities	Good in sociology. Standards are average overall. Students respond well to good teaching and make good progress. In sampled subjects, very good progress was evident in geography and psychology, teaching was good in history and sound in law.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Work in design and technology was sampled. Very good relationships ensure good advice and support.
Visual and performing arts and media	The photography teaching seen was providing good support for students.

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'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students have **good** access to comprehensive advice and guidance. Staff understand students' individual needs well and provide very good support. Assessment is good and helps students meet examination requirements. Marking gives clear guidance on how they can improve their work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the sixth form are good because the impending closure has not been allowed to affect the provision for current students and has been well managed.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form and enjoy it. They appreciate the quality of advice and say that the courses on offer matched their needs and aspirations. The questionnaires indicated some concerns about teaching and assessment but in discussion students were more positive. They thought they were well taught and appreciated the individual support. Inspectors agree with this more positive view.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students enter the college with **average** skills, knowledge and understanding. Achievement is **good** in Years 10 and 11, where standards are **above average**, and better than in Years 7 to 9, where it is **satisfactory** and standards are average. The higher standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are mainly due to better teaching and learning in these years. Sixth form students are achieving well overall. Technology College Status has had a positive impact on standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in ICT and geography is very good
- GCSE results in 2003 were above average overall and better than in similar schools
- Students in Years 10 and 11 and in the small sixth form are generally achieving well
- Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well
- Current students are achieving well in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9; achievement in English is satisfactory
- A minority of students have negative attitudes which at times affect their achievement and the learning of others
- The improvement in standards has been somewhat affected by staffing difficulties

Commentary

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)

1. Students make satisfactory progress between starting college and the end of Year 9. Students' results at the end of Year 9 are average compared with all schools and are in line with similar schools. English results have been broadly average in recent years except in 2001 when they were well above average. Mathematics results are above average and science results are average. When compared with schools whose students achieved similar results in Year 6 tests, English results are not as good, science results are in line with, and mathematics results are better than these schools. Overall the trend in results is very similar to the national trend. Girls have performed better than boys, but the gap narrowed significantly in 2003.

2. Standards seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 are average in most subjects and above average in ICT, science, geography and mathematics and also in design and technology, despite staffing difficulties in some aspects of this subject. In English, standards have also been affected by staffing difficulties and students are making satisfactory progress. In general, however, students are achieving well. A Year 7 ICT class made particularly good progress and showed very good achievement when making full use of the very good facilities to work on data and information sources from the college intranet.

3. Most teachers manage behaviour effectively so that students with more negative attitudes are not affecting their own education or that of others. In a small proportion of lessons, the disruptive behaviour of a small number of students, mostly boys, was not well managed and this was having an effect on their achievement and their standards of work.

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

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	33.1 (33.8)	33.4 (33,3)
mathematics	36.4 (35.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.2 (33.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 334 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

4. Results have improved since the last inspection and have been above the national average. In 2003 GCSE results improved; they were the best in the college's history. Relative to similar schools, the results were above average and show that students made good progress and achieved well. The college achieved its targets for 1 or more A*- G passes and for the average total points score, but fell just short of achieving their own challenging target for the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* - C grades.

5. Girls have shown levels of performance which have been consistently above the national average performance for several years. Results for boys are lower than those for girls but, in 2003, showed a significant increase on previous years. The college results are improving at a faster rate than the national trend. Results for science, geography, design and technology and art were particularly strong in 2003. Mathematics, music and religious education improved their results.

6. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average in ICT and geography and above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, music and religious education. Students are achieving well overall and very well in ICT and geography. In both of these subjects they make particularly good progress.

7. Most students achieve well in all subjects, although a small number, as in Key Stage 3 do less well. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is being changed for these students to try to improve their motivation. The initial indications are that this is being successful and they are making better progress.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A *-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.2 (37.1)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 338 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

8. The college has made good provision to raise the level of literacy by using learning support assistants to withdraw students for special lessons. This is having a positive effect in raising levels of literacy for those students and the general level of language use across the curriculum is above average. Speaking and listening opportunities in all subjects and extended writing for different purposes, in some, help students to improve their skills. General levels of numeracy are satisfactory. The college has not yet put the same emphasis on numeracy, however further development is planned. Students are very competent in using their ICT skills and most departments include good opportunities for students to practise these skills in their learning.

9. Students with special educational needs generally achieve well. The college is taking an increasing number of students from areas traditionally served by other schools. Although there is still a good proportion of higher attaining students on entry, an increasing number of students arrive with special educational needs. Many of these students experience difficulties with literacy skills. Several others have difficulties related to behaviour and some have specific learning difficulties related to physical disability. Their difficulties often affect their ability to make progress in other areas of the curriculum. When supported in lessons and, where appropriate, when they are withdrawn from lessons, their progress is good. It is also often good when support is not available, as teaching staff are aware of their needs and work extremely hard to ensure that tasks meet students' individual needs. The students who have statements of special educational needs also make good progress. Occasionally however, when students with emotional and behavioural problems are together in

lessons without appropriate support, they do not make enough progress and sometimes their behaviour and attitudes affect the progress of other students in the group. Gifted and talented students achieve well overall, particularly in science.

10. The college has very few students for whom English is an additional language. They are well supported and achieve at a similar rate to other students. Students at an early stage of English have one-to-one and in-class support from specialist teachers and learning support assistants. All students are offered the opportunity to take a GCSE in their home language and the success rate is very high. Good use is made of ICT to develop their language and mathematical skills.

Sixth form

11. The sixth form is due to close at the end of this academic year and, with only 32 students in Year 13, most teaching groups are very small. Results have been below average overall but improved in 2003 and were at the national average. Of the four subjects inspected in full, standards in mathematics were above average and in physics they were well above average. The small number of students in these groups have clearly had a very positive experience and are achieving very well. In other subjects, including those sampled, standards are average or above. The personal attention that these students have received means that many are achieving well relative to what might have been predicted from their GCSE results. Students have good literacy skills and also sufficient mathematical skills to solve problems accurately. The collection, analysis and display of data is well developed.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.1 (87,6)	91.5 (90,3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	36.0 (17.4)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	241.1 (219)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 45 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most students, including the sixth form, have positive attitudes to college and their work. Behaviour in classrooms and around the college is **good**. The college provides for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Attendance levels are **above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students behave well and have good attitudes to their work
- A minority, mostly boys, have poor attitudes to learning and college life
- Bullying is dealt with effectively
- Students' personal development is good as a result of the many opportunities for increasing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
- Attendance and punctuality are good

Commentary

12. Most students have good attitudes to their work and concentrate well in lessons. Overall students behave well in classrooms and around the college. Their behaviour when there was a genuine fire alarm was very good. Students are confident, friendly and courteous with visitors and happy to talk about college life and their work. They are positive in their views of the college. The small minority of students, mostly boys, who have more negative attitudes to college and their work, were disruptive and affected achievement in a few lessons where agreed procedures were not followed consistently or when teachers did not know students well.

13. Relationships overall in the college are good. Students work well together and with staff. Students from different ethnic groups are well integrated socially. Students say that, although some bullying occurs at the college, incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. The College Council enables three students from each year group to represent students' views. They respond to this opportunity with enthusiasm and maturity and work hard to make improvements in the college through, for instance, organising the introduction of a new code of conduct.

14. Students with special educational needs usually have a positive attitude to work when withdrawn from lessons to receive extra support. This is also the case in most lessons, particularly when learning support assistants provide extra help. Here they are enthusiastic and confident they will succeed because they have appropriate support and because both learning support staff and teaching staff are generally aware of students' specific needs.

15. The college promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. Students are regularly encouraged to reflect on their own and others' lives and beliefs through religious education. Opportunities for reflection in assemblies, however, were not exploited. The difference between right and wrong is clearly understood and promoted well in the college. Moral dilemmas are often discussed, particularly in history and English lessons. The short tutor times in the morning, however, restrict opportunities for moral and social issues to be discussed though the half hour session should provide a significant opportunity. A good range of cultural visits are arranged by the college and awareness and appreciation of other cultures is promoted well through art, music and dance lessons. Attendance is above the national average and most students arrive on time. The college's system for highlighting and rewarding students for regular attendance works well.

Sixth form

16. The few students in the sixth form are hard working and well motivated. They are keen to do well and appreciative of all the college has to offer them. Their behaviour is good and their attitudes to their work positive. Students are mature and speak confidently. Most students attend well and arrive punctually to lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
College data:	6.2
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
College data:	0.7
National data:	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2002-2003.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian

Exclusions in the last college year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1596	131	2
3		
17		
1		
2		
3		
10		
3		

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2		
Chinese	6		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	15		

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 college is providing a wide range of **good** educational opportunities. Teaching is good, particularly in GCSE classes. Though the sixth form is very small, the provision is satisfactory overall with much that is good, for the small number of Year 13 students currently completing their studies. The curriculum is good overall and the more flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is helping to improve students' motivation and their achievement. The college is not meeting statutory requirements for collective worship. Students are very well cared for and links with the community are excellent. The partnership between the college and parents is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall. Well over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better and almost a quarter of lessons were very good. As a result students make good progress and overall they achieve well. Staffing difficulties have had an impact in some areas but, in most subjects, teachers are working hard to overcome these. The teaching was generally best in Years 10 and 11, though some of the very best teaching was seen in Years 7 and 8. Most of the few unsatisfactory lessons were classes in the lower year groups taken by short-term supply teachers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching in geography and ICT resulted in very effective learning and students' very good achievement
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects
- Teachers work hard to develop students' vocabulary and literacy skills
- The range of teaching techniques maintains a mostly high level of interest and motivation, though in a few lessons the pace of work was too slow and the level of challenge was not high enough
- Most teachers organise their classes effectively; occasionally, where some challenging behaviour was not well managed, this took time away from teaching and learning
- Students' work is regularly marked but this does not always give them enough guidance on how to improve

Commentary

17. The strengths in the teaching are apparent in all year groups and almost all subjects. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and want to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with students. In the good and very good lessons, students are expected to think for themselves and teachers regularly challenge them to explain answers and give reasons. The questioning ensures an appropriate level of challenge for the range of students in the class. In most lessons, teachers paid particular attention to developing students' literacy skills through effective use of discussion and work on vocabulary. They also generally gave clear guidance on expectations for writing. Support for numeracy was less structured.

