

INSPECTION REPORT

KING ALFRED'S COMMUNITY AND SPORTS COLLEGE

Wantage

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123263

Principal: Bernard Clarke

Lead inspector: Grace Marriott

Dates of inspection: 20th to 24th October 2003

Inspection number: 259295

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1801
College address:	Portway Wantage Oxfordshire
Postcode:	OX12 9BY
Telephone number:	(01235) 225690
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Clem Davies
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

King Alfred's is a very large specialist sports and community college on three sites in the town of Wantage in Oxfordshire. It has around 1800 students on roll (which is slightly fewer than at the last inspection) with almost equal numbers of boys and girls. The sixth form is much larger than other sixth forms. Around 65% of Year 11 students continue in the sixth form and some students from other schools join the sixth form. The students come from a very wide area of Oxfordshire and a wide variety of backgrounds. Almost all students are of white UK origins and the college has very few students who have English as an additional language. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. Most students join the college in Year 7 with broadly average standards. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is also average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is about average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The college has achieved the Artsmark, Investors in People, a School Achievement Award and the Sportsmark Gold with Distinction. It is also involved in teacher training in partnership with Oxford University. The college facilities are extensively used for adult and community education.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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10244	Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16 and 6 th form
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29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	Chemistry 6 th form
11240	Paul Shallcross	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-16 and 6 th form
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art 11-16 and 6 th form
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-16
17808	Susan Orpin	Team inspector	Geography 11-16 and 6 th form
27492	John Barker	Team inspector	History, Business Studies 6 th form
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	French 11-16 and 6 th form
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team Inspector	Music 11-16, Psychology 6 th form
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education
2746	Roy Lund	Team inspector	Special educational needs, 6 th form GNVQ
32400	Maureen Champness	Team inspector	Citizenship
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

King Alfred's is a good school because of the exceptional range and quality of opportunities offered to students. Standards have been affected by a period of considerable difficulty over staff recruitment and are average overall in Years 7 to 11, though with some significant strengths. Achievement is improving. It is sound overall in Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in many subjects. Standards are well above average in the 6th form and achievement is very good. Students think it is a good school and that they are expected to work hard. Parents are also supportive. The college is well managed and staff are working hard on areas which need improvement. The consistency of approach and expectations across the three sites does much to minimise the impact of split site working. Teaching and learning are good, with particular strengths in the sixth form. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The specialist sports and community provision greatly enhances the opportunities available to students.
- Standards are well above average in mathematics and science.
- Achievement, teaching and learning in art are very good throughout the college.
- Sixth form teaching is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes and behave very well, relationships are very good.
- The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is good.
- Some students' literacy skills, particularly in writing, are limiting their achievement.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used enough in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in psychology in the sixth form are well below average.
- The college is not meeting statutory requirements in a number of areas.

The action taken to improve the college's ethos and the consistency across the three sites has been very effective. Development planning and monitoring of teaching are much better and the community and sports college status has acted as a catalyst for improvement in many areas, not just in the provision for physical education (PE). Standards have fluctuated somewhat, largely because of staffing difficulties which have particularly affected English, however standards in mathematics and science have improved and standards in English are starting to rise. The GCSE point score is better and the percentage of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades is higher than last time, though the national results have improved at a faster rate. Sixth form standards have improved and results are now well above average. The college has not been able to eliminate the impact of the split site on finance and resources. **Improvement overall has been good.**

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

In 2002, results in Year 9 tests were well above average in mathematics and science and below average in English. The results are **better overall** than most schools and better than those of similar schools in mathematics and science, but not as good in English. The 2003 results improved considerably in English. Girls did significantly better than boys in English, in both Year 9 tests and at GCSE, but there was little difference between boys' and girls' results in mathematics. The 2002 GCSE results were average both in terms of the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* to C

grades and when compared with schools achieving similar results in Year 9. The 2003 results are better than 2002. Current standards are average overall. In Years 7 to 11, achievement is sound overall and improving. It is very good in art, and good in geography, history, PE, religious education (RE), design and technology, music, modern languages. Some students, particularly boys, have difficulties in expressing themselves clearly and accurately in writing. In the sixth form, achievement is excellent in art and good in almost all subjects though in psychology, achievement is not satisfactory. A Level results are well above average overall and in 2002 students did best in art, biology, geography, business studies, chemistry, drama, mathematics, physics and PE. Current standards in the 6th form are **well above average** overall.

Students develop into mature and likeable young people who behave very well, have a sense of responsibility and have very positive attitudes towards college. Their spiritual, moral, and cultural development is **good** overall, social development is **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college is providing a good education for its students.

The curriculum has an exceptionally wide range of enrichment and extension activities and a very good range of opportunities for social and personal development. The links with the community are particularly strong. The provision for students with special educational needs is good in relation to emotional and behavioural difficulties and satisfactory overall. The introduction of a more flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11, including vocational courses, is very appropriate and is being well-managed. Students are well cared for and given good guidance. Teachers work hard to minimise the impact of the split site working on the support given to students. Students are encouraged to give their views. The working partnership with parents is satisfactory. The college is not meeting statutory requirements for citizenship, collective worship or for RE in the sixth form or in having formally adopted a policy for disabled access.

Teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form.

The significant recent improvement in teaching in Years 7 to 11 has not yet had time to be reflected in better results at GCSE. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge. They structure lessons well, which helps students to understand the work and make good progress by moving from simpler to more complex activities. A good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is supporting students well in class, particularly where they have behaviour difficulties. Where teaching was less good, the lessons tended to start well and then lose momentum, particularly if a writing task was involved. Some lessons did not challenge students enough.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The principal provides **very good** leadership and is well supported by good leadership and middle management teams. They have a strong commitment to continuing the improvement and overall are effective leaders and managers. They are working systematically to monitor and improve teaching. The governing body is very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the college and is closely and effectively involved in strategic planning and in monitoring. It has not, however, ensured that the college is fully meeting statutory requirements and in these areas its governance is not satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

The college's relationship with parents is generally good but communication is not as consistently effective as the college would like. The response from parents to the questionnaire was very low, but those who attended the meeting were supportive of the college and positive about the range of opportunities provided. However, they were critical of the arrangements for discussing their children's progress because of lack of access to subject teachers. The college has accepted the concerns and is actively considering how to improve the arrangements. Students are generally positive about the college. They appreciate the range of opportunities and the quality of teaching. They were confident that bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Years 7 to 11

- Raise standards in literacy, particularly writing and particularly in relation to the achievement of boys.
- Increase the use of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

6th form

- Improve the provision for psychology.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve the provision for citizenship, collective worship, and RE in the 6th form.
- Develop an access policy as required by the Special Needs and Disability Act 2002.

SIXTH FORM SUMMARY

Overall Evaluation

King Alfred's has a successful sixth form. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and academic standards are well above average overall. In most subjects, students achieve well and the teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Sixth formers are able to take advantage of a very wide range of enrichment and extension activities and develop their leadership skills. The sixth form is cost-effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Well above average academic standards overall, with girls doing better than boys.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Students who are mature in their attitude towards work and college activities.
- Standards in psychology are well below average.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English: Good. Very good teaching and teachers' subject knowledge contribute to students' positive attitudes to learning. Good leadership and management during a period of staffing change have improved achievement.
	French: Very good. Standards are above average with very good speaking and listening skills. Very good teaching and learning and very high expectations provide very good support for individuals.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory overall with higher attaining students achieving well above the national average.
Science	Biology: Good. Teaching and learning in biology are good. As a result students make good progress. Standards are well above average.
	Chemistry: Good. Students have a very good attitude to their learning. They respond well to good teaching which stimulates their interest and achieve well in examinations.
Information and Communication Technology	Good. Teaching is now very good and encourages and motivates students. Standards are satisfactory and improving.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Art	Excellent. Standards are very high in examinations. Teaching and learning are excellent and students' achievements outstanding. Students are intellectually challenged by the work and teachers' expectations.
Geography	Good. Teaching and learning are good, teachers have very good subject knowledge and students have good attitudes to their learning and achieve well.
Business Studies	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Standards are high in examinations. Students have a sustained level of interest and are committed
Psychology	Unsatisfactory. Examination results are well below average. Teachers are enthusiastic but do not have specialist knowledge which affects standards.
PE	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students' attitudes are very good and they achieve very well
Media Studies	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve well because activities are imaginative and stimulate interest.
Leisure and tourism (Foundation)	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Students are achieving well on the course and reaching the required standards.

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' particular needs well and give them very good support. Assessment is sound and clearly designed to help students meet examination requirements. Marking is careful and 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 very good.

The sixth form management team is very good. The staff are promoting high standards and sensible development of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form and enjoy it. They appreciate the range of courses and the quality of teaching. The questionnaire indicated some concerns about the quality of advice they received before entering the sixth form and the support they receive but in discussion students were more positive and in practice, they felt well advised and supported.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards and achievement have been affected by staffing difficulties, but recent improvements in teaching and learning mean that overall achievement, though sound, is improving and much of it is **good**. Test and examination results in Years 7 to 11 are average overall, with particular strengths in science, mathematics and art. Sixth form standards are well above average overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 test results in 2002 were well above average in mathematics and science and below average in English. The 2003 results improved considerably in English.
- Girls did significantly better than boys in English, in both Year 9 tests and at GCSE, but there was relatively little difference between boys' and girls' results in mathematics.
- The 2002 GCSE results were average both in terms of the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades, and when compared with schools achieving similar results in Year 9. The 2003 results are better than 2002.
- In Years 7 to 11, achievement is sound overall. It is very good in art and good in geography, history, PE, religious education (RE), design and technology, music, and modern languages in Years 10 and 11.
- A Level standards are well above average overall.
- In the sixth form, achievement is good in almost all subjects and excellent in art. Achievement is unsatisfactory in psychology.