18. Teachers used a wide variety of methods to keep lessons moving at a brisk pace. Explanations, demonstration, discussion, teamwork and ICT were all used in different ways to motivate students to work hard and to enjoy learning. ICT is being used increasingly effectively: for example, in a Year 10 design and technology lesson, the skilful use of ICT motivated students and extended their knowledge and skills. A Year 7 geography lesson was well structured and the range of activities meant that all students achieved an understanding of coastal processes well beyond what would normally be expected for their age. They were motivated because the learning was such fun. In an excellent ICT lesson, the use of video conferencing enabled students to build very successfully on what they already knew.

19. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pace of work was slower and occasionally teachers waited for everyone to finish before moving on. Teachers did not always make their expectations for the quality and quantity of work clear enough and did not check students' understanding thoroughly enough. The level of challenge was not always accurately matched to the needs of both higher and lower attainers. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, students did not have enough time to practise and consolidate what they knew or the teacher had underestimated what they needed to know to enable them to complete the tasks successfully. In most departments the potential impact of staffing difficulties has been managed well. Good planning and support have enabled new and sometimes relatively inexperienced staff to teach effectively. However, on a few occasions, students were able to take advantage of temporary teachers who were not sure about what they should be doing and did not know the classes.

20. Assessment is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, geography, art, religious education, music, modern foreign languages, assessment and marking are good and help students to improve their work. In other subjects such as English, history, science and design and technology, the marking is more variable. Though much of it is good and teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students, some does not always give students enough guidance on how to improve. Homework is not used consistently enough in all subjects to support work in class, though in some subjects, most notably geography, this is a strength.

21. Relationships are good. In most lessons, students behaved well and teachers were able to deal effectively with any low-level disruption or lack of attention. In general girls showed better motivation than boys, particularly in lower sets. On a few occasions when behaviour was not well managed, learning was less than satisfactory, because teachers did not deal effectively enough with some disruptive boys.

22. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good in all subjects. Students' needs are well known by teaching staff. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson where there were many students with special educational needs, their needs were well known and the class teacher and teaching assistant worked extremely well together. This resulted in students making good progress. In most subjects support from learning support assistants in lessons is providing these students with very good support. In some lessons, support was not provided but good classroom teaching, involving an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources, compensated to some extent and students' progress was at least satisfactory. However there were a few lessons where work did not match the needs of students with special educational needs and others where support was inappropriate. In these situations, students made unsatisfactory progress.

23. Teaching assistants provide very good support for students and have a significant and very positive impact on the progress of students in many lessons. Many have developed some subject expertise, know the students and their specific needs very well and liaise very effectively with subject staff. Some teaching assistants also lead literacy support lessons for small groups of Year 7 students who have not achieved the appropriate National Curriculum level in English. Progress in these lessons is good as objectives are closely matched to the needs of the students and a range of teaching activities sustain their interest.

Sixth form

24. Teaching is good in the sixth form. All lessons were at least satisfactory and most were graded good or better. The strengths evident in Years 7 to 11 are even more evident in the sixth form. In the subjects inspected in depth, teaching was particularly good in mathematics and physics where the one-to-one tuition was helping students to learn very well. It was good in English and sociology. In the subjects sampled it was very good in psychology, ICT and modern languages, good in the humanities subjects, chemistry, biology, technology and sound in law. In general, the size of teaching groups meant that teachers were able to give good individual attention and this helped students to learn well and make good progress, though it also limited scope for discussion and exchange of ideas. Assessment in the sixth form provides students with good guidance on how to improve their work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 178 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactorily	Poor	Very Poor
7 (4%)	38 (21%)	77 (43%)	45(25%)	10(5.5%)	1(0.5%)	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 college provides a **good** range of worthwhile opportunities that suit the needs of the students well. The statutory curriculum is enhanced by a wide-ranging enrichment programme. The quality of accommodation and resources is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very inclusive, responsive to the varied needs of students and well planned to make learning worthwhile
- Students are prepared very well for further stages of education and collaboration with local colleges is good
- The varied programme of opportunities for learning that feed back into the curriculum is very good
- Collective worship does not meet statutory requirements
- There is as yet no co-ordinated approach to teaching and applying numeracy across the curriculum although plans are in hand

Commentary

25. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 11. Throughout the college, the curriculum is generally broad and balanced, but Year 11 students have physical education only once in the ten-day timetable. The college does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Some time should be allocated in tutor periods for students to reflect on the theme from the weekly assembly, but this is not happening consistently enough.

26. The courses for students aged 14 to 16 are well developed and give them a good range of subjects and qualifications. The system for choosing options at the end of Year 9 is good, with students and parents being given clear information on the meetings to be held and the guidance which is available. Very few students are not accepted on their first choice of option, and these options have been widened to include certificate courses in history and geography, where achievement of students is good and their self-esteem is boosted as a result. This latter system provides for lower attaining students and those who may be lacking in motivation.

27. Provision for vocational education is very good and co-ordinated very effectively. The inspection focus was on ICT and engineering; the other courses were sampled. The courses in ICT, business studies, leisure and tourism, engineering and work related learning all help to meet the

needs of students of all levels of attainment. The needs of some lower-attaining or potentially disaffected students in Years 10 and 11 are particularly well provided for by work related learning. The college provides part of this course, which is staffed by experienced teachers, in tandem with the local college. Vocational courses on a range of occupational areas are on offer, such as hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and construction together with an appropriate range of other subjects. The success of this programme can be seen in the fact that two-thirds of students go on to further education at the end of it.

28. The curriculum for the whole college has been evaluated and is currently under review, and this includes the provision for personal, social and health education, which receives input from external health promotion groups. Within this subject, students develop good discussion and reflective skills, as was evident in a Year 8 sex education lesson, based on their understanding of anger. Citizenship is a distinct component of the life skills course, but all subjects include some citizenship teaching within their schemes of work and lesson planning. Students in Year 10 and 11 participate in a half-day placement within the community for a period of a term.

29. Every effort is made to ensure that all students have access to the whole curriculum. The provision for students with special educational needs is good when students are withdrawn or when they are given support in lessons. It is also good in those lessons where teachers have worked hard to take account of individual needs. The training needs of learning support assistants are recognised and they are appropriately qualified. The provision for students learning English as an additional language is good, and they are well integrated into the college. Very good records are kept of their progress and they are well supported. Very good use is made of ICT to enhance their learning, and these students are able to take GCSE in their own language.

30. The college provides a rich and varied programme of learning opportunities beyond the classroom which feed back into the curriculum. Opportunities which have widened students' experiences have included theatre trips, a visit to the opera, a foreign exchange to Germany, an activity visit to France, a technology visit to the British Grand Prix, geography field trips and many historical trips. Gifted and talented students are also provided for, for example through a summer school based on key scientific and technological principles of forces in motion. Extra-curricular clubs are also organised on a regular basis, and these include an art club which gives students the chance to extend their skills in ceramics and a science club which offers extension practical activities and investigations. Sports clubs are also provided across several sports. The number of students participating in these activities is satisfactory.

31. The impact of the Technology College status on the curriculum has been good. The aims and objectives relating to the development plan have been carried out well, particularly in relation to the main subjects in the plan - design and technology, ICT, science and mathematics. Other subjects have also benefited from increased ICT facilities, for example music, and the impact of these on the curriculum overall has been good. The development of ICT skills in art and physical education has been more limited. A new computer club for girls has also been set up. Several areas of the college with computer facilities are available beyond college hours for students to seek help and advice from staff or to complete homework.

Sixth Form

32. The sixth form curriculum is very appropriate for the needs of the students who have remained in Year 13. The college has managed the provision well in the circumstances but these students do not have the choice that would normally be open to their age group. The very small size of some teaching groups restricts what can be provided in terms of discussion and group work. Nevertheless, students are able to enjoy similar opportunities for enrichment as those in the main college. Visitors have included speakers on developing independent learning skills and raising achievement, as well as topics related to personal issues and world wide groups, such as Amnesty International.

Care, guidance and support

The college takes **very good** care of its students and provides them with **excellent** careers guidance, combined with good support for personal development. Students are involved well in the life of the college. Health and safety procedures are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for careers education is excellent
- In most subjects, target setting is not yet specific enough to be as helpful as it should be
- Tutors and heads of year regard the welfare of students conscientiously
- Induction procedures and access to support services are good
- Management of health and safety is very good
- Students can take an active role in the decision-making of the college

Commentary

33. Most students feel that they get good support from the tutorial team. Tutorial times are short and brisk. The college is piloting extra interviews during assembly in Year 7 to enable teachers to know students better. The higher than usual number of changes in tutorial staff in some tutor groups is making it more difficult for tutors and students to build relationships.

34. For students who are having personal problems, good systems of support are available. The college has good policies in place for students' care, and in addition to the tutor and head of year, the college has a counselling service for students and close links with other agencies and professionals who provide good health, welfare, careers guidance and youth services. The procedures for logging possible concerns about students are very thorough. Child protection procedures are based on local authority guidelines and all staff have received training. New and temporary personnel are given information about the procedures.

35. The two academic review days in the year enable tutors to set targets with their students. Teachers generally monitor students' progress and work in lessons, but the use of target setting is not fully embedded. Students in Year 8 were aware of their targets, but in Year 9 they could not recall their future learning targets for individual subjects, and were therefore not sure if they were reaching their expected levels or exceeding them. In modern languages, the good target setting coupled with the rewards system had an unquestionable effect on students gaining better achievement. Students generally receive good advice from their subject teachers in lessons, except in physical education in Years 10 and 11. Marking varies in quality between subjects and practices are inconsistent, but tend to be better in GCSE years. The half-yearly reports do not indicate sufficient information on what the student needs to do to improve and reach the next stage of achievement. Student diaries are not used as effectively as they could be to provide an additional communication system between college and home.

36. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of students with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Procedures for identifying students are thorough. Although there is no formal link group, links between departments in the college and the learning support department are effective in ensuring that most staff have an appropriate understanding of the specific learning needs of those students with special educational needs. Individual education plans provide appropriate information and set useful generic targets. They are beginning to provide useful information for staff. In a minority of lessons they are now being used to set specific targets for students and to assist in monitoring progress. Liaison with primary schools is good and forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through extensive testing of students on entry. This provides relevant information which helps the college to make decisions about the level of support necessary.

37. In Years 7 and 8 some students are also withdrawn for literacy support and make good progress. Students who have significant emotional and behavioural problems may also be withdrawn to attend counselling related to anger management. This is carefully managed to ensure that their

entitlement to the rest of the curriculum is safeguarded. Information on the achievement of these students shows that most make good progress.

38. The management of health and safety is very good due to the proactive style and the consistent application of policies. The college very successfully demonstrated that the large number of students and staff could be evacuated safely from the building in an emergency.

39. The induction programme for students joining the college in Year 7 is good. The programme includes: Year 6 visits; links with subjects in primary schools; parents evenings; Year 7 'buddies'; and a transition club run by the youth worker. All ensure that transition is smooth so that students quickly become part of the college community.

40. The college has good procedures for taking students' views into account and acting on them through the college council system. This has led to students working with managers to write a new code of conduct and being involved in the staff appointment system. Despite this, some students feel that the college is not interested in their opinions.

41. The careers teaching, advice and support are excellent. All students benefit from a comprehensive programme of very well taught lessons in Year 9 and further modules in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs have additional support from an attached learning support assistant who gives specialist individual guidance to the more vulnerable students. This helps to ensure that they make the best of their achievements. The many numerous activities and events, which include work experience placements, industry days, and connexions services, provide very effective guidance to further study and careers.

Sixth form

42. Sixth form students have also had access to good quality advice and support which has helped them to decide on their future education or employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **satisfactory** and lines of communication from the college are **good**. Parents expressed understandable concerns about the high number of staff changes in the college. Staff and governors are aware of these concerns and every effort is being made to retain skilled staff. Links between the college and other education providers are **good** overall. The community is seen as a very important factor in the students' education and links are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has worked hard to foster satisfactory links with parents
- Parents receive good information about the college
- Excellent community links have been maintained
- Despite the college's efforts, some parents remain critical and dissatisfied
- Links with local colleges are very good
- Good partnerships have been established with local schools in the area

Commentary

43. Much effort has been made by the college to establish satisfactory links with parents, in particular regarding communication. However a significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction about the high number of staff changes in the college and the negative effects this has on their children's learning. Staff and governors at the college share these understandable concerns and are striving hard to recruit and retain high quality teachers. Parents are kept very well informed about the college through the newsletter 'The Network' which is issued regularly. At the time of the last inspection, parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the arrangements for consultation meetings. In response to this the college, in consultation with parents, devised a new system introducing academic review days. In a survey of parents conducted in 2002, a majority of parents said they preferred this new system. However, a significant minority of parents remain dissatisfied with arrangements for consultation on their children's progress. Parents receive two written progress reviews each year. These satisfactorily provide information on how well students

are achieving and what they need to do in order to improve. Some parents find them hard to follow and impersonal in style. The reviews do not currently comment on students' personal and social development.

44. The college brochure and governors' annual report for parents are detailed and informative. Their content meets all the legal requirements set for them. Parents' views on the college are sought through questionnaires, taken very seriously and acted upon wherever possible. Most parents are satisfied with the college's complaints procedures should they have a problem or concern. However some parents expressed concerns over time taken in responding to their enquiries. The college's Parent Teacher Association is developing very well. Regular, well-supported fundraising and social events are organised for both parents and students and useful funds are raised for extra resources. The association is also used very positively as a forum for parents to discuss college issues and new developments directly with staff and is helping to develop partnerships with parents further.

45. Community provision continues to be excellent, overseen very efficiently by the college's Community and Support Services Manager. Very good use is made of the college's facilities by all sectors of the local community. An impressive range of high quality childcare facilities, including a nursery, before and after school care and a holiday play-scheme provide very useful support to young families. A large range of courses in information technology are provided for, both at the college and also out in the local area, using the recently acquired 'technology van'. Students at the college are actively involved in many of these initiatives, for example at the weekly lunch club for the elderly where students from Year 9 help to serve food. These opportunities have a positive affect on the personal development of students. Good use is made of the local area for students take part in regular curriculum visits for instance to local theatres and places of historical or geographical interest. Very good and developing partnerships have been built up with local colleges. Links with primary schools are good. Information on students' progress including those with special educational needs are transferred efficiently and this adds to the smooth transition of new students. Teaching and support in technology are developing well but there are currently no direct curriculum links with primary schools in some areas, for example English.

46. Parents of students in the sixth form are satisfied with the education and care provided for them. Parents receive good general information on the college and its work through the regular newsletter. They are also kept satisfactorily informed of their son's and daughter's academic and personal progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The **very good** leadership and management at all levels of the college, are clearly focused on the vision of raising standards for all students. The governors are very effective in their support for the college and their contribution to strategic planning. The college evaluates its work very rigorously and uses the results of such evaluations to inform planning though at times the implementation of planned policies is not rigorous enough. There is a very strong commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community. The college is working hard to recruit high quality staff and has recently made some very successful appointments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher provides highly effective leadership and is fully supported by a very good leadership team
- The governors are very well informed, caring and committed and play an active role in promoting the vision for the college's future
- Planning for the future direction of the college is very effective
- Although most staff support the ethos and vision for the future, a small minority are resistant to change
- There are some inconsistencies in the way college policies are implemented
- The college monitors performance data very closely and uses the information gained to measure the success of teachers and the achievement of students

Commentary

47. The governors are very well informed, caring and committed. They challenge and support the head teacher and the leadership team very effectively. Governors work very closely with the college and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They regularly visit to meet teachers and attend after-college functions and in-service training. They also informally meet all newly appointed staff at a social event. Governors do not usually observe classroom practice, however, and are not attached to specific departments.

48. The governing body ensures that the college fulfils most statutory duties, including promoting inclusive policies in relation to special educational needs, race equality, disability and sex. It has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to the daily act of worship, but is exploring ways of doing so.

49. Committees have clearly designated responsibilities, which reflect governors' interests and experience. Regular briefings are given by middle managers and members of the leadership team to these committees or to the whole governing body, on the achievements of specific departments or on new policy developments.

50. The governing body has been very actively involved in identifying priorities for the future development of the college especially with regard to acquiring specialist college status. Many governors are involved at a strategic level in the formation of policy and play a significant role in shaping the college development plan.

51. The head teacher is a highly effective leader, who has made significant improvements to the college since his appointment. He and the leadership team have a very clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the college. Standards have risen and the main focus is on ensuring that all students achieve their best and that standards continue to rise. There is a very strong commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community. The strategic planning is very effective and fully reflects and supports this vision. The leadership team, year group and subject managers inspire and motivate most staff and students to give of their best, although a small minority of staff remain resistant to the change in college culture and drive for higher standards.

52. In a situation of staffing turbulence over the last few years, the head has created a very effective leadership team and most academic and pastoral teams are also now functioning very well. The members of the leadership team lead by example. They all have some teaching commitments, are visible around the college and are frequently in lessons. The head, the leadership team and almost all middle managers have a very close knowledge of teaching and learning based on frequent and consistent monitoring of classroom practice. In general the leadership at departmental level is very good. It is excellent in mathematics, geography and information communication technology. It is satisfactory in art, science and physical education.

53. The management of the college is very effective, with a clear management structure. The management of the leadership team is very good and effective procedures are in place to monitor progress in achieving college and departmental targets. The college evaluates most aspects of its work very rigorously and uses the results of such evaluations to inform planning. Occasionally there are some inconsistencies, however, in the way college policies on such matters as assessment, marking and homework are implemented.

54. The college monitors performance data very closely and uses the information gained to measure the success of teachers and the achievement of students. The systematic performance management of teaching and support staff is now valued by most staff as an important tool to enable them to improve. It is linked closely to staff development, which is comprehensive.

55. The college induction programme is very good and it enables both experienced and inexperienced staff to become familiar with systems, procedures and approaches very quickly. Very good systems also support temporary teachers, which enable them to teach effectively in most instances. The college has established good links with higher education training institutions and

provides good support and experience for trainee teachers in a number of departments. The recruitment of new staff is very well managed and over recent years the college has made some very successful appointments at all levels. Some teachers are appointed on temporary contracts, which are not made permanent unless the college is sure that the teachers are of a high calibre and fit in with the college ethos.

56. The management of support for learning is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads a large team of staff very effectively. Links with those outside the college who can help have also been effectively engaged. There is a clear policy and a very good and developing range of information for staff. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and their deployment is well organised. Procedures for the recording of the progress of individual students is good and an important factor in the good progress made by these students. Learning support assistants all have access to a range of relevant training opportunities and most are taking advantage of these and ensuring that good practice and new ideas are consistently being developed in the college. All heads of department are well informed and there is a consistent approach to students with special educational needs across all departments. A development plan for special educational needs reflects college priorities and is seen as integral to the college focus on teaching and learning. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and a named governor is well informed and supportive.

57. Because of its community and specialist technology status, the college has a complex budget. Its financial management and control are excellent. The head teacher has a very good strategic overview of financial planning and is very effectively supported by the community and support services manager and governors' finance and site committee. Governors are closely involved in financial planning, working to a well-structured timetable throughout the budget planning and monitoring cycle. They bring significant expertise to bear in both supporting the college and holding it rigorously to account. Financial administration and control are carried out in line with best practice. The latest auditors' report (March 2003) was good and the few minor points for action have been addressed.