Commentary

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)

1. Students join the college in Year 7 with standards which are broadly average, though with significant variations between different subjects. In English and most other subjects, standards are average, though weaker in writing than in reading. In mathematics and science standards are above average. However, in design and technology, geography, history and PE they are below average. Relatively few are very high attainers and, the proportion of students with special educational needs is similar to most schools.
2. The results of the national tests in Year 9 have varied from subject to subject but overall were better than most schools. In English they have fluctuated mainly because of staffing difficulties. They were below average in 2002 but have risen significantly in 2003. In mathematics, results have gone up steadily, science results improved dramatically in 2001 and have continued to rise and both were well above average and better than might have been expected from their attainment on entry. At the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, boys and girls are doing equally well in mathematics and science. In English, girls do better than boys at all levels.
3. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 was average overall but with considerable variation between subjects. Standards are above average in science, mathematics, art and ICT and history and average in all other subjects and achievement is improving. Though achievement is satisfactory overall, when compared with their standard of work when they joined the college, students are achieving very well in art and well in science, design and technology, geography, history, music, ICT, and PE. Their achievement in English and mathematics is satisfactory. The very few students for whom English is an additional language achieve at a similar level to other students.

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

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	32.9 (n/a)	33.3 (33)
mathematics	37 (36.6)	34.7 (34.4)
science	36.5 (36.6)	35.7 (33.1)

There were 305 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

4. GCSE results are broadly average overall though girls do better than boys. When the college results are compared with other schools nationally they are as good as most schools in terms of the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A* to C passes, and better than most schools in terms of the point score. When compared with schools of a similar standard in Year 9 tests, the GCSE results are as good in terms of the point score, but not quite as good in terms of the 5 A* to C grades. The average point score per pupil has improved at a faster rate than nationally. Results in English, mathematics and sciences were above average overall, In 2002, (the latest year for which national comparisons are available) students achieved their best results in business studies, chemistry and physics, girls also did better in geography. Their relatively weaker results were in art, design and technology and German, and boys were relatively weaker in English Language and Literature and mathematics. In PE, the results are not comparable with other schools because virtually all students take PE at GCSE and in most schools it is an option subject.

5. In Years 10 and 11, students maintain the satisfactory level of achievement evident in Years 7 to 9 and in French and RE their achievement improves. In individual subjects, standards are well above average in the separate sciences, above average in English, mathematics, business studies, geography, French, music and PE and average in all other subjects. In art, standards were below average but are now above average because of the very considerable improvement in teaching and learning. Overall standards in ICT are difficult to gauge because of the way in which ICT is taught through different subjects, and the lack of overall assessment. Though most students are achieving satisfactory standards, there is some under-achievement because of the variation in the amount of ICT to which students have access. The very few students for whom English is an additional language achieve at a similar level to other students.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50.7 (54.2)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	86.6 (88.3)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35 (n/a)	39.8 (n/a)

There were 292 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2001.

Literacy and numeracy

6. Literacy standards are satisfactory but with weaknesses in writing for a significant number of students, particularly boys. Much of the oral work in lessons is good. For example in art, drama, English, music and ICT students are encouraged to research and present their findings to the class and students use technical vocabulary naturally in mathematics. Numeracy standards are good and used in a range of subjects, for example in history, students were able to calculate the costs of land purchase for canal routes. Students used and interpreted graphs in geography when studying coastal erosion and in PE when students are studying recovery rates after exercise.

Special educational needs

7. The achievement of students with special educational needs and disabilities is satisfactory overall. Students who have behavioural difficulties make good progress towards their targets relating to personal and social development because they receive good support. Targets for literacy and numeracy are less well defined, it is more difficult to assess their progress in these areas. There is evidence that the students who have most difficulty in basic literacy, particularly in spelling and handwriting, are not making enough progress in these areas as they move through the college.

Sixth Form

8. At A Level, the percentage pass rate, the average point score and the proportion of students achieving A and B grades have all improved since the last inspection. Results in 2002 were well above average, with girls doing better than boys overall, though the boys did better in chemistry, media studies, mathematics, physics and sociology.

9. In over half of all subjects, all students taking A2 or advanced vocational examinations in 2002 achieved at least a pass grade and most did significantly better. In subjects where enough students were entered to make comparisons with national figures valid, the A Level results were above average overall and best in art and design, biology, geography, business studies, chemistry, drama, mathematics and sociology. In psychology, results were well below average. Results in some subjects, for example history, business studies, physics have fluctuated. English literature results declined to below average in 2002, mainly as a consequence of staffing difficulties but improved in 2003. The advanced vocational course results were good in business, health and social care and leisure and recreation.

10. In the subjects inspected in depth during the inspection, the standards are well above average overall. They are very high in art because of the consistently high quality of teaching and the very high expectations. Standards are well above average in mathematics, biology, geography, music and RE. They are above average in English, French, business studies, PE, media studies, chemistry and average in ICT. Students taking the GNVQ Foundation leisure and tourism course are achieving well and reaching the required standards. All the students who completed the course passed and almost half achieved a merit pass. In psychology, the standards are well below average mainly because non-specialist teaching is not giving the students the depth or breadth of knowledge that they need. In the subjects sampled the standards seen were never less than average.

11. Students are achieving well, overall. In many sixth form lessons students showed maturity in their discussions and they were developing good analytical skills. For example, in geography they were evaluating material skilfully, to decide whether they had sufficient information or whether other sources were needed. Though the general level of literacy is good, in some subjects students' competence in writing is satisfactory. For example, in French students speak confidently and accurately and their reading skills are also well developed, but writing is less well developed. In geography, a few students have difficulty with spelling and grammar limits their achievement. Students are generally competent users of ICT, though they do not always have enough opportunity to use it in all their subjects. Students receive prompt and constructive feedback on their work which helps them to make good progress.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98 (97.6)	94.8(89.9)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	42.2 (44)	38.4 (35.6)
Average point score per student	288.5 (18)	263.4 (17.4)

There were 149 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2001. Please note that the method of calculating the average point score changed in 2002.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and offer a firm foundation for effective learning. The college fosters students' maturity very well through its ethos and very good development, in general, of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Students' attendance and punctuality are **good**. Sixth form students have very good attitudes and personal qualities.

Main strengths

- Students work hard and have very positive attitudes to the many opportunities the college offers.
- Relationships are very good.
- Behaviour is very good because the sense of community and the consistency across sites helps students to feel secure and to be very clear about what is expected.
- The college develops students' maturity very successfully by expecting them all to take responsibility for their own actions and to be aware of each other's rights.
- Attendance has improved in response to better and more consistent procedures.
- Sixth form students show continued development of the maturity and commitment to their studies evident among younger students in the main college.

Commentary

12. Students are very responsive to the rich and varied range of opportunities that the college offers through its everyday life and specialist community and sports college provision. The college has worked hard to motivate students by matching the curriculum to students' individual strengths and weaknesses. For example, it has reduced the incidence of truancy and exclusions by enabling groups of older students to take courses that match their interests and aspirations more closely than traditional GCSE subjects do. It offers a very varied range of 'elective' opportunities after college twice a week that cover stimulating experiences from recreational sport, to Latin, and life drawing. As a result, students become committed to learning through positive, and sometimes fun-filled, experiences.

13. Students in the main college are generally positive about college, feel that they are taught well and are pleased to be trusted. As with others their age, they recognise that bullying happens and that not all students behave well all the time. Students' questionnaire responses confirm that almost all believe that they are expected to work hard and do their best. New students also soon learn that the college expects them to 'get on with their work to the best of their ability and let others do the same', so clear messages about effort are helping to establish a strong climate for learning.

14. Key staff, led in exemplary fashion by the Principal, make a point of greeting and talking to students. As a result of what they term the 'hello culture', staff foster a positive, harmonious sense of community, which makes students feel that they belong to the college, regardless of the site on which they are based. This produces very good relationships where mutual respect and tolerance are evident and bullying is rare, but firmly dealt with when it happens. Students have used their own initiative to set up their 'peace patrol' to help with this, in line with the college's encouragement of personal and social responsibility. Members of the leadership team show genuine interest in all students, including anyone in trouble. On a regular site visit, one senior member of staff took time to speak to every individual who had caused concern to tutors or teachers. Students were very pleased to have the chance to show their much improved work and attitudes.

15. The college has ensured that its ethos and unity of approach across the sites have improved greatly since the last inspection as a result of concerted effort by the leadership team to provide consistency. Behaviour management and attendance procedures are effective because of very clear written guidance and a pattern of cross-site meetings and visits focused on this consistency. Attendance has improved over the last year to a level above the recent national averages. The misbehaviour identified at the last inspection has improved and exclusion rates have fallen. Students are very clear about the standards expected and the consequences of their actions. Their moral and social development are particularly good because of the clarity of the college's codes on trust, courtesy and consideration.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
College data:	7.7
National data:	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
College data :	1.0
National data:	1.2

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1398	41	
White – Irish	2		
White – any other White background	29		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	5		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0		
Black or Black British – African	5		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	355		1

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

Sixth form

16. Sixth form students are generally very positive about the opportunities offered by the college. Specific difficulties with staffing and in having a quick word with subject teachers as they move from site to site have made it hard for individual students to enjoy the informal support often found in sixth forms, which colours their view of college life. However, students are clear that relationships with teachers are very good and supportive, in general. They feel that as individuals, they are given as much trust and respect as they deserve and appreciate being treated as responsible, young adults. Almost all are very committed to their studies.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The college is providing a **good** education for its students. Teaching and learning are good overall. The curriculum has an exceptionally wide range of enrichment and extension activities and a very good range of opportunities for social and personal development. The introduction of a more flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11, including vocational courses, is very appropriate and is being well-managed. The college is not meeting statutory requirements for citizenship, collective worship or for RE in the sixth form.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall though the significant recent improvement in Years 7 to 11 has not yet had time to be reflected in better results at GCSE. It is very good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects.
- The structure of lessons allows students to move confidently from simpler to more complex tasks.
- Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses and give them good feedback in lessons.
- Teachers use a wide variety of methods which help to motivate and encourage students to work hard and learn very well.
- The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is good and helps students to make good progress.
- In some lessons the pace and momentum of the lesson slowed after a good introduction.
- Not enough attention is being paid to developing students' written skills.
- In a few lessons in Years 7 to 11 the level of challenge was not as good as it could have been.
- Much of the assessment of their work gives students in Years 7 to 11 good information on how to improve, but this is not consistent enough.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Staffing difficulties have been largely overcome and there have been significant improvements recently which have not yet had time to be reflected in better results at GCSE.

18. In the college as a whole, over two-thirds of the teaching seen was graded good or better and four out of every ten were very good or excellent. In Years 7 to 11, there was very little unsatisfactory teaching and no significant differences between the year groups or the sites.