58. The community budget is kept separate from the college budget and is overseen by a different committee. The technology college budget is administered separate from the main college budget to ensure that it is fully targeted at developing the specialist college status. The budget is planned in full recognition of priorities identified in the college's development plan. In addition to basic funding, subject departments bid for funding for curriculum development. This stimulates initiative and innovation. Although the proportion of the budget allocated to resources for learning is low in comparison to national averages, subject departments are all adequately funded. The principles of best value are fully embedded in the college's principles and practice at all levels and are applied in accordance with its Best Value statement.

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£5286850.00
Total expenditure	£5259770.00
Expenditure per pupil	£2889.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£66,412.00
Balance carried forward to the next	£27,080.00

Sixth form

59. The management of the closure of the sixth form has been very well handled to ensure that students' education has not been adversely affected by the decision and the provision in most subjects is good. The potential financial implications of the impending closure have been incorporated in budget planning with the intention of minimising their impact. The sixth form is not cost effective and has not been for some time.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The college has courses in three modern European languages as well as English and English literature. Language provision was a focus of this inspection so French, German and Spanish have all been included in the detailed subject report.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher expectations are high and students are achieving well in Years 10 and 11
- The department is very well led and is developing effective strategies for raising standards
- Assessment does not involve students and is not directly linked to the target setting process
- Students have limited access to ICT, though when available it is used well

Commentary

60. Students' standards on entry are about average, but the proportion of higher attaining students has fallen in recent years. At the end of Year 9 results are at national expectations, though with fewer very high levels (Level 7) than nationally. In 2003, the average point score in English was lower than in mathematics and science but still in line with national expectations. English results have declined over the past two years from an exceptionally high level in 2001. Results in GCSE English are above the national average and even stronger in English literature. Since almost all students are entered and most gain B or C grades, this represents good achievement and improvement over time. However, again, only a small number achieve top grades. In 2003, girls did better than boys, but the gap was narrower than in previous years, showing that strategies to improve boys' achievement are working.

61. Students' achievement in lessons is good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. Areas of weakness in writing are a focus for improvement and students respond well to detailed marking and encouragement. Independent learning is supported through well-structured lessons and, as students progress through the college, their skills as learners are developed. This leads to improvements in achievement.

62. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory overall though including both very good and unsatisfactory lessons. This judgement reflects staffing shortages to an extent, though the department is managing a difficult situation well by providing clear plans for temporary staff. Where plans are well used, teaching and learning are generally good. The teaching of high order reading skills and close analysis of the text of "Macbeth" were successful features of some lessons. In the few unsatisfactory and less effective lessons, weakness in behaviour management allowed some students to disrupt the learning of the class.

63. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, students work independently and with enthusiasm. Good relationships, high expectations and sensitive guidance support their achievement. A self-evaluation process has been introduced but it is not yet consistently used. It would help students to become actively involved in their own assessment and to take responsibility for progress towards their targets. This will further develop their independence as learners. The sharing of learning objectives, in all years, is good practice. Where it is clear, linked to previous learning and intended outcomes it is most effective and results in greater success. Good use is made of ICT but there is limited access. An interactive whiteboard, overhead projectors and Powerpoint allow teachers to engage students in varied and imaginative ways. This improves response and leads to better learning but at present not all students can benefit. Teachers use seating plans effectively to reinforce good learning. Topics and texts, with particular appeal to boys, are proving effective. In most lessons boys and girls are equally engaged and their speaking skills equally strong.

64. Leadership and management are very good. The shared purpose of raising standards and a common passion for the subject are reflected in the practice of permanent staff. Temporary teachers are supported well. The department is aware of what it needs to do to improve the achievement of all students and has begun the process. Teachers share good practice and plan together to improve learning. Issues raised in the last report have been tackled well. Improvement in English since the last inspection is good at GCSE and satisfactory in the end of Year 9 tests. Joint planning with primary schools has not yet been developed sufficiently. The department is aware of the need to support and challenge the most able and is increasing opportunities to extend and enrich their learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

65. Provision is good with strengths in some subjects. In general students have good literacy skills. In most subjects, learning is assisted by display of key words and the use of materials to provide structure for writing. Speaking and listening opportunities in all subjects and extended writing for different purposes, in some, help students to improve their skills. English, history, geography and religious education make a strong contribution by making language requirements explicit to students and clarifying what they need to do to improve. This is supported by very effective language for learning in modern foreign languages. Temporary staffing in some subjects has led to less consistent provision but, overall, the college is tackling this area with considerable success, resulting in the improvement of students' language skills over time.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French, German and Spanish is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Years 9 and 11 have improved
- Students learn willingly in response to teachers' high expectations
- Some teaching does not focus sufficiently on learners and their differing needs
- Leadership and vision in the subject are very good, supported by a stable and enthusiastic staff
- The department does not have enough ICT resources to give students better access to new technologies for learning
- Visits to Germany and France make a good contribution to students' social and cultural development

Commentary

66. Teachers' assessment of students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the average reported nationally. This was a significant improvement on 2002 figures. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average in higher-ability groups but average overall. In 2003, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* - C was above the national average in French and below in German. In both languages, results improved on 2002 figures and students also did better in languages in relation to their other subjects. Boys did less well than girls by about the same margin as that found nationally. Standards in the current Year 11 are broadly average in French and Spanish, but have improved to above average in German.

67. Students' achievement and progress in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory and good in Years 10 and 11. Their listening and speaking skills tend to be strongest and the most able write effectively on topics of personal interest, including imaginative work. In Year 7, they have made a good start in Spanish, which was introduced as a parallel first language to French last year. Year 10 and 11 students write well on topics such as health, diet, holidays and leisure time. The majority of students make less progress in Year 8, as do those in lower ability sets in Year 10. This is linked in part to a lack of opportunity to consolidate their learning through written reinforcement. Year 10 and 11 students who began Spanish and German late make good and sometimes very good progress.

68. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The most effective lessons are well planned, proceeding at a good pace with a variety of activities based on all language skills. Teachers have high expectations and provide very good models of the language studied, often using original resources tailored to course requirements and students' needs. Students learn well in response to the good teaching, especially when active strategies such as surveys and information-seeking are employed in lessons. Overall, they have positive attitudes to languages and learn willingly. Teaching was less effective, notably in the small minority which were unsatisfactory, where the needs and capabilities of learners were not sufficiently considered. New material was insufficiently practised, tasks were not clear and students were placed in challenging situations without support. Students' work is assessed in detail and National Curriculum levels are being increasingly used to provide them with clear goals and targets.

69. In the last year, staffing has stabilised and this, with very good leadership and vision in the department, has contributed strongly to the improvement in standards. The department is well managed, with an appropriately focused development plan and a good, delegated management structure which involves the whole team. Good progress is being made with new schemes of work, though elements such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship should be more explicitly featured. The well-established link with Germany and visits to France, some in collaboration with other subject areas, make a good contribution to students' social and cultural development. Resources for learning are up-to-date, but the department needs more ICT resources to give students better access to a broader range of opportunities for learning. Library provision is satisfactory, but underdeveloped in Spanish. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall but, with the current team in place, the department has a good capacity for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership and management provide the structure for success and the teachers respond with dedicated hard work
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 have improved significantly and achievement is good in all years
- Assessment procedures are used well to inform both teachers and students of the progress made and provide realistic but challenging targets
- The impact of interactive white boards is good but needs further development to maximise their potential to improve learning
- The college has planned but not yet introduced a policy to co-ordinate the use of numeracy across the curriculum

Commentary

70. Results at the end of Year 9 in the national tests in 2003 were above the national average. The trend in results is rising at the same rate as the national trend with no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. Results are above average based on their performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Results of the GCSE examinations in 2003 were also above the national average and have arrested the fall in results in 2002.

71. The work in Year 9 seen during the inspection week is above the expected national level. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are at the national level. However the attainment of students on entry to the college has fallen in recent years. Consequently students in Years 7 to 9, including students with special educational needs, achieve well. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is above and, for very high attainers, well above national standards. For example, higher attaining students use sine and cosine rules to solve problems and they draw a graph of the sine function. Achievement therefore is good with no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or students with special educational needs.

72. Teaching is good overall with teaching in Years 10 and 11 better than in Years 7 to 9. The older students are more actively engaged and have a greater motivation to achieve well. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and a quarter of the lessons were very good. Good lessons had challenging work, were structured effectively, and delivered with interest at a suitable pace to involve students at every stage. For example, a lower attaining group in Year 8 were met on entry to the room with a task to start the lesson that interested them. They worked under close, enthusiastic direction from the teacher, using timed activities, on an increasingly complex series of problems developing the idea of function machines. Interactive whiteboards are now used in many lessons adding another dimension to the variety of teaching and learning techniques seen. Students react positively to them. Year 9 students, many with special educational needs, are able to move co-ordinates defining the position of a point in four quadrants. Further development in the use of these boards is needed to increase their impact on learning. The three-part lesson is established but starter activities are not always as imaginative as they could be and the plenary does not always assess the effectiveness of the learning in the lesson. Assessment procedures are effective. Test results are recorded on a database and analysed to identify underachievement and monitor the effectiveness of the learning in each topic.

73. The department is managed well with the leadership exemplary. Strong educational vision is aimed at introducing and improving strategies to raise attainment and also to raise the status of and generate interest in mathematics. The GCSE statistics course provides very high attaining students with additional challenge and there are different courses to suit the different abilities of the students. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been rewritten and contain links to ICT but they do not identify opportunities to allow mathematics to contribute more fully to the students' personal development.

74. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. The issues raised have been addressed. Teaching has improved and work is matched to the students' ability. Interactive whiteboards, now located in every room, are used very effectively by teachers, and there is a designated ICT suite.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. The National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place. However the college does not yet have a policy for co-ordinating the use of numeracy across all areas of learning. Such a policy is planned as part of the college's in-service training programme later this year. Students' numeracy skills are developed in many subjects with display and analysis of data particularly strong in science geography and ICT. Students have satisfactory mathematical skills and the techniques to undertake calculations successfully.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average at GCSE, with higher attainers achieving very well
- Some lower attaining students have little interest in learning which affects what they can achieve
- The lessons are very well planned and follow set agreed procedures
- The department now has a team of well-qualified specialist teachers
- Teaching and learning are not monitored consistently enough across all classes

Commentary

76. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above the national average. These results have remained above average since the last inspection. The results at GCSE were well above average and have been improving over the past few years.

77. The standards seen in lessons are above average in Years 9 and 11. The students enter the college just below the national level in science and make good progress through Years 7 to 11. The

achievement overall is good, especially for higher attaining students who gain the highest grades possible at GCSE. These students are producing reports on their investigations into enzyme activity that are detailed, accurate and demonstrate their extensive scientific knowledge. They are achieving very well because they have very good attitudes to their learning. Some lower attaining students are underachieving because they do not share the same level of interest or motivation. Students with special educational needs achieve well due to the good support and guidance given by their teachers and learning support staff when present.

78. The teaching and learning are good overall. The best teaching was seen with the higher attaining students. In these classes, the teachers share a good relationship with the students and this allows them to concentrate on the teaching and learning. An example of this was in a biology lesson where the teacher set challenging tasks regarding the role of insulin. It engaged all the students who responded in a very positive manner. However, the attitude to learning of some lower attaining students, especially boys, was not as good and teachers had to spend more time managing behaviour and ensuring that students were attentive and involved.

79. Lessons are very well planned and involve a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. All lessons follow the same set procedures that ensure consistency between teachers. The use of computers is now an integral part of many lessons for the majority of teachers. The extra funding available from the technology college budget has enabled the department to increase very significantly the ICT resources and most staff are confident to use them in lessons.

80. The management of the department is good. The issues raised by staff turnover have been managed well and relevant and well-planned new courses have been introduced. After several years of staff turnover there is now a team of well-qualified specialist teachers who are well supported and work together in a very cooperative manner. An effective team of technicians ensure that the resources for all lessons are available and are part of the effective planning. The direct monitoring of teaching and learning has been limited. However, the department is now in a good position to concentrate more on the learning strategies employed and to raise standards further through taking effective action, particularly where there is underachievement. The improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Very good teaching leads to consistently very good learning and achievement
- Excellent leadership ensures that high expectations for learning are maintained
- A very good scheme of work ensures that the National Curriculum requirement is met for all students throughout the college
- Equipment and facilities are very good

Commentary

81. In the end of Year 9 tests, students are achieving results that are above the national average. In 2003, at the end of Year 11, just over half the students entered for GNVQ assessments. They achieved results that were in line with the national average. The rest of the students did not take an ICT examination. Now all the students in Years 10 and 11 study for a formal qualification. From the observation of lessons and the analysis of students' work the current standards are now above national expectations throughout the college. This is a substantial improvement since the last inspection. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

82. Many students start in Year 7 with average standards in ICT. By the time they have reached the end of Year 9 their very good achievement is reflected in their improved level of skills, knowledge and understanding. This achievement is maintained as students work towards GCSE and vocational qualifications in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented students achieve equally well, as there are

many opportunities for them to extend their studies. Students with special educational needs also achieve well because the lessons are planned to meet their needs and the teachers ensure that they receive the extra help they need in lunchtime and after-college sessions. The majority of students always work to the best of their ability. They are increasingly confident students who clearly enjoy their studies. These qualities and the very good teaching give rise to very good learning.

83. The teaching is very good throughout the college. Some excellent teaching was seen, for example when Year 11 students were producing a flow diagram to sequence the processes towards creating a customer-tracking database. The teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement focused and maintained the students' attention. In another Year 11 class, students were spellbound as they participated in a three-way video conference. Humour is used appropriately and well to add further enjoyment of learning. A wide range of teaching resources is used very effectively to support learning. All the teachers use interactive whiteboards skilfully and to very good effect to enhance learning. High expectations are all pervasive. Leadership and management are excellent. Very good schemes of work have been produced and the department makes full use of the very good facilities and equipment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. ICT is being used increasingly effectively in most subjects. Teachers are identifying a range of opportunities which are extending students' knowledge of the use of different applications and programs and contributing to the good standards achieved. Work has been particularly successful in design and technology, science, mathematics and music, where the use of ICT is well integrated into teaching and learning. In English and art, departments have limited access to ICT and are not yet exploiting its potential as much as they could.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision for geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond enthusiastically to the challenging teaching and all achieve well
- Excellent leadership of the department is supported by a committed team of teachers
- Students have the skills necessary for independent learning
- Very good marking tells students how to improve their work
- Positive relationships encourage students' confidence and participation in lessons
- Students ICT skills are not used enough

Commentary

85. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national expectation and examination results at the end of Year 11 were well above the national average in 2003 with boys outperforming girls. Students did better in geography than all other subjects.

86. Year 7 students have the skills and enthusiasm necessary to make progress. They achieve well during their first three years in the college. By the end of Year 9 they can express their very good knowledge and understanding of the places and themes covered, using the correct terms and have a very good range of skills. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson when students traced the economic rise of Japan between 1945 and 1990. Students with particular learning needs, including the gifted and talented, make similarly good progress as teachers know them well and tailor the work to meet their needs. This was also evident as lower attaining students in Year 11 achieved a good understanding of how tourism could result in the exploitation of less economically developed countries.

87. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well and standards are well above the level expected at this stage. Their written work shows a very good knowledge and understanding of the topics covered and an ability to interpret maps and diagrams. For example, they could explain how processes combine to result in demographic change or assess the impact of counter-urbanisation

on the local area. Year 10 students produce coursework of a very good standard, following well-organised fieldwork and making very good use of their subject skills.

88. Teaching is very good and students learn very effectively. Lessons were well planned and moved at a brisk pace so students produced a good quantity and quality of work. Planning enabled students to build upon existing knowledge to extend their understanding. Teachers used their very good subject knowledge to enrich lessons with good examples and make links with other topics. An outstanding feature was that teachers used their knowledge of learning to include a wide range of activities. In a Year 7 lesson on coasts, this meant that not only were all students catered for and achieved an understanding of processes not usually expected until Year 10, but were motivated because the learning was such fun. Students take responsibility for their learning using the skills developed in each year. Assessment information is used to match work to the needs of the students and to monitor their progress. Target setting is having a marked effect on the progress of students in Years 7 and 8. Marking is thorough and shows students how to improve their work. Teachers apply, most effectively, strategies to develop literacy and number skills. Difficulties of access limit the opportunities for students to practise their ICT skills.

89. The teaching and learning does much for students' personal development and citizenship. Relationships are very positive. Students' contributions are valued so they are confident and willing to ask as well as answer questions. Teachers invariably challenge them to explain answers and give reasons. Homework supports learning and is set regularly.

90. Leadership of the department is excellent. Enthusiastic and informed management, together with support by team members, has resulted in good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning is monitored thoroughly, as line management is very effective. This team has both the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

History

Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Underachievement was evident in some of the results in 2003
- Good leadership and management has identified a clear plan for raising students' achievement
- Good monitoring has begun to develop students' learning, by assessing the impact of teaching styles
- The majority of students are well involved in lessons because of the very thorough planning
- Further work is needed to share the good practice within the newly formed team, to motivate the few students who are disruptive

Commentary

91. Results of teacher assessment for students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. 2003 GCSE results were below national average, with boys underachieving significantly. Standards of work in the present Year 9 are average. Students enter the college with knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject which are close to expectations for their age. They make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactorily in Years 7, 8 and 9, particularly in their understanding of chronology and causation. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE groups' standards are average. Most students achieve well, given their skills in the subject at the start of their course, mainly due to careful target setting and improving teaching strategies. Most can use a variety of source materials to solve problems and when writing about or discussing historical issues they develop theories that they can justify. The students with special educational needs make good progress and those who are involved in the Certificate course achieve well.

92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the more successful lessons, good planning provides students with a variety of well thought out challenges including work on citizenship. In a lesson on the Great Fire of London, students learned very well by working together to solve problems. The teacher's high expectations led to very good response. As a consequence, the

students achieved very well and thoroughly enjoyed exploring whether the fire was 'a blessing in disguise'. Good research has been undertaken into students' learning styles. This has led to practical sessions, such as a visit to a First World War trench site, being developed. This enabled students to learn well about the causes and consequences of fighting on the Somme. Where lessons were less successful, a significant number of students did not complete tasks, because they had limited understanding of the historical context. They underachieved as a result. Unsatisfactory response by a small number of students also hindered learning occasionally.

93. Assessment and marking are satisfactory. In GCSE lessons, the teaching of examination technique strengthens students' knowledge of how marks are awarded. They are given clear targets and know what they must do to raise their grades. Good quality assessment tasks are now available in Year 9 work. However, there is a need to ensure that all students are gaining the full benefit of these new systems and receiving regular feedback.

94. The leadership and management are good. The new team has worked very hard to ensure that the department is progressing. Although results are not as good as at the time of the last inspection, the monitoring of learning and the development of new teaching approaches to address students' varied learning styles are beginning to raise standards. The thorough analysis of results and the resultant changes in programmes of study have also begun to raise students' achievement, particularly that of boys taking GCSE. The need to ensure that the good practice is fully shared is a priority. The development work is strong and this is well supported by senior managers. Improvement has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well gaining good results at GCSE in 2003
- Students generally learn well because they are challenged and interested by good teaching
- A minority of students do not respond with interest even to good teaching and do not achieve as well as they could
- Leadership has a very clear vision of how to improve further the achievement of students
- Most students have positive attitudes towards their work and generally enjoy the challenge in lessons

Commentary

95. Results in teacher assessment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. GCSE results in 2003 were above average with students achieving well. Present Year 9 students have average religious knowledge, skills and understanding for their age. The majority are beginning to ask questions about the affect of religion upon important issues in their own lives. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieve well, developing their knowledge and understanding of religious ideas.