19. The strengths in the teaching are apparent in all year groups. Teachers have considerable expertise in their subjects, and want to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with students. In the best lessons, the guided questions helped students to understand the work and express their own ideas. The questioning is carefully targeted to identify and meet individual needs and to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for the range of students in the class.

20. Explanations, demonstration, discussion, individual, paired and group work were all used in different ways to keep lessons moving at a brisk pace. They motivated students to work hard and to enjoy what they were learning. In practical subjects the teachers provide expert help and use demonstrations well to extend students' knowledge and skills. In art, demonstrations bring the subject to life and motivate students to want to improve their work. In an excellent PE lesson, the use of a power point presentation added considerably to the quality of presentation, to the pace of working and enabled students to build very successfully on what they already knew. In the good and very good lessons, students are treated as independent learners and respond well. For example, in a Year 11 geography lesson, the teacher's high expectations resulted in excellent attitudes to work and students who could talk about their coursework with animation.

21. Assessment is satisfactory. In most classes, teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students. They mark work regularly and give good oral feedback. However written comments do not always give students enough guidance on how to improve. In most year groups, the use of peer evaluation of their work is effective and enables students to learn from each other.

22. Relationships are very good. In the vast majority of lessons, students behaved well but if their attention wandered, teachers were able to bring students back on track. There were no significant differences overall in the attitudes of boys and girls. On a very few occasions when the teaching was not stimulating enough, students became restless and inattentive. In a few lessons, learning was satisfactory rather than good, because teachers did not deal effectively enough with some low-level disruption.

23. Teachers have considerable expertise in their subjects, and want to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with students. In the best lessons, the quality of questioning challenged students to think critically and developed their ability to express their ideas in depth. In most lessons questioning is carefully targeted to identify and meet individual needs and to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for the range of students in the class.

24. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, an effective start sometimes faltered and the pace flagged with the introduction of the main activity, particularly where a writing task was involved. Teachers did not always make their expectations for the quality and quantity of work clear enough and did not check students' understanding enough. On one or two occasions the initial introduction was inadequate or the teacher talked for too long and this left students unclear about what they were supposed to be doing. The level of challenge was not always accurately matched to the needs of both high and lower achievers and students were passive rather than active learners.

25. Much of the teaching of students with special educational needs is good. The college has identified a higher than average number of its students as having emotional and behavioural difficulties and most teachers motivate and include them well, through good routines for teaching and learning, with clear expectations of appropriate behaviour, and by providing a good range of stimulating activities. This results in good achievement.

26. In most lessons, the teaching assistants work well with the teachers to include the students with special educational needs and disabilities, especially when they are working on their own or in small groups. They help them to meet their individual education plan (IEP) targets by clarifying discussions and helping to modify materials and teaching approaches.

27. Although the teachers and teaching assistants are able to help most students to overcome their difficulties in class, some have more complex literacy and numeracy difficulties which are not identified precisely or soon enough. Consequently, subject teachers are not able to provide the specific, intense intervention to enable to overcome them. In Years 10 and 11, in GCSE English and business studies lessons the use of laptop computers enabled students with special educational needs to take part fully in lessons, but in general, however, the teachers are not making enough use of ICT to give students access to the curriculum.

Sixth form

28. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Over three-quarters of the lessons seen 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 art, English, ICT, French, media studies and music. It was good in biology, chemistry, geography, RE, and business studies and satisfactory in mathematics. Only in psychology were there significant weaknesses. Here the teaching was enthusiastic but the teachers did not have the specialist knowledge to provide the breadth and depth of work that students needed.

29. Assessment in the sixth form is good and the feedback provides students with good guidance on how to improve their work. In art teachers use assessment particularly effectively to develop students' analytical and critical skills which in turn develops students' confidence. The use of peer assessment in the sixth form is particularly good. For example in an A Level English lesson the analysis of another student's work against the assessment criteria enabled students to see how their own work could be improved.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (4%)	56 (28 %)	75 (37)%	58 (29%)	4 (2 %)	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 quality of the curriculum is **good**. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities and community involvement are **excellent** and contribute strongly to students' academic and personal development. Resources are **satisfactory** overall and the accommodation is adequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sports and community college status has lifted whole-college performance.
- Sound development of the 14-19 curriculum with the introduction of vocational courses.
- Curriculum is enhanced by a very wide range of extra-curricular and extension activities.
- Excellent community links have a very positive impact on learning and achievement both in and out of college.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in citizenship and collective worship and RE in the sixth form.
- Provision in ICT does not guarantee that all students receive equal access in Years 10 and 11.
- Literacy provision lacks co-ordination and rigour.

Commentary

30. The quality of the curricular provision is good despite weaknesses in some areas. The college is meeting its targets set in the development plan for its sports college status. The new opportunities have improved the curriculum and lifted whole-college performance.

31. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 includes all national curriculum subjects and religious education. RE, geography, PE and art are particularly strong subjects where effective teaching and learning and regular subject review support the needs of the individual pupil. Work in mathematics and science has also significantly improved. Students with special educational needs have equality of access to all areas of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the introduction of vocational courses and expansion of sixth form subjects have made a significant contribution to the programme of students aged 14 to 19. The introduction of a special option in design and technology has also improved the provision for students who are potentially disaffected. However the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for citizenship in Years 7 to 11, and collective worship in all year groups. In Years 10 and 11, ICT is provided through the various subjects of the curriculum. This arrangement had the potential to work well, but as yet it is not planned or monitored well enough to ensure that students receive equal access in Years 10 and 11. In many subjects insufficient use is made of ICT.

32. The personal, social and health education is well structured and delivered effectively with the partnership of external agencies and visiting speakers. Tutorial time delivery, however, is not consistently effective as both teachers and students have few opportunities to discuss important issues or share ideas and information.

33. The college inclusion policy has been successfully introduced and a group of actually or potentially disaffected students have been effectively linked to a work-related programme. There are clear curriculum routes for students aged 14 to 19 and good preparation for Post-16 education, training and employment. Good provision has been made with the Connexions service which provides support and advice for students.

34. The college has developed excellent community links since gaining specialist sports college status. Sporting provision is excellent, overall. All students in Years 7 to 11 have timetabled provision of at least two hours per week. This is enhanced by extra time in Years 10 and 11 because all take the GCSE PE course. Further opportunities are provided by very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year. Many students take part in a wide range of physical education and sport and health-related activities available at lunchtimes and after college. Students can follow a wide range of accredited courses as well as opportunities to represent the college in competitive fixtures. In addition to opportunities in sport, students' learning is further enhanced through a wealth of after college clubs including music, drama and the arts. The community education programme is strong and both students and the local community make good use of ICT facilities on site.

35. The college now has sufficient well-qualified staff to deliver the curriculum having come through a period of difficulty. However, staffing levels have hindered some curriculum development within special needs and psychology. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory on each site and the staff work very hard to overcome the difficulties which split-site working imposes. The accommodation for students with special educational needs and disabilities is good, with bases on each site which are used as "drop-in" centres at lunchtimes and smaller rooms for individual work and interviews.

Sixth form

36. The sixth form curriculum is well-matched to students' needs. It includes a good range of courses at A and AS level and vocational courses in business, health and social care and leisure at different levels. A few subjects are also available at GCSE. Sporting provision has also been improved for sixth form students, particularly those in Year 12 who have the opportunity to join in one hour of Wednesday afternoon activities. The main weaknesses in the curriculum is the lack of provision for RE and collective worship.

Care, guidance and support

The college takes **good** steps to ensure that students are cared for and safe from harm so that they are happy and ready to learn. Advice and guidance are similarly good. The involvement of students in its work and development is **satisfactory** in the main college and **good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths

- Staff work hard to ensure that students are well known to tutorial teams and their line managers so that good quality care can be offered to meet their individual needs.
- Induction arrangements are very good and help new students to settle in quickly and confidently.
- Students have good informal opportunities to express their views and make suggestions about improving college life, which have influenced changes in ethos; formal consultation is less influential.

Commentary

37. An energetic team of heads of site and year co-ordinators works tirelessly to improve care and support. The drive for consistency, with practical changes such as use of technology, teamwork and better communication systems to check on individual students, results in constant improvement. At its best, care is first rate and students respond impressively, as when a student took real pride in sharing a special piece of practical work with the senior teacher who had come to see how he was getting on. Students are provided with good support and guidance at key stages in their career.

38. The college's policies and actions, including procedures for child protection, help to ensure that students work in as safe and healthy environment as possible, given the complexities of the sites and local traffic patterns beyond the college's control. The college liaises well with external agencies.

39. The college's induction process is good. The college has very strong links with its community and feeder primary schools, which help students to settle in quickly because they have so many opportunities to take part in sporting and recreational activities, which it organises. The Year 7 residential trip in September ensures that new students soon feel part of the college community.

40. The college is committed to including students with special educational needs and disabilities in all aspects of its life and, as a result, they feel valued and supported within the community. Most students are aware of their individual education plan (IEP) targets but less know what they should do in order to meet them. The induction of students with special educational needs is also good. The teaching assistants visit the primary schools prior to transfer and the students have an opportunity to visit the college beforehand and to attend open evenings. Year 7 students, who have only been in the college for half a term, say that they have been made to feel welcome and that their needs are recognised and supported.

41. The college has good, informal ways of seeking and valuing students' views through the 'hello culture'. Teachers on all sites chat to students and listen to their views carefully. Formal consultation is less secure because students have mixed feelings about college council groups. Some students, particularly younger ones find it valuable, but older students tend to be rather less confident that much is achieved through.

42. Sixth form students also receive good support and guidance both academically and in relation to their personal development and future careers. They make a significant contribution to the community, particularly in fund-raising initiatives for charities such as Children in Need. The sixth form council is active, run well by student members.

Partnership with parents, other colleges and the community

The college has a **satisfactory** working partnership with parents. It has **excellent** links with the immediate and wider community and **very good** links with other colleges. As a specialist college, its work with the local community, feeder schools and with other secondary schools is outstanding.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college's excellent links with the community and very good links with other colleges are helpful to students.
- The college's community focus and related work is of exceptional benefit to a wide range of students.
- Arrangements for students transferring to and from the college are very good.
- Information for parents is not always targeted carefully to its audience.
- Parental response to the chance to contribute to the inspection process was disappointing.

Commentary

43. Although the college's relationship with parents is good in many respects because of the efforts to keep parents informed and involved, communication is not as consistently effective as the college would like. This is because written information is not always lively and in keeping with the rich and colourful day-to-day experiences of the students, who have less opportunity than in many colleges to contribute to news and reports for parents. In the sixth form where students make very perceptive comments in reports on their own progress, information for parents is better. So few parents took up the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire designed to gauge their views of the college that it is not possible to judge their levels of satisfaction with its work. Those who attended the meeting with inspectors felt that the college is willing to listen even if it does not consult parents routinely. They were forceful in their view that arrangements for discussing students' progress are

unhelpful because of lack of access to subject teachers. This is a more significant problem than usual because students also find it hard to talk to subject teachers who move from site to site, though this is unsettling for only a few students.

44. The college works well with the parents and carers of students who have special educational needs and disabilities who are happy with the education their children are receiving. The annual reviews of statements of special educational needs include parents, carers and students. However, the parents and carers are not currently systematically involved in identifying the needs of their children, setting targets for improvement, or reviewing their progress towards meeting these targets. The files of students with statements of special educational needs are badly organised, making it very difficult to monitor their progress. The liaison with the primary schools about students with special educational needs and disabilities is effective through regular meetings of the special educational needs co-ordinators at the college, which includes shared training.

Example of outstanding provision

Contribution of community links to the quality of education provided.

Community links make an exceptional contribution to students' responsiveness to the rich variety of opportunities on offer during and beyond the college day. This is because the college community, including the governing body, draws in as wide a range of people and organisations as possible to share talents and breadth of experience with students. Strong local links help particular students to find alternative learning programmes to match interests outside the traditional curriculum, and to identify specific skills for which they have real aptitude. The college's sharp focus on lifelong learning means that students are used to seeing older members of the local community relishing the chance to join in A-level classes or enjoying the buzz of U3A (university of the third age) meetings. International links enable students to speak powerfully from experience about the challenges of life, cultural diversity and education in countries such as Ecuador and Tanzania. All these hugely enriching activities foster very positive attitudes among students to interesting chances to learn.

45. The college has a very good network of links with other colleges and institutions, supported very well by its specialist status as a sports college. Its work with the local and wider community and other colleges is outstanding because of its breadth and quality. It includes participation by younger students in World Challenge projects in Poland and Morocco and by sixth formers in countries such as Tanzania, Ecuador and Vietnam. Teacher exchanges and work with Italian and Spanish colleges benefit students in Years 8 and 9 as they work with peers overseas on projects such as alcohol and addiction. Students are quick to settle on arrival and confident about moving on to the next stage of education or work. Experiences such as a 'taste of life' at Swansea University help with this. The college offers master classes in conjunction with university departments, chances for students to coach primary students in a wide range of sports and related opportunities for community service. Sixth formers benefit from the chance to take Open University units, while groups in Year 10 thrive on the flexible learning programme managed in partnership with a college of further education. Mature students have the chance to take advanced level courses alongside sixth formers. Many people from the community come into college regularly and enjoy using its facilities. The key benefit is the creation of a strong foundation for lifelong learning for students of all abilities and aspirations within a culture where learning can be fun. This ensures that students develop very good attitudes to work and are very responsive to the college's provision, including a very wide range of electives and other extra-curricular enrichment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall, despite the fact the college does not fully meet all statutory requirements. The governors are knowledgeable and carry out their work with rigour and challenge. There is **very good** leadership from the principal and several subject co-ordinators. The leadership team is good overall. Staff development is very good. The college has to work very hard to overcome the difficulties of a three site college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principal has a strong vision and ambition for the college.
- Distinctive whole-college ethos with a strong commitment to inclusion.
- The sports and community college status has a positive impact.
- Leadership, teamwork and the management structure are key inter-related elements which promote students' academic and personal achievement.
- The governing body is well informed and organised.
- Staff training and professional development are very good.
- Statutory requirements are not fully met.
- Some specific curriculum policies are not applied throughout the college.
- Some aspects of the administration of special educational needs are not complete.

Commentary

46. The governors are very active. The committee structure and the links with the leadership team together with regular visiting mean that governors are well informed and able to develop a secure awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They provide a good balance of support and challenge and thus help the college with strategic and operational management. For example, the staffing committee worked with the college to produce a performance management policy. An important outcome of this was that more time was made available for lesson observation, which is improving the monitoring of teaching and learning.

47. In one aspect of its work the governing body is unsatisfactory, because it is not ensuring that the college meets all statutory requirements. Curriculum requirements are not being met regarding citizenship and also religious education in the sixth form. There is no daily act of collective worship for all students. There is no access policy as required by current legislation for the disabled.

48. The principal's leadership is visionary and distinctive. There is an unmistakable whole-college ethos with its emphasis on people and creating opportunities for everyone to achieve. The use of funding arising from the sports college status and the range of work done, is clear testimony to these values operating within the college and in community links. The principal develops leadership at all levels. He leads by example, encouraging teamwork and strategic thinking throughout the college. The leadership team and other key staff take their cue from the principal. This is well illustrated by recent appointments in art, science and mathematics which have already given a strong sense of direction to colleagues and are providing the drive for improvement within their subjects. Also, very good leadership of the sixth form promotes high standards.

49. The college has moved to more shared responsibility and better collaborative working. In response to the previous inspection report, where inconsistencies in expectations and significant differences in ethos were criticised, the staff have worked very hard to ensure that all sites operate as part of the same institution and that there is consistency in essential academic and pastoral functions. Overall, they have succeeded in achieving this and the approach supports both learning and personal development. Students know that expectations are the same and that they will be treated in the same way. Achieving this has had cost implications due to duplication of some jobs and resources. The college is emerging from a period of significant difficulties in recruiting suitable teachers for some subjects, but the problem is being managed well. For example, unqualified staff are being trained and they receive support from experienced recently retired staff as well as those in post. However, staffing issues have meant that some national initiatives such as literacy, numeracy

and ICT across the curriculum have had a lower priority than maintaining stability and they are not securely embedded in all subjects. Students' achievement in these areas is hindered.

50. The college has recently re-organised the management of special educational needs: prior to the beginning of this term, the three centres worked almost entirely separately. The new management structure is already beginning to ensure that the inclusion and support of students with special educational needs and disabilities follows a whole-college approach, with recent training for all staff on target-setting. The teaching assistants are split into three teams, one for each site, and each team has a team leader, with one having overall management responsibility for all teaching assistants. There have been differences in the extent to which the role of the teaching assistants has been developed on each site in relation to subject liaison but the current management structure is beginning to ensure a more consistent approach. The college's new policy for special educational needs and disabilities reflects the improved provision and management, but has not yet been formally ratified by the governing body. The college has not yet produced an access plan and policy for development, which are statutory requirements under the Special Needs and Disability Act, 2001 (SENDA).

51. Financial control is effective and is monitored using the county internal self-audit scheme. The budget deficit is being reduced by giving higher priority to best value principles and also by income generation. Careful planning and communication ensure that college administrative procedures are clear and not unduly bureaucratic. Although the administration for special educational needs is being put into place, the documentation associated with student targets needs developing

52. The college provides an impressive number of courses for teaching, support, and new staff as a result of its status as a training school. Very good links with university education departments complement the initial and graduate teacher training programmes provided by the college.

Leadership and management in the sixth form

53. The governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and challenge and support its managers very effectively. There is no separate sixth form development plan, but the governing body is involved in monitoring the overall college plan, which contains targets specific to the sixth form. The governing body has ensured that the sixth form is fully inclusive by not insisting on minimum entrance qualifications. It has not ensured, however, that the sixth form fulfils its statutory duty in relation to the teaching of religious education and this aspect of its work is, therefore, unsatisfactory.

54. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The principal has delegated responsibility for the management of the sixth form to an assistant principal, who is the line manager of the head and deputy head of the sixth form. These three senior managers work very cohesively together. They have a clear vision for the development of the sixth form and set about achieving it purposefully. The students comment very positively about the leadership and management. The sixth form has very good systems for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress. The tutor system is very innovative and offers very good academic and pastoral support. Students appreciate the freedom and responsibilities they are given. The monitoring of teaching and learning and of the standards reached in subjects is thorough and very effective. The sixth form leaders have identified clear priorities for future developments. The approaches to financial management are sound and help the sixth form to achieve its educational priorities.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	6,096,797
Total expenditure	5,971,332
Expenditure per pupil	3,279

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	(317,967)
Balance carried forward to the next	(192,502)

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests are satisfactory and GCSE examinations are good.
- Students' learning benefits from good teaching by specialist teachers.
- Standards are rising in spite of continuing staffing difficulties.
- Some students do not write at length and do not use the range of vocabulary evident in oral work or expected for their age.

Commentary

55. Results in the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were satisfactory compared with the national average, but below those achieved by students in similar colleges. Students, especially high achievers, did better in mathematics and science. The standards achieved in GCSE English are good, and in English Literature they are similar to those found nationally. In 2002, students generally made more progress in their other subjects and fewer boys were entered for English than nationally. Girls continue to outperform boys. Indications are that these trends have improved in 2003. The evidence of students' work in Years 7 to 11 indicates that positive change is taking place, but improvements are not yet secure in terms of examination data, especially for boys.

56. Students have positive attitudes to work that is demanding and challenging, and most make satisfactory progress as they move through the college. Their standard of work at the end of Years 9 and 11 is similar to the national average. By Year 9 students have good techniques for analysing literature because they read a wide range of high quality poetry, plays and fiction. The college has produced informative 'Can't Stop Reading' booklets to widen younger students' reading choices. Higher attaining students, girls and boys, reach good standards of writing in a range of styles. Average attainers' letters and diary entries show they understand problems encountered by the homeless. Lower attaining students recount the story of Macbeth, but their spelling is weak and boys' work is often unfinished.

57. By the end of Year 11, the writing of higher attaining students is well structured. Essays on 'Othello' include analysis of different productions of the play. Average attaining students make good use of quotations to show how Juliet's mood changes when she learns that Romeo is to be banished. Lower attainers write clearly and use literary terms such as irony accurately when they describe contestants on 'Blind Date'.

58. The teaching and learning seen in lessons were good, overall. In the most effective lessons, teachers' questioning helps students to think critically and form opinions. Feedback from discussions on the role of the medieval knight was guided skilfully by the teacher to make sure that there was analysis. In Year 9, very clear and accurate teaching means that students concentrate hard and gain confidence in learning to interpret a difficult text, 'Stone Cold'. In a small proportion of lessons, committed English teaching is made less effective because planning does not challenge different groups within the class, or teachers spend too long talking, and students are inactive. Expectations for boys' writing are inconsistent and overall are too low. As a result they do not write at length with the range of vocabulary evident in oral work or expected for their age.