96. In Years 10 and 11, students' work is above expectation for their age in GCSE lessons. They are achieving well, given their abilities in the subject when they start the course. Students following core RE lessons achieve well. Students' behaviour is good and this enables the teachers to create a positive learning environment. In GCSE work, the encounter with moral dilemmas such as euthanasia and abortion makes students think about their own views and analyse those held by faith groups.

97. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers' skilled questioning enables students to develop good understanding of why religious believers might hold very different opinions. In the most successful lessons, students learn very well because they are well challenged to develop, discuss and challenge ideas. Students are often encouraged to take control of their own learning. A Year 9 council of enquiry into the future of religion in Britain was particularly successful. Students learned very well having organised their own debate. They identified the key issues, drew very good

conclusions and showed that they had listened respectfully to the views of others. Very good opportunity for spiritual development was successfully created in Year 8 'The castle in the clouds' lessons. Good teaching about marriage and divorce, abortion and euthanasia was very well planned and provided lots of relevant activities that challenged the students and made them think about key decisions they may face in their lives. Good use is also being made of ICT in some lessons. However, students' response to the good teaching was occasionally lacklustre and they did not achieve as highly as they might have in some lessons.

98. Assessment procedures are very thorough and help students to gain a good idea of the level at which they are working. Evidence of targets is well recorded in students' exercise books. The marking is generally good and tells students how they can improve their work. However, feedback on how to do better is not given regularly enough for some students, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9.

99. The leadership and management of religious education are very good. There is a very clear vision of how the department can be further developed. The commitment and hard work of the specialist team is very evident. The monitoring of the effect that teaching has upon students' learning has developed well and good practice is shared more fully within the team. The high commitment to raising boys' attainment and the very good developmental work on the GCSE programme are significant factors in moving the department forward. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Results remain above the national average and are rising. Students are achieving well in all age groups. Students with special educational needs now achieve as well as their peers. The new GCSE double short course is encouraging more boys onto the course.

TECHNOLOGY

The department offers a full range of GCSE product design courses in resistant materials, graphics, and food technology, as well as textiles design, engineering and electronic systems design.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above average overall
- Teachers have established very good relationships with students that promote good behaviour
- Very good leadership has ensured effective teamwork and a raising of standards
- Teaching of computer-aided design and manufacturing is excellent
- Undersized accommodation for textiles, poor resources in one area of the campus and staffing difficulties have had a negative impact on achievement
- Insufficient use is made of information gathered from monitoring and assessment in the planning of work

Commentary

100. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are above average overall and have increased in the last two years. Girls do better than boys in these assessments. GCSE results at A* - C were above average overall in 2003. Boys and girls have also done less well compared with other subjects. Girls have also done less well than boys in the last two years compared to the national average. This can be linked to changes in staffing, and recruitment difficulties, which have particularly affected the achievement in food and textiles, the two areas more often taken by girls. The strongest area of technology is currently resistant materials where improvement has been significant.

101. Students have varied previous experiences in technology when they start in the college. By the end of Year 9, their achievements are above the average because of the opportunities to apply the use of computer-aided design and manufacturing. Standards and achievements are below average and weaker in food and textiles because of staff recruitment difficulties and poor accommodation and resources. The lack of ICT access is also affecting the standards of work in graphics. The standards of GCSE work are above average. The new facilities including a new food

room are accelerating the raising of achievement. However, students studying food, textiles and graphics have suffered from the staffing difficulties and resourcing issues.

102. Teachers provide for students with special education needs very well, but the use of assistants is limited. This affects the achievement of groups that have higher numbers of students with special educational needs. In all lessons, the standards of behaviour and attitudes are never less than satisfactory and in many lessons good because students enjoyed the subject, and teachers had established very good relationships.

103. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good, but also some that is unsatisfactory as a result of staffing difficulties. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, have embraced new teaching strategies and made very good use of the new technologies. This is having a positive affect on raising standards and making students eager to learn. Very good relationships help teachers to manage potentially challenging behaviour. The marking of work in these years does not indicate to the student what needs to be done to reach the next stage of achievement. Some weaknesses and inconsistency were also seen when teachers did not have strategies for students who forgot to bring their work and practical materials. For some students, the timetabling arrangements mean that they have four different teachers. Homework did not feature strongly in the observed lessons. GCSE teaching and learning are good, with more evidence of the strengths seen in some of the lessons for younger students. Marking and assessment are better. Some outstanding teaching was seen as for example in this Year 10 lesson:

Example of outstanding practice

The teacher approached the topic from the standpoint of a professional designer and the students knew that they were getting expert learning opportunities.

The lesson objectives were shared with the students using an interactive whiteboard and the teacher made it clear at the start of the lesson that the plenary would include a short test on the work covered. This kept students on their toes and focused. After an impressive demonstration of computer-aided design software, the students were directed towards independent on-line learning materials that enabled them to develop new skills. The teaching seamlessly switched between individual support and whole-class teaching. This was achieved by judging precisely when to make whole class teaching points, very good pace, and the skilful use of the voice, using a range of different tones with individuals and the class as a whole. After 20 minutes, all students had developed their own rendered 3D designs. In the plenary session the teacher showed the students how to extend the work further and gave them a taste of further possibilities. The

104. The leadership of design and technology is very good. There is very good teamwork and a dedication to improve. The enthusiasm and determination spills over onto students and impacts on raising achievement. The management is good, but some weaknesses are evident in the assessment and monitoring systems that are not yet sufficiently developed to be responsive and inform the planning of lessons. The development plans show that the department is fully aware of the weaknesses identified. Since the last inspection overall improvement has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were inspected in depth and the work in drama and dance was sampled. Three **drama** lessons were observed and discussions took place with departmental staff. Teaching and learning were at least **satisfactory** in the lessons seen, though teachers had to work very hard to keep some challenging Year 8 students on task. Provision is improving with a sharper focus on assessment, which is helping teachers to plan for student progress. Schemes have been rewritten and the GCSE examination syllabus changed to help students to achieve to the best of their ability. The staffing situation is now more stable and a successful after-college club, run by Year 11 students, is helping to re-establish drama in the college. Two lessons based on Indian **dance** were sampled, and the teaching and learning were **satisfactory** overall. Where the lesson began in a structured way and the brisk pace was maintained throughout, students achieved well, but in one of the lessons, the behaviour of some challenging students seriously affected the progress of the whole class.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is effective and results in good achievement overall though a small number of boys underachieve
- There are very good support and guidance materials; students know how well they are doing and how to improve
- Students behave well
- Students do not use computers enough for their art work
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not systematic

Commentary

105. When students enter the college, their skills, knowledge and understanding of art cover a broad range, but overall are below the national average. Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 was in line with the national average. GCSE results in 2003 were also in line with the national average. Results in 2002 were above the national average. Boys performed significantly less well than girls in both 2002 and 2003.

106. Standards seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 and of Year 11 were in line with national expectations. In Year 9 students' paintings of pictorial landscape, they used perspective and colour wash with growing confidence. In Years 7 to 9, students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because of the good specialist teaching. This good progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11. Students can explore their ideas, using a range of media. They research work from other cultures and artists, to inform their studies. Their drawing skills are average, because these are not taught systematically enough. Students studying photography and ceramics gain good technical skills, because these are progressively taught.

107. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make good use of lesson displays which explain what students will learn, together with key points and examples. Thinking skills are linked to learning about art, and this results in students connecting their ideas to those of other artists. For example, after Year 11 students had studied the work of Leichenstein and commented on his stereotypical portrayal of women, an arresting composition was created challenging our conception of stereotypes. Students concentrate hard in lessons because teachers have high expectations, and plan well structured lessons. However in all year groups a small number of boys underachieve. Their independent learning skills and motivation are poor. In Years 10 and 11 this hampers them making enough use of the good GCSE guide, which provides comprehensive step by step guidance.

108. Students' work is regularly marked, and students know their levels or grades, and how to improve. The department has a good assessment scheme in place which is providing useful information for both students and teachers. However, it is not always consistently applied, and more use could be made to measure the impact of strategies to raise achievement.

109. Leadership and management of art are satisfactory. Raising achievement is the department focus, and relevant key priorities have been identified. There are appropriate schemes of work in place. The department has developed some very effective support and guidance materials, such as the GCSE guide and homework booklets. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not carried out on a regular basis, neither is there a system of sharing good practice. Students make good use of the Internet for research, but rarely use computers for other purposes in art. The department has insufficient access to computers. The better progress now being made by students indicates that improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are improving and are above the national average
- Staff expertise in music is very good and has a significant impact on the standards achieved
- Music makes a good contribution to students' awareness of other cultures
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities for students to develop their musical skills is currently restricted

Commentary

110. Results at GCSE in 2003 in music are above the national average and show an improvement of 10% at A* - C on last year's results. The cohort from the college entered for the examination was approximately twice the size of the average college cohort and represented a wide range of musical ability, making the results even more noteworthy. Girls achieve significantly better than boys. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations, although fewer students attain the higher levels. From observations of lessons and from listening to CDs of the students' work, the musical attainment of students as they enter the college is below average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations and at the end of Year 11 are above average. This represents good achievement by most students as they progress through the college. However, a few lower attaining students do not find this subject easy, particularly at GCSE level, and, partly because they do not respond to the support of the teacher, do not make as much progress as they should.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers display very good subject knowledge, and are able to demonstrate their high standard of skills with enthusiasm in order to stimulate and motivate students in their learning. For example, the learning in a Year 9 lesson developed from question and answer rhythmical phrases into improvising short jazz phrases on the glockenspiel because of the infectious musical skills of the teacher. Correct musical terminology is a key feature of lessons and good questioning develops the students' understanding. Clear planning is evident across the department and resources are used as well as possible. In some lessons, there is a tendency for the teacher to over-direct the lesson, thereby not encouraging the students to think for themselves and answer questions as far as they can before teacher intervention. Good relationships exist between staff and students and, together with effective use of praise and encouragement, create a good learning environment. Many of the practical tasks are deliberately structured so that students may achieve at their own level of ability, for example in a Year 11 lesson using the concept of cells and loops in layering for a minimalist composition. However, examples were seen where the initial task was too easy for higher achieving students and the additional task needed to be available earlier in the lesson. One extra-curricular vocal group was observed where the standards of musical performance achieved were high.