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the post of co-ordinator is unfilled, and there has been significant staff turnover, standards are improving. There is a good ethos in the department, and the contribution made by new staff on both sites is valued. As a result of information gained from internal monitoring and assessment, the department has identified the need for greater consistency to share the expertise and good practice so that high expectations and challenge are made available to all groups of students.

60. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards for students in Years 7 to 9 have improved as a result of curriculum changes made to meet the requirements of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers use the College Marking Policy well to inform students on how to improve their work. In some classes, students use the same criteria to help each other improve first drafts of their work. Students with special educational needs make good progress in most classes where their needs are known. They are less well supported in mixed ability groups in Years 7 and 8 because individual education plans do not give sufficient guidance on literacy needs. Good use is made of opportunities for students to apply ICT skills, and library provision on both sites promotes students' wider reading choices.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Though students have satisfactory literacy skills, the provision for teaching English language and literacy across the college is not satisfactory because there are too many inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of opportunities planned by departments. There is a very good focus on understanding how language works in modern foreign languages. The English department creates a literary environment with high quality displays of students' work in classrooms and public spaces around the two sites. Good opportunities for students to read aloud, research and present their findings are planned in art, drama, English, music and ICT. Oral work is good in many lessons and students use technical vocabulary naturally in mathematics, science and music and sport, but students are less confident in presenting their findings to a wider audience and their voices are sometimes inaudible. Many opportunities are missed to develop reading and writing at all levels.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The teaching in French and German in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- The close co-operation between teachers and learning support assistants helps to support students with special educational needs well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and linguistic skills.
- Teachers use very good assessment and tracking strategies.
- The use of ICT is limited.

Commentary

62. Results in the GCSE examinations in French in 2002 were average. Results in 2003 dipped slightly, but were still broadly average. Both boys and girls generally performed to similar standards. Results in the GCSE examinations in German in 2002 were well below average and they were below average in 2003. Girls performed less well than boys.

63. By the end of Year 9 most students' listening, speaking and reading skills in French are average. In a Year 9 top set, however, students understood a long description in the past tense and had a very good grammatical understanding of the formation of the perfect tense of reflexive verbs. Their pronunciation was also good, which represents satisfactory achievement in French from Years 7 to 9. Writing is not as developed as the other skills because it is mainly used to consolidate oral work.

64. German lessons are not timetabled as part of the normal college day in Years 7 to 9, but the small elective Year 9 group was observed after college. After five lessons most students understand some classroom instructions and answer simple questions about themselves.

65. By the end of Year 11 standards in French are broadly in line with national expectations. Students' listening and speaking skills are very high, however and reading comprehension is good. Standards in writing are generally below average, although higher-attainers produce good quality course and home work. In a Year 11 top set students spoke with confidence and fluency. They discussed grammar in French with support and followed a lesson conducted entirely in French spoken at normal speed. In a Year 11 low set, students had good accents and could speak about holidays using the past tense. Standards in German by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. High attainers write and talk about jobs with reasonable accuracy. Their pronunciation of known vocabulary is very good and they have a good awareness of basic grammar. Low attainers can talk about future plans when skilfully supported. Achievement in French and German is good, because of the significantly high listening and speaking skills.

66. Teaching and learning are good in French in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning are very good in French and German in Years 10 and 11, because of the clear focus on GCSE criteria.. On occasions teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge in both French and German is very good. Most teachers use the foreign language almost exclusively in lessons and insist that students communicate in French or German as well. This develops students' listening and speaking skills to a very high standard. Lessons are very well planned and teachers make their aims clear at the beginning and during lessons. All lessons have a good balance of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Lessons are structured logically and are delivered at a brisk pace, which challenges and motivates students. Students are used to working in pairs and small groups as well as independently. A strong feature of the learning is that students evaluate and assess each others' work. The relationships between students and with teachers are very good in most lessons. On the few occasions where teaching was satisfactory this was because parts of lessons lacked pace and challenge. Teachers make very limited use of ICT.

67. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department works well as a team in spite of the split site. The collaboration with the learning support assistants is good, which ensures that students with special educational needs are well catered for. The subject co-ordinator provides a very good role model in the classroom. Strategies are in place to raise standards further and develop teaching and learning. The assessment of students' written work and their oral contributions in lessons is very good and students have clear targets for reaching higher standards. The department organises a number of visits to France and Germany, which motivate students and also help to raise standards. The low results in recent GCSE examinations in German are largely attributable to staffing difficulties, which are now resolved. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students have a positive attitude to work.
- Teachers are supportive and teaching is good.
- Students cannot sustain their efforts for the full length of a lesson when it is the second mathematics lesson in a day.
- ICT is not used enough to enhance mathematics teaching.

Commentary

68. Results in the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were high when compared with the national average and better than those achieved by students in similar schools. Students did better in mathematics than English or science. Mathematics results have gone up steadily. The standards achieved in GCSE mathematics for both boys and girls are above the national average. Overall, boys' and girls' achievement is not significantly different, however, boys gained a higher proportion of A* and A grades. Girls' achievement is similar to their performance in other subjects while boys do not always achieve grades comparable with other subjects.

69. The standard of work of current students at the end of Years 9 and 11 is good compared to the national average. Though not quite as good as the previous year's test and examination results the standards are consistent with what students have previously achieved. By Year 9, higher attaining students are able to solve simultaneous equations showing all the steps in their working very clearly. Average attainers calculate accurately both the interior and external angles of regular polygons, however their accompanying drawings are not always drawn with precision. Lower attaining students can calculate the mean and median of small sets of data accurately and interpret pie charts with understanding.

70. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining students successfully apply their mathematical knowledge and algebraic skills to carry out extensive investigations based on the painted cube. Average attainers meet the challenge of finding the relationship between a rectangular lawn and the areas of different paths around it. Lower attaining students are able to write an algebraic statement for finding any number in a given sequence.

71. Students have positive attitudes to work and their achievement is satisfactory as they move through the college. Relationships between teachers and students are good and work takes place in a relaxed and productive atmosphere. Students have confidence to ask questions to gain further understanding. Whilst most show an enthusiasm for calculations, many boys are reluctant to use written English to explain them. Students' care and pride in their work are not yet consistently good.

72. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teachers use a question and answer technique effectively to establish levels of understanding and to involve students in the lesson's development. Teachers' encouragement and support of students are often very good, enabling them to make good progress. Lessons taken by specialist mathematics teachers are usually planned carefully especially when teaching a second mathematics lesson in the day to Years 10 and 11. Despite this, the students' productivity falls during the last twenty minutes of that second lesson. Some lessons lack pace and variety to keep students absorbed in their work. The three-part lesson, an effective standard practice, has the objectives clearly visible so that students know precisely what is expected of them. However, the lack of individual whiteboards limits the range of starters and the final plenary sessions are not always as beneficial to students as they could be. Homework is used effectively to support and enhance classwork. Students with special educational needs benefit from teachers and teaching assistants working in partnership. The teaching assistants demonstrate high levels of patience and understanding for all students especially those who require almost constant attention. In a small proportion of lessons, teaching is less effective either because teachers have not considered the difficulties that students will encounter or there is poor student management.

73. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has only been in post since September and has already made an impact with team members who are keen to support her enthusiasm and energy to improve the status and standards of mathematics. The development plan identifies correctly the priority to establish consistency across the East and West sites. The first steps have been taken in using a common marking and assessment strategy. It is supported by a bank of comments, related to National Curriculum criteria, which informs students of their progress. The Key Stage 3 strategy is enabling teachers to collaborate in their planning and to share good practice. Analysis of national test data is helping to target areas of support for groups of students in Key Stage 3.

74. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The examination results have continued to rise and all the issues raised during the last inspection have been addressed apart from the use of information and communication technology. The new co-ordinator has this as a priority and discussions reveal a considerable interest throughout the team for the purchase of new software.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2002 were average in national terms and below similar schools, but improved significantly in 2003.
- Examination results in 2002 at the end of Year 9 were high.
- Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
- The range and balance of teaching and learning styles is too restricted.
- Assessment procedures are good, but are not applied consistently.
- Leadership and management of the department are both good, with significant very good features.

Commentary

75. Examination results at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2002 and well above those in similar colleges. Results increased slightly in 2003. GCSE results in the separate sciences in 2002 were well above average and in chemistry and physics were significantly higher than in most of the students' other subjects. Results in double award science were about average and in single award science were significantly below average. There was significant underachievement in double and single award science. Overall, GCSE results were about average but were below those of similar colleges. Results improved significantly in 2003 and there was no underachievement in double and single award science.

76. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average, for example in terms of understanding the reactions of acids and displacement reactions of metals. Students make good progress and achieve well. Standards in Year 11 are well above average, for example in terms of an understanding of osmosis, refraction of light, heats of reaction and use of the wave equation. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

77. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have good subject knowledge, their explanations are clear and they use questioning to check students' understanding. Students' grasp of concepts is developed through appropriate written and practical activities. There is a significant amount of good teaching throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are conducted at a good pace although clear time-scales are not always set. Lessons involve a suitable variety of activities, which are well matched to the needs of the students. Effective use is made of models and in some lessons the Key Stage 3 Strategy is implemented to good effect. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and as a result learning is satisfactory. Students' attitudes in middle and lower ability groups are satisfactory but less positive than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning styles have been broadened to include some group work, student presentations, mind mapping and modelling, but some lessons are too teacher dominated and students are not involved enough. The range and balance of styles is still too restricted, particularly in Years 10 and 11 with too little open investigative work or independent work. The use of ICT has been restricted by a lack of resources, but this is currently being remedied. The department has introduced good new marking procedures designed to tell students specifically what they need to do to improve, but implementation is inconsistent. The procedures are thorough for tracking students' progress, target-setting and giving feedback to teachers if there is underachievement in their groups.

78. The subject co-ordinator has been appointed relatively recently and has a clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards and has taken effective action. There is regular monitoring of teaching and teachers are observing each other to learn from good practice. Schemes of work have been revised and are good in Years 7 to 9. The schemes for Years 10 and 11 are less detailed and give insufficient guidance about teaching and learning styles. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the pace of improvement has increased in the last two years.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9.
- The leadership and management is good in Years 7 to 9.
- In Years 10 and 11, the provision does not ensure that all students have enough access to ICT.

Commentary

79. Teacher assessment in Year 9 and the inspection evidence indicate that attainment above national average. Students' achievement is good. These standards are achieved through a good mixture of specialist ICT lessons and the effective use of computers in other subjects, such as English and PE. In Years 7 to 9, students often perform complex tasks such as embedding internet data to spreadsheets and writing web sites in programming language. The use of control software and hardware to monitor and change external events is both exciting and challenging. Students use flow diagrams to alter external events. They modify these to change sequences and patterns.

80. The positive work in Years 7 to 9 is not being built on systematically in Years 10 and 11. ICT knowledge and skills are taught entirely through the other subjects and although statutory requirements are broadly met, the college cannot be certain that all students consistently have enough teaching of, and access to, ICT to develop their knowledge and skills to an appropriate level. Some students have much greater access to ICT than others and in some subjects achievement was often good. In Years 10 and 11, work in geography, music, vocational subjects and English is good and it is very good in PE. In citizenship, a short course introduces web site design, but this is limited. The use of computers has been unsatisfactory in science, though this is currently being remedied. Lower attaining students are helped in all years through the use of computers in lessons, though provision is not co-ordinated systematically across the college and this is restricting some students' progress.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good in lessons in Years 7 to 9. The teaching proceeds at a fast pace and students' attitudes are positive because they enjoy being able to modify and present their work well. Lessons are being re-planned against a national scheme and additional resources. Where computers are shared one between two students there are often inefficiencies in the use of time. Whilst sharing often leads to good mutual support, it can also lead to slower than expected progress. This was evident in some Year 7 lessons where it had an effect on the progress of both higher and lower attaining students. When given the opportunity they make good gains in extended writing and drafting and re-drafting text. In Years 8 and 9, more able students are challenged when using the computers, but this is not continued into Years 10 and 11.

82. The quality of leadership and management in Years 7 to 9 is good. The curriculum has improved and is broader and better structured. This has increased the level of challenge and taken account of the different ways in which students learn. The improvements are being reflected in higher standards. There is no specific leadership of ICT in years 10 and 11, which seriously limits what can be achieved. Despite the deficiencies in Years 10 and 11, the overall provision for ICT has improved. Standards and resources have improved. Drop-in facilities and enrichment activities to support out-of-hours learning are good. Sports college funding has been used to improve the availability of hardware and software. Much better use is made of communication software and the tools used are more sophisticated and adaptable for project work and research. The whole-college

network greatly improves efficiency between sites but it has reached its capacity, this restricts pace in many lessons and there are still shortages of equipment. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results and standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are good.
- Achievement is good throughout the college.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the college, students are interested, enthusiastic and value their learning.
- The curriculum is broad, varied and interesting.
- Assessment and target setting do not give students enough help in improving their work.
- Some teaching does not offer sufficient support or challenge for all levels of attainment.

Commentary

83. The 2002 results at the end of Year 9 were above average and have improved steadily over recent years, including the proportion attaining higher levels. GCSE results have been above average in recent years, including in 2002, and improved significantly in 2003. From the students' work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages and by Year 11 they are above.

84. Students in Year 9 have good skills in carrying out investigations, for example through the study of microclimates around the college. They have learned how weather is recorded, analysed, and its impact on people. Students in Year 11 are learning to think as geographers and their skills are developed well through the use of decision-making activities. They have a good understanding of settlement hierarchies and urbanisation and can apply their knowledge to places such as New York, Glasgow and Sao Paulo. Their understanding of physical geography is very good and the field work they have undertaken has made a very good contribution to their learning. Students achieve well throughout the college though some lower-attainers do not achieve as well as they might. In general, those with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, although learning is better when they are supported by a teaching assistant. Students' skills in literacy are satisfactory, and higher attainers successfully use extended writing, but some opportunities are missed to help lower-attainers develop their skills in spelling and basic grammar.

85. Teaching and learning are predominantly good, though there is some inconsistency and not all teaching is challenging enough. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, relationships are good and students are often treated as independent learners, to which they respond. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher's quiet, relaxed manner and high expectations resulted in excellent attitudes to work and students who could talk about their coursework with animation. Homework is set regularly and used well throughout the college. Teachers use video and ICT resources well and as a result many lessons are interesting and stimulating. Assessment is developing and students are being set some targets. However, the information from assessment is not yet used well enough to help students see how they can improve. Teachers are not yet using assessment to help them plan for differing levels of attainment which explains why some lower attaining students do not achieve as well as they might.

86. The leadership and management of the subject are good overall, despite some relative weaknesses, because they have provided a climate in which students achieve well and teaching is good. The curriculum is also good. Schemes of work are very comprehensive and students have an interesting and stimulating range of opportunities which develop thinking skills as well as their factual

knowledge and their understanding of physical and human processes. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is based on teachers' very good subject knowledge and commitment.
- Relationships between students and specialist teachers are good.
- Students achieve well.
- Good planning and teamwork by members of the history department in encouraging the interest of students.
- Students are not always consistently well motivated.

Commentary

87. GCSE results in recent years have varied between above and below the national averages. In 2002, they were above average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are consistently well above national expectations. In the current Year 9, they represent good achievement in relation to entry to the college in Year 7. Students of all abilities demonstrate growing levels of factual knowledge and understanding, and a better appreciation of the skills of analysis and judgement needed when working with source materials and on case studies. This was seen during the inspection in Year 9 lessons examining the building of canals and a Year 10 lesson considering the successes of the Weimar Republic.

88. Standards in the current Year 11 are satisfactory and most students are achieving well, including those with special educational needs. Students' thoughtful questions during lessons help them to improve their ability to interpret historical evidence, such as in Year 11 classes on the supernatural ideas which have been held about medicine and on the Black Death.

89. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good overall, with strong features contributing to some teaching which is very effective. Specialist historians are knowledgeable about their subject and committed to developing the enthusiasm of their classes. Support for individual students is very noticeable, though there could on occasions be more challenge. Teachers work hard to increase the motivation and participation of the less committed students. Some students make valuable oral contributions, however many tend to stay in the background. Some marking and assessment is of good quality, but more consistency is needed in offering aspects and ideas for development. The subject uses ICT effectively, and this is appreciated by students. An established programme of visits and activities provides important opportunities to support work in college.

90. The leadership and management of history are good. The recently appointed subject co-ordinator has a clear vision and priorities for the further development of the subject. These include improving the consistency in the assessment and monitoring of students' work. Progress has been made in the writing of schemes of work and in relation to teaching and learning strategies. Close teamwork is ensuring a focus and continuity in the subject's aims and use of resources. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good, most notably in the consistency of the quality of teaching.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11, and as a result achievement is very good and GCSE results are above average.
- Standards in RE are high. This considerable improvement since the previous inspection owes much to the current head of department.
- Assessment is very helpful to students particularly in Years 10 and 11. They understand exactly what they need to do to improve and their performance is carefully tracked.
- Achievement of the current Year 11 is equally good for those doing a short or full GCSE examination.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but lessons often lack variety and higher attainers are not always suitably challenged.
- The sometimes over-narrow teaching approaches give few opportunities for independent learning or pupil enrichment.

Commentary

91. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national expectation. Inspection evidence points to satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection with the majority of students performing relatively well in comparison to entry levels. However, a significant number of higher attaining students are under performing and working below their capabilities. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls.

92. In Years 10 and 11 standards are well above average. GCSE results convey an upward trend since the previous inspection and the achievement of the current 16-year-olds is equally good for those doing a short or full GCSE course. Results are higher than those of similar schools and RE outperforms many subject areas within the college.

93. Achievement in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is broadly satisfactory and most students make adequate progress. However there are pockets of underachievement associated with ineffective teaching when the pace of lessons slows and not enough work is completed because the teacher intervenes too often. In these lessons students are too often passive. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well and good gains are made across Key Stage 4. This is a result of high expectations, excellent teacher knowledge and subject expertise and effective support for examination success.

94. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. They have excellent listening and concentration skills and are willing participants when lessons are varied and interesting. Behaviour and concentration deteriorate however when students are not suitably challenged or the lesson pace is too slow. Students within GCSE groups are mature, confident and articulate individuals who are effective debaters and critical thinkers. The majority are motivated, independent learners who are courteous and respectful to their teachers and colleagues.

95. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9 with many good features. Successful lessons are characterised by high expectations and a very high standard of subject expertise and knowledge. The result is that learning is good and students' move quickly in their understanding of fundamental religious and philosophical questions. Students' sustain concentration and seek meaning and interpretation from religious texts, artefacts and symbols for example the study of Jewish Food Laws in Year 8. A particular strength of the department is the ethos of mutual trust and respect that teachers create through being exemplary role models and through comments which praise and challenge the learner. In less successful lessons, the aims and outcomes are sometimes unclear to the learner. The tasks are not varied enough and the work is not always challenging enough.

96. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good overall. Very clear assessment ensures that work is accurately targeted. Students are very well prepared in their understanding of what the examinations will demand. The good quality of the teaching in Years 10 and 11 stems from the excellent grasp that teachers have of the subject and courses they teach and the orderly classes they maintain through firm but friendly management of their students. Students are encouraged to discuss and debate on matters of life and death and they have a very good understanding of moral issues as seen in the light of their own experiences. They are able to reflect on their own and others views with sensible and mature consideration and deal with sensitive subjects such as abortion with objectivity and discretion.

97. The head of department provides strong curriculum leadership and is committed to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. The department is rigorous in tracking students with great care through assessment and the use of student data information. The staff know that the main priority now is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Students achieve well.
- Working relationships are good and lessons have a positive atmosphere.
- The proportion of A* and A grades attained in GCSE is high.
- Provision for potentially disaffected students is good.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are too generous and over estimate what students have achieved.

Commentary

98. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above the national average, but current work indicates that attainment is in line with the national average. In 2002, GCSE results were in line with the national average. The proportion of boys gaining A to C grades was above the national average for boys, but for girls, this proportion was below their national average. The proportion of students attaining A* and A grades was above the national average, however, girls and boys do not do as well in design technology as in most of their other GCSE subjects.