112. The leadership and management of music are good. The highly skilled and effective team share a clear vision for the future direction of the department, based on raising achievement. Regular monitoring of the standards of teaching and learning take place. The last section of each lesson is used to assess what the students have learned, and this informs teachers' planning. A new electronic assessment system is currently being set up to record the standards achieved by students, which can then be carefully tracked and appropriate targets set. The scheme of work and departmental development plan are also being reviewed, but their impact cannot yet be evaluated. During the inspection, several lessons developed students' awareness of cultures other than their own, including Indian and Chinese music. Eleven peripatetic staff, some of whom run music groups, teach over three hundred students on a wide range of instruments, but there are currently few opportunities for students to join a music club. However, opportunities do arise during the rehearsal time for productions and concerts.

113. Accommodation for music is very good, and the impact of new ICT resources has been good, but general classroom resources are only satisfactory, as there is a need for untuned percussion instruments and artefacts relating to world music. Improvement since the last inspection, particularly in results at GCSE, has been good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some good quality teaching and learning in lessons result in good progress
- A significant number of students underachieve in their GCSE examinations
- Relationships between staff and students are good in most lessons
- In some lessons a significant minority of students disrupt the learning of the rest of the class. They lack motivation and are not consistently engaged in the lesson
- Assessment is not providing appropriate information for students to help them improve in both core and GCSE physical education

Commentary

114. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average, although they were close to the average in 2002. Standards obtained by students in Year 9 are average but vary between different activities. This represents satisfactory progress overall during their first three years in the college in most areas of the curriculum, given the extended range of activities and the average standards observed in Year 7. Girls, during their first three years in the college, apply many of the appropriate techniques and skills to gymnastics where both the quality and the range of their movement is above the national average. Year 8 students in netball and Year 7 in basketball lacked accuracy in their passing and have below average tactical awareness.

115. Standards obtained by students in Years 10 and 11 lessons are also average overall in the core PE (those taken by all students). In Year 11 in dance, girls have good choreographic skills and the quality and range of their movement is above average. Boys in a Year 11 football lesson displayed above average passing skills over both long and short distance and several had very good control skills. Evidence from GCSE course-work and from a theory lesson indicates that GCSE standards are average. Students have a sound understanding of many aspects of the course including physiology, anatomy and the acquisition of skills, although higher attaining students lack the expected depth of knowledge. The ability of all students to observe and analyse and to plan performance is underdeveloped. Most students have a good understanding of the need for a range of warm up activities before physical exercise although in most lessons there was not enough time to improve levels of fitness.

116. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and was good in several lessons and occasionally very good. In the best lessons, a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and

good teacher-directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning incorporates varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involves both individual and collaborative learning. Discipline and class management are good and relationships between staff and students are generally good. In the satisfactory lessons there were sometimes some weaknesses. Sometimes relationships were not as good and a few students were able to disrupt the learning of others in the class. Sometimes the planning was not specific or detailed enough to extend the most able students. In many lessons, several students were not participating.

117. In the best lessons teachers assess students' performance effectively and this helps them to make good progress, but even in some of these lessons, they rarely set individual students clear targets for improvement. Students are seldom used to observe and evaluate in lessons, and assessment does not yet involve students in setting their own targets. In relation to the GCSE course taken by a minority of students, the marking of theory work is not providing giving students enough information about how well they are performing or how to improve. ICT is rarely used and several opportunities are being missed in the GCSE course.

118. The department is still undergoing a transition to new leadership and leadership and management are satisfactory overall though day-to-day management is good. There are only limited opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning in the department and for the department to share good practice. The quality of teaching in different activities is not yet consistent. A satisfactory range of activities is offered to students after college although the department is concerned about participation rates. Department development planning identifies appropriate priorities but there is not enough information on how to achieve targets and no long-term plan. There is not enough time in Year 11 to cover the core National Curriculum in appropriate depth. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Higher achieving students are still not making appropriate progress and there is still a lack of challenge in some lessons.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Changes that have taken place since the previous inspection make comparisons difficult. Overall, the provision in this area is **very good**. Courses in information and communication technology, business studies, leisure and tourism, engineering and work related learning serve to meet the needs of boys and girls of all abilities. The focus was on the applied GCSE engineering course, though other courses were sampled.

Engineering

The quality of provision in engineering is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The course enables students of all levels of attainment to study engineering
- Students respond positively to this course and the good teaching
- Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of the engineering (manufacturing) industry
- Students have good access to ICT facilities
- Cramped accommodation and deficiencies in computer controlled equipment are having an adverse effect on what students can achieve

Commentary

119. Results in the GNVQ examinations of 2003 were broadly in line with the national average. When prior attainment is taken into account achievement was satisfactory. Underachievement amongst less motivated students was due, at least in part, to poor attendance.

120. Year 11 groups include students of a wide range of prior attainment. They make good progress and standards are in line with the level expected at this stage. In oral work they showed a

good knowledge and understanding of materials and processes as they prepared a production plan for their project piece, a desk tidy. However, lower attaining students worked with little enthusiasm.

121. Students opting to follow the course in Year 10 include a greater proportion of higher attaining students who are self-motivated and work with a greater confidence. All have made good progress over the first four months, the majority being able to read drawings with accuracy but their hand-tool skills are underdeveloped. Overall, achievement is good.

122. Teaching is good and students learn well. Lessons were well planned to build upon existing skills and knowledge. Teaching demonstrated very good knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the course, which resulted in rich and focused exposition, helping all to understand. Students listened carefully. They take responsibility for learning and strive to solve problems as they arise. While this results in mistakes, these are used very effectively to show how such errors can be avoided. The assessment of work is in line with the requirements of the examining body. They are clear about what they should do to improve but less aware of the level they are working at. Students cover the areas required by the National Curriculum for design and technology as well as developing an understanding of manufacturing industry; this through close links with local companies, visitors and visits. The visit to a local motor-racing circuit not only enhanced students' appreciation of high-technology engineering but raised interest and levels of motivation. Wherever possible, work placements are found in local engineering factories.

123. Students have ample opportunity to develop and apply their ICT skills. The teacher's very good organisational and student management skills ensure very effective practical work in a safe environment. Accommodation is cramped, however, and manually operated machines are old and worn. There is a shortage of computer-controlled equipment. The subject does not have an area where students, especially those with lower attainment can plan projects and theory work.

124. Relationships are very positive, students respond with interest to the good teaching. Homework is set regularly but students do not always use these opportunities to progress their design and theory work. The teacher in charge manages the course effectively. Many changes have taken place since the last report and improvement has been satisfactory.

Leisure and tourism

125. This Applied GCSE course was introduced as recently as September 2003, in part to increase the opportunities available to lower attaining students. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were good. The teaching focused on individual and group needs. The work on 'Package Holidays' was sufficiently challenging, students achieving a good knowledge and understanding of their case study. Good links have been developed with local businesses and students profit from work placements in the industry.

Business studies

126. Since the last inspection, when attainment was broadly in line with the national average, GNVQ courses have been replaced with the GCSE course. In 2003, examination results were significantly lower than the national average and that of the college. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls reflect prior attainment. Teaching groups comprise students from the full range of attainment, though a high proportion have special educational needs. Overall, the teaching observed was good; for example a Year 10 group achieved well as they applied Maslov's theory of motivation to a furniture removal case study. They were interested and attentive, making many perceptive observations. Students have very good access to computer facilities and can use a variety of packages confidently.

Work related learning

127. This very well organised course provides for lower attaining students including those lacking motivation. Students are selected for the course with great care. Their parents are involved in the consultations to ensure that all are aware of the opportunities. Students attend a local college one afternoon each week and can follow courses such as hairdressing, motor vehicle mechanics and

construction. On completion they achieve a National Vocational Qualification 1. In college, students study first-aid, health and safety, careers and take part in other activities which qualify them for the award of the 'Preparation for Employment Certificate', the equivalent of a GCSE grade G. In 2003, those completing this course achieved very well, two-thirds going on to further education. In the lesson observed, students gained a very good understanding of how to treat the victim of an accident as part of the first-aid course. All showed a good understanding of what they should and should not do, faced with such a situation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision for personal, social and health education and life skills is **good** overall. Citizenship is a component of the life skills course, but all subjects include some citizenship teaching within their schemes of work and lesson planning. Students in Year 10 participate in a half-day placement within the community for a period of a term.

The provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is good with a clear vision for its development
- Students gain great benefit from participation in the various college councils and through the Year 10 involvement in the community programme
- The humanities departments make a good contribution to the delivery of citizenship
- Although all departments include citizenship in their schemes of work and lesson planning, some do not identify opportunities in lessons
- The monitoring of the teaching of citizenship is inconsistent
- The profile of citizenship with teachers and students is not yet high enough
- The resources for citizenship are not sufficiently up to date

Commentary

128. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned. A detailed audit of the elements of citizenship in the curriculum has been carried out, which has enabled the college to identify gaps in the provision.

129. Citizenship now features in the schemes of work and lesson planning of all departments, although in art, modern foreign languages and physical education these references are superficial. There are posters in most classrooms, which remind both teachers and students of the subject. During the inspection there were examples of citizenship being taught overtly in science, history, geography, religious education, careers and music. Opportunities for citizenship in the other subjects were not taken or not made explicit to students. During the inspection two lessons of citizenship given by outside speakers were observed in the PSHE programme. Students achieved satisfactorily and acquired an awareness of their rights and responsibilities in society. The tutor, year and college councils play an important role in further developing students' awareness of aspects of the subject. Citizenship is also a central element of the Year 10 placements in the community. It was not possible to gather enough evidence to judge standards or the quality of teaching and learning.

130. The leadership of citizenship is good. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Most heads of department are now involved in its delivery, but their commitment and enthusiasm varies considerably. Although there is some monitoring of the cross-curricular delivery, this is not comprehensive and the college cannot be sure that all students receive their full entitlement. A start has been made by the humanities departments to assess attainment and achievement, but this is embryonic. There is a need for more staff development to help staff identify opportunities for citizenship and for more up-to-date resources.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, four subjects were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in most other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college. However A2 modular examinations made it impossible to sample work in ICT, business studies, religious studies, physical education and personal and social education. The group sizes in most sixth form subjects are small, with only sociology and psychology having more than 10 students and most subjects having five or fewer students.

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	7	57.1	90	28.6	42.7	25.7	39
Business Studies	5	80	89.1	0	31.7	24	35.4
Design Technology	5	100	89.2	0	32	30	35.7
Geography	5	100	88.3	0	36.4	28	36.3
Information technology	7	50	78	0	20.8	11.7	28.4
Mathematics	5	28.6	34.3	0	74.2	7.1	31.3
Other social studies	11	100	83.2	9.1	32.5	31.8	39.8
Physics	6	100	80.2	33.3	34.2	38.3	33.1
Religious education	5	60	90.9	0	38.9	16	57.9

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE 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	96.1	33.3	48.7	77.8	85.1
Biology	9	100	91.6	11.1	36.3	66.7	74.1
Business Studies	9	100	96.4	11.1	32.8	75.6	76.5
Communication Studies	5	100	98.3	0	36.8	64.0	81.1
English / English Language	8	100	98.3	25	36.5	75.0	80.1
English Literature	7	100	98.5	42.9	43.7	85.7	83.3
History	8	100	97.1	25	41	67.5	81.2
Information Technology	6	100	89.1	16.7	22.4	73.3	64.1
Mathematics	12	100	93.3	41.7	52.2	90	84.7
Music	5	100	97.7	20	41.8	76	82.2
Other Social Studies	25	100	94.3	24	38.9	76	77.7
Physics	6	100	92.8	50	43.8	93.3	78.6

Sociology	6	100	95.4	16.7	39.6	66.7	79.1
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ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

GCE AS and A2 courses have been offered in English language, English language and literature, and German. English language and literature was inspected in depth and other subjects were sampled. In the English language lesson sampled, teaching and learning were good. Effective use was made of students' essays, to prompt discussion on the editorial writing task. This enabled students to write concisely and to the point. Work is clearly related to assessment objectives. In German, very good teaching led to very good achievement especially in listening and speaking. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons.

English

Provision in English language and literature is **good**.

Main strengths

- Examination results are consistently in line with the national average
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements enable students to make good progress
- Good leadership and management ensures that final Year 13 students feel valued and are taught by experienced staff

Commentary

131. Comparison with national pass rates is difficult because small numbers of students are entered for examinations, but overall results are in line with the national average. In 2003 all students entered were awarded a grade, and a third gained the higher grades A and B.

132. The standard of work of current students is average and their achievement is sound. Students' files show progressive development of notes to extended critical writing. By Year 13, higher attaining students show good knowledge of linguistic devices, and their writing is confidently matched to the target audience. A perceptive analysis of terminology for an article aimed at football fans explains the editorial decision not to overload the article with results and statistics. Average attainers' writing is accurate but commentaries are more descriptive than analytical. The writing of lower attaining students has some technical lapses, but good evidence from texts supports main points.

133. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements. There is prompt and constructive evaluation of students' ideas both in discussions and writing. Students respond well to teachers' expectations which are realistic and generate a good level of interest. The students were able to replicate the teacher's very good example of an analytical reading of 'Wild Swans'. Teachers' questioning styles extend students' critical thinking skills, but time is not always used well to move learning forward in focused discussions. In a good lesson on language and gender the teacher gave appropriate prompts to enable students to make evaluative comments, but did not stretch them to use the linguistic terms in their feedback.

134. Very good leadership has guided the department through a period of instability caused by recent staffing problems and the decision to close the sixth form. Good management of provision has ensured that the final Year 13 students feel valued and are taught by experienced staff. Standards have been maintained and not affected by the decision to close the sixth form.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

135. The approach to teaching language and literacy through other subjects in the sixth form is good. Effective work was seen in subjects such as chemistry, physics and sociology where teachers expect students to acquire and use a high level of technical vocabulary. There is good development of communication skills through discussions and debate in English, history and modern foreign languages. The monitoring of students' work is evaluative and explains what is needed to improve critical analysis and writing.

MATHEMATICS

AS and A2 courses have been offered in mathematics. Class sizes are very small.

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Teaching is very good, providing effective individual support
- Student motivation is high and achievement is very good

Commentary

136. Overall results at A level were in line with the national average for 2003 and results have steadily improved over the past three years. Group sizes have been very small, making national comparisons difficult, but students have been successful in gaining the higher grades.

137. The very small group sizes, such as that observed during the inspection, and knowledgeable staff have enabled students to make good progress. Students have received very close personal attention and have been able to make good gains in their learning. They are motivated and work well in the close tutorial type of lesson. As a result they achieve very well. The results of earlier examination modules of students in the final Year 13 are at the higher grades and they are attaining good standards in the final modules. The provision during the final year of sixth form study has been managed well. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

138. Students have sufficient mathematical skills to solve problems accurately. The collection, analysis and display of data are well developed and students are able to use their skills where relevant in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Work in physics was inspected in depth and biology, human biology and chemistry were sampled. In **biology**, students receive **very good** guidance and support and are achieving well. In **chemistry** and **human biology** the teaching is **good** and the students are well supported. Their achievement is good. Group sizes are very small.

Physics

Overall, the provision in physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A level results have been consistently high
- Teaching is very good
- Very good teacher/student relationships have developed showing mutual respect and a shared desire to succeed
- Small groups limit interaction between students

Commentary

139. The A and AS level results in 2002, the latest year for which there are national comparisons, were well above the national average. Results have been consistently high for many years. Standards seen during the inspection are of an equally high standard. Achievement is therefore very good.

140. High quality teaching and a tightly organised programme of study are major factors in this success. The small group size this year has enabled closer contact between teacher and student allowing individual tuition to take place. However this means that the opportunities for student interaction, discussion and the exchange of ideas have been very limited. The situation has fostered

close relationships and a mutual desire to obtain as high a grade as possible. The subject is extremely well led and managed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

As in the main college, the provision for ICT is much improved. Students generally have good skills and **good** access to ICT facilities. They generally make good use of ICT in learning but opportunities are sometimes not exploited as fully as they could be.

HUMANITIES

The college runs courses in history, geography, law, sociology and psychology. In all these subjects except sociology and psychology group sizes are small. Sociology was inspected in depth and work in the other subjects was sampled. In **geography** and **psychology** students responded very positively to challenging and enthusiastic teaching and were making **very good** progress. In **geography** they were aware of the importance of economic, political and personal values in bringing about change. In **history**, **good** teaching and the attention to detail in analysing the documents being studied were enabling students to understand complex issues. In **law**, sound teaching was helping students to apply successfully their knowledge of case law to resolving legal problems.

Sociology

Provision for sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. A good range of activities for students combined with very good relationships result in good learning
- Achievement in the A2 group is good and students have good critical skills
- The use of ICT is not fully developed
- A well resourced and very well organised teaching room provides a stimulating learning environment for students

Commentary

141. In 2002 the A level examination results were below the national and the college average but students who took sociology achieved similar results in their other subjects. In 2003 a very small cohort achieved similar results in sociology to their results in other subjects.

142. Standards of work seen in the A level group were better than recent examination results would indicate. Overall the standard of the work of these students slightly exceeds the expected standard. For several students, it is significantly better. Students demonstrate good critical skills, a willingness to participate in debate and an ability to make perceptive comparisons, relating to a variety of social issues and using a range of sociological perspectives. Most have a good understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject and can apply this to a range of sociological issues. This was most evident from their work on religion in society. Students are competent in analysing data and reaching conclusions based on relevant evidence. From an average standard in GCSE their achievement in the 2003 AS examination was satisfactory and is good from work seen this year on religion. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the different theories which explain the development and importance of religion and can provide very good explanations for the relationship between various religious beliefs, religious organisations and social groups.

143. Teaching and learning are good because the class teacher has very good subject knowledge and is able to encourage and guide debate so that students of all abilities are challenged and stimulated. Good planning, very good relationships between teacher and students, clear objectives and a very good range of activities in the lesson all contribute to the good learning. A good example of this was seen in a lesson where students were preparing for a debate on whether religion binds

society together or is a source of conflict. A very good introduction utilised lively question and answer with students and drew on prior knowledge and understanding. This led into preparation for the debate in small groups with very well focused intervention from the class teacher. A good range of resources and evidence were provided although opportunities to use ICT were missed.

144. The leadership and management of sociology are good, encouraging students to have high expectations and a spirit of enquiry. Resources are well organised and the teaching room provides a stimulating environment for students. Procedures for monitoring the progress of students exist but are not fully effective in providing ongoing guidance and support to ensure that all students achieve appropriately.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Work in design and technology was sampled. **Very good** student/teacher relationships ensure **good** advice and support. The range of facilities in the department enables successful conclusions to coursework. This includes very good computer-aided design and manufacturing facilities. Standards in designing are average due to the limited use of media. Management of the course is good and well informed of current examination practice.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Students are currently taking courses in art, media studies and photography. Work in photography was sampled. The teaching provides **good** support for students. This leads to a good standard of achievement and progress.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Sixth form grade	College grade
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the college	4	3
How inclusive the college is		2
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the college	5	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	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	4	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	3
How well the college seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the college's links with parents		4
The quality of the college's links with the community	1	1
The college's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the college		2
The governance of the college	2	2
The leadership of the head teacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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