99. By the end of Year 9, students develop a satisfactory range of designing and making skills and their achievement is good when compared to their standard of work on entry to the college – *which is?* Students have opportunities to research and analyse existing products and develop their own design ideas through to final designs. These are then made using a satisfactory range of basic skills in a variety of materials. Standards attained vary according to students' ability. All students follow well-structured programmes which allow them to experience both designing and making. Higher attaining students produce folders of well researched and presented work, which shows their greater depth of knowledge and understanding. All students including those with special educational needs make good progress because they enjoy this practical subject. By the end of Year 11, current standards are in line with expectations. Students' work is well structured to meet the requirements of the examination. Design folders include a good range of graphical techniques and computer-generated work is often used to improve content and presentation. All students, including those who have special needs, show confidence in researching, presenting the results of surveys, developing ideas to satisfy specifications and then applying technical knowledge in producing well made final solutions. Higher attaining students produce very good folders and their final solutions are often creative and well made.

100. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who deliver centrally planned courses well. A good range of designing and making activities captures the interest of students of all levels of ability and students with special educational needs make progress at a rate which matches that of other students. Lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 are planned satisfactorily. However, in some cases teachers do not make assessment criteria sufficiently clear and this affects the standards being attained. In Years 10 and 11, teachers structure programmes of work, and plan lessons well. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of the courses they teach. They have good technical knowledge and this enables them to demonstrate new skills and provide very good individual support. The pace of learning is good and time is used well. Students' attitudes are good. They are co-operative, show interest in the tasks set, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Many spend a lot of time in presenting their coursework to a high standard and homework is used well to reinforce learning. Marking and assessment procedures encourage students to improve their work.

101. Leadership and management of the large department and widely spread accommodation and resources are both very good. The close co-operation across the large team of experienced and inexperienced design technology teachers enables the department to provide a balanced curriculum and maintain standards. Departmental documentation provides good central support for programmes of work but needs development to enable new and inexperienced teachers to develop deeper understanding of what needs to be taught and why. The head of department, together with the rest of the staff have created a stable, structured and supportive environment in which teachers and students are effectively and sensitively monitored and well supported. The working environment and resources have been improved and are now good overall. However, although students have better access to computers, the lack of equipment for computer-aided design and manufacture limits what they can achieve. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

The focus was art and music, but drama was also sampled. The provision in drama is **very good**. Results in GCSE examinations are above the national average and the teaching is very good. In the lessons observed in Years 7 and 11, achievement across the ability range was very good because teachers focus on technique and give positive guidance on improving performance through evaluation. Year 7 students worked hard to perfect the point of effort and release in their mime sequences and take great pride in their work. Year 11 were responsive to their teacher's guidance on use of voice and posture and improved their projection in scenes linked to 'The Last Resort'. Leadership of the subject is very good. Its management has been affected by staffing difficulties, but the priority has been to focus on examination students. The curriculum is well planned and work is regularly assessed. Provision for students in Years 7 to 9 is only one lesson every two weeks, however appropriate use is made of the Electives programme for Year 9 students to prepare for GCSE. Very good use is made of local and national productions to support students' work in lessons.

Art

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving standards in all years.
- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement.
- Excellent leadership, presenting a very clear direction and focus on improvement.
- Students in Years 7-9 are not given enough information about the National Curriculum levels.

Commentary

102. In 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed standards to be above expectations with significant numbers of students working at higher levels. The work seen suggests these assessments were slightly generous. Standards in GCSE examinations were below average and reflected significant underachievement when compared with results in other subjects. However the highest-attaining students did very well. The percentage of students gaining the highest A* and A grades was considerably above average. In 2003, standards improved and were above average.

103. The work by current students is above expectations and significant numbers are achieving standards well above expectations. Achievement is very good because the work is demanding, students are learning new skills and they are able use them in new and exciting ways. In Years 7 to 9, students' work shows increasing depth and a growing understanding of their own and artists' work. They are able to explain the decisions they make as they work, connecting their own work and work by artists exploring similar themes. Year 7 students understood the basic ideas behind Cubism, could talk about the different viewpoints chosen by the artist and describe the composition, noting the geometric shapes and limited pallet. This prepared them well for cutting and re-arranging their drawings to present a fragmented, multi-layered image. In Year 9 students constructed a human figure, initially from wire, and carefully added papier maché so the figure remained in position with the weight finely balanced and distributed. Their learning was reinforced by key words, introduced by the teacher, helping them describe the similarities and differences between work by Giacometti, Flanagan and Gormley.

104. In Years 10 and 11, standards are quite mixed, reflecting some variation in the quality and range of work students covered prior to beginning their examination courses. Most are working at above average standards and are achieving very well. They are benefiting from individual guidance in meeting the examination requirements. All students are progressing very well, although girls are especially confident and skilled at developing ideas and concepts creatively and imaginatively, for example through the personal book project. The more stable staffing situation, together with the very good teaching, are leading to improved standards that are positively reflected in students' work.

105. Teaching and learning were very good overall and in a small proportion of lessons teaching was outstanding. Teachers created many opportunities for students to practise using technical language and to reinforce concepts like space, scale and proportion. Discussions helped students develop a deeper understanding and an awareness of the decisions they made as they worked. Teachers have very high expectations and the examples of high quality work displayed around the studios help to reinforce this. Their command of the subject is excellent. The work they set and their demonstrations bring the subject to life and motivate students to want to improve their work. Lessons were well structured and the pace of learning brisk. Teachers' interventions were generally well timed, reinforcing points that the whole class could learn from and quietly and constructively helping those students needing one-to-one support. Teachers' assessments are currently the subject of departmental review and moderation. Written and verbal feedback gives students helpful pointers for improvement although in Years 7 to 9 not enough information about achievement against National Curriculum levels is shared with students. They therefore they have limited information on which to plot their progress.

106. Leadership is excellent and the impact of what has been achieved in a very short time is beginning to be seen in improved standards. The management and implementation of the curriculum in years 7-9, are very good. A curriculum is in place that progressively builds on skills, knowledge and understanding, introduces computers for image manipulation and is directly tackling the years of underachievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching strategies lead to good learning.
- Planning has clear vision and good commitment to improvement.
- ICT provision to support the development of music skills is good.
- The cramped accommodation is a barrier to learning.

Commentary

107. By the end of Year 9 students' music skills and knowledge are in line with the national average. There is an understanding of rhythm and counting in ensemble work indicating growing listening skills. They can satisfactorily improvise melodic and rhythmic material within given structures, explore musical devices and compose music to convey a mood or scene, for example skating on ice. Students with special education needs make similar progress to others because of the practical nature of the subject and the extra help they receive. Higher attaining students are challenged to embellish their work and can analyse and evaluate how music reflects the context in which it is played. Achievement is good and standards are improving rapidly in Years 7 to 9 after a period of staffing problems slowed the pace of students' learning.

108. The examination results at GCSE Level in 2002 were well above average but the lower results in 2003 reflect staffing problems at that time. By the end of Year 11, current attainment is good and students produce original and imaginative music in a variety of genre and style. Achievement is good. Students make positive evaluative judgements on their own and others' performance so that they learn how to improve, but there is still scope to add more expression and dynamic so that performances are shaped more sensitively and expressed more musically.

109. Teaching and learning are good, overall. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who successfully target key musical skills using a variety of strategies in order to lay down a sure foundation for future improvement. Students learn quickly where the pace is brisk and they have a variety of tasks, which challenge them to make creative and intellectual effort. Self and group evaluation is built into lessons and this is an excellent feature because it encourages independent learning and leads to very good progress. When coupled with the use of examination criteria it provides a very helpful preparation for the GCSE students in Years 10 and 11. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations and want to do their best. Targets are shared with the students so that they know how well they are learning and, more importantly, how to improve.

110. Leadership and management are both good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All issues have been tackled, apart from the unsuitable accommodation. The new subject co-ordinator has a clear vision and commitment to improvement, and after a period of uncertainty standards are rising rapidly. ICT facilities are being put in place and these will enhance learning significantly. As part of the Expressive Arts faculty programme, there are numerous opportunities for extra-curricular music and instrumental tuition from a supportive team of peripatetic teachers. Resources are steadily being built up to a satisfactory level but learning is hindered by unsuitable and cramped accommodation on the East site because students cannot receive a full musical experience or be properly supervised and supported in their practical work and performance. Sound leakage from practice rooms and background transformer hum on the West site reduce the enjoyment and listening skills of both students and teachers.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good** and has been greatly enhanced as a result of the college gaining specialist sports status.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality of teaching and learning results in good progress in lessons.
- The proportion of students attaining A* to C grade passes at GCSE is improving.
- The majority of students achieve well by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Very good leadership and management and the very strong team spirit and ethos in the department.
- The department's involvement in an extensive range of initiatives linked to the college's specialist sports status.
- The inconsistent quality of marking of GCSE theory work.

Commentary

111. The college is unusual in that all students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE course, and around eight out of every ten students were entered for the examination. This is much higher than most colleges and it is difficult, therefore, to make realistic national comparisons or comparisons to other subjects taken in the college. Though results in the GCSE examination were below the national average in 2002, in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9, students' achievement was as expected. Boys and girls performed as well as each other. Provisional results in 2003 show a good improvement in the proportion of A* to C grade passes.

112. In lessons and extra-curricular activities seen in Year 9, standards are average for the majority. Students are, however, on line to attain above average standards at the end of Year 9 with the majority at level 5 or above. Achievement is good because standards on entry were below what was expected for Year 7. In trampoline lessons, for example most girls perform sequences of controlled jumps and moves with confidence and the more capable are starting to include more difficult combinations. However, in mixed dance lessons, standards are not as good because teaching and learning is less effective. Good quality teaching and learning has led to good improvement for the great majority. The programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has also been beneficial in this respect.

113. In lessons seen in Year 11, standards are above average because, by following the GCSE full course, all students are being well challenged. In badminton lessons, for example, they are developing their techniques in the use of overhead strokes. The more capable are effective in their use of both the backhand and forehand overhead clear and are working at practical levels commensurate with A* to C grade passes. Ineffective use of footwork and movement around the court mean the less capable have much to improve to attain higher-grade passes. In the GCSE dance course, students' choreographic and performance standards are above average.

114. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all years and results in good progress in all lessons. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught. The good quality teaching is typified by pace, purpose, progression and challenge. There is consistent insistence on high standards of behaviour. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, which enhances the quality of learning. All groups of students are therefore able to make good progress. Teachers circulate well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes students aware of their capabilities. On the odd occasion, however, there are insufficient structured opportunities for students to be involved in evaluating other students' work or in coaching – this would deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. Teachers make effective use of ICT to support learning, for example, the use of digital video cameras to enable students to analyse their own performance. In an excellent GCSE theory lesson, the use of a power point presentation added considerably to the quality of presentation, to the pace of working and enabled students to build very successfully in what they already knew. The quality of marking of GCSE theory work is inconsistent and students are not always being told what they need to do to make further progress.

115. Leadership and management of the department are clear and focused. There is a shared commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning as well as improving standards even further. However, not all schemes of work support students' basic skills of literacy and numeracy sufficiently well. Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year broadens students' learning experience and enables the more capable to represent the college in competitive fixtures. Fifty-seven individual students from across all years have gained representative honours at county level in a variety of sports and approximately 25 per cent of these have gone on to gain national representative honours. Many college teams have performed well in county competitions. Students' leadership skills are developed well through the junior sports leaders award (JSLA) course and dance has been introduced as a GCSE course. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above average and students tend to do better in business studies than in their other subjects.
- Students are interested and well motivated.
- The course makes very good use of the local resources to illustrate business principles and practice.
- ICT is not used as extensively as it could be.
- The marking of work is not consistently giving students enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

116. Business studies is a popular option in Years 10 and 11 and one in which both boys and girls generally achieve well. Examination results have been *well above average* and better than other subjects, particularly in 2002, though the difference in 2003 results was not as great. The work seen in class and in students' books was generally of a good standard, though the quality of presentation varied significantly and some students showed limited literacy skills. Orally, students were able to explain their ideas and answers well.

117. The teaching and learning seen was satisfactory overall and much of it was good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and work hard to ensure that students are. The use of local resources is good. For example, the Year 10 study of Wantage as a market town helps students to apply what they have learnt in the first half term of the course, to a real situation. They are able to use their knowledge to identify different types of businesses and it helps them to understand the significance of location. The work is generally well matched to the students' needs and makes good links with previous work. Teachers know their students well and in one lesson the partnership between the teacher and the teaching assistant was good. The level of individual support enabled weaker students to achieve to the best of their ability. Students generally respond well, though on one occasion when the teaching was less than satisfactory, the students had not grasped what was expected of them and they became inattentive and achieved very little. Students' work is regularly marked and the oral feedback is helpful, but in some classes there are relatively few constructive written comments.

118. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The schemes of work are adequate, particularly for experienced teachers. They help to ensure that activities meet the examination requirements and are well matched to the immediate needs of students. Resources are appropriate, but not enough use is made of ICT in supporting and extending students' learning. The standards evident at the time of the last inspection have broadly been maintained and the improvement is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

The PSHE programme includes sex education and relationships, drugs education, careers education and preparation for work experience. Much of the work the college does in this area takes place outside the formal PSHE lessons through the electives and other programmes. Students also have access to a wide range of opportunities that make a good contribution to their personal development. These include a residential activity in Year 7, sports leadership programmes, community work, fund raising for charity and taking part in debates or the Duke of Edinburgh award. This aspect of the PSHE provision is **very successful**.

The taught PSHE provision is **satisfactory**. It is taught during three tutor periods of twenty minutes. Year co-ordinators provide good support on these occasions. The quality of teaching varies, but overall is satisfactory. When teachers are confident and informed, learning is satisfactory or better. Students play a very active part in some lessons, for instance determining and agreeing the 'ground rules' to be used during discussions on sex and relationships. In others, teaching is reliant on worksheets and learning is passive. In all lessons, the time available curtails the use of visiting speakers and reduces the range of teaching methods used, limiting achievement. Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and aware that the change from a one-hour lesson to tutor periods needs to be matched by development and updating of schemes of work and more training for staff. Resources are good, particularly for careers education and work experience.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory** because it is not meeting statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and a practical understanding of issues relating to citizenship through a wide range of activities.
- The scheme of work in place for some Year 10 and 11 students incorporates a good range of active teaching and learning styles, but not all students have access to the full course.
- The provision for students in Years 7 to 9 is not effective because the contribution from other subjects to citizenship is not well enough co-ordinated to ensure that all students receive their entitlement.
- There is no system for assessing, recording and reporting students' achievement in citizenship.

Commentary

119. Students have access to a wide range of activities that develop responsibility and other skills of citizenship. These include membership of the college council, fund raising for local, national and international charities, reception duties in Years 7 to 9, the peace patrol and peer mentoring. Students on the extended curriculum took part in 'Breaking the News'; a simulation organised by the Oxford Touring Company. Subjects offer other opportunities such as the Sports Leaders Award. These ensure that students gain a better understanding of practical citizenship than they do in many schools.

120. The quality of teaching seen in citizenship lessons was satisfactory with some good features, particularly the use of active teaching styles. In one lesson, for instance, the use of forum theatre enabled all students to make a contribution to a role-play focusing on law and order. Year 11 students, reflecting on their experiences in Year 10, cited a debate on corporal punishment as an example of an engaging and effective lesson. In Years 7 to 9, citizenship is taught through the subjects of the curriculum with very variable effectiveness. The contribution of the different subjects is not identified clearly enough to ensure that all aspects of citizenship are covered adequately. A start has been made in providing subject co-ordinators with guidance but this does not yet inform teaching and the college has no system for recording and assessing students' achievement in citizenship across the curriculum. As a consequence, students are not able to make links between the good experiences in some subjects and the skills of citizenship. Year 11 students' knowledge

and understanding of, for example media bias or of democratic processes was insecure and standards were below expectations.

121. Overall, however, the provision for citizenship is still at an early stage of development and students are not achieving as well as they could. The college has not yet fully audited the contribution made by different subjects or agreed a development plan for citizenship. However, the potential for development is very good. Students are generally positive about the need for a citizenship programme. The leadership and management are broadly satisfactory. Some progress has been made this year with the introduction of a scheme of work for Year 10 and 11 students taking the standard curriculum. A good range of resources has been purchased and a set of materials produced for each topic. The staff team is enthusiastic and keen to develop appropriate courses and the college accepts the need to be more systematic in the planning, teaching and monitoring of the subject and in assessing how well students are achieving.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, latest year for which national comparisons are available.

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	11	81.8	90	36.4	42.7	38.2	39
Biology	6	100	81.6	16.7	81.6	33.3	33.2
Chemistry	7	100	84.8	0	84.8	31.4	35.2
English Literature	5	100	94.4	40	37.9	32	38.9
Design and technology	6	100	89.2	50	32	41.7	35.7
General Studies	104	96.2	78.6	46.2	25.7	41.4	30
Geography	6	100	88.3	33.3	36.4	41.7	36.3
Information technology	15	93.3	78.2	6.7	20.6	30	28.5
Mathematics	11	81.8	74.2	27.3	34.2	30	31.3
Physics	14	100	82	21.4	36.2	35	34.3
Sociology	8	100	83.7	12.5	33.6	33.8	33.8
Physical education	6	100	88.2	83.3	27.7	50	33.8

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	100	48.7	113.3	85.1
Biology	32	96.9	91.6	62.5	36.3	91.3	74.1
Business studies	27	100	96.4	33.3	32.8	80	76.5
Chemistry	21	100	94	52.4	45.9	89.5	81.1
Media studies	25	96	98.3	32	36.8	74	81.1
Drama	9	100	98.1	44.4	41.5	86.7	82.9
English Literature	33	97	98.5	36.4	43.7	78.2	84.3
Design and technology	20	100	95.3	20	35.5	77	76.5
Geography	29	100	97.1	51.7	40.5	90.3	80.9
German	8	100	96.3	37.5	40.5	82.5	82.1
History	25	100	97.1	28	41	78.4	81.2
Information technology	24	91.7	89.1	20.8	22.4	65.8	64.1
Mathematics	34	97.1	93.3	61.8	52.2	92.9	84.7
Physics	27	96.3	92.8	48.1	42.8	83	78.6
Religious studies	5	100	96.3	40	44	72	82.2
Sociology	27	88.9	95.4	22.2	39.6	64.4	79.1
Physical education	13	100	95.4	46.2	29.5	81.5	73.2

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
GNVQ Foundation Leisure & Tourism	9	78		44		0	
GNVQ Intermediate Business	13	46		23		0	
GNVQ Intermediate Health & Social Care	8	88		38		0	
GNVQ Intermediate Leisure & Tourism	15	80		0		0	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English Literature, French, German, media studies and Theatre Studies. English literature, French and media studies were inspected in depth and other subjects were sampled. GCSE English is offered as a one year re-sit course mainly for students who wish to improve their grades. GCSE Spanish is offered as a new course. In the German lesson observed in Year 12 teaching and learning were very good. Excellent use of the target language by the teacher develops students' speaking and listening skills very well. They write quickly and with good focus on making short sentences more interesting.

ENGLISH

Provision in English literature in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths

- Very good teaching, teacher subject knowledge, quality planning and challenge contribute to students' positive attitudes to learning.
- Very good relationships encourage students to ask questions and accept and give constructive criticism.
- Standards fell below the national average in 2002, though they have risen again in 2003.
- Good leadership is raising standards and guiding the department during a period of staffing change.

Commentary

122. Although staffing issues caused standards in AS and A Level results in 2002 to fall below national averages, this trend has been reversed in 2003 and a third of students gained the higher grades A and B. AS results are improving because the proportion of students gaining the lower grades has been reduced.

123. The standard of work of current students is above average. The structured approach to teaching specific critical skills in Year 12 means that students make rapid progress with essay writing. By Year 13, higher attaining students' writing is persuasive and insightful. They incorporate a range of critical views fluently in a close study of 'A Passage to India' and 'A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters'. Average attainers have a confident grasp of implied meaning and a good knowledge of technical terms. The writing of lower attaining students is evaluative and clear with good evidence from the text to support main points.

124. Teaching and learning are very good and lead to very good achievement. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements. Students' ideas are promptly and constructively evaluated, both in discussions and writing. Effective use is being made of peer assessment to develop students' critical awareness. For example, by working together to track assessment objectives in each others' essays on 'The Playmaker', students in Year 13 clearly understand the need to work in greater depth. Time is well used to move learning forward through focused discussions. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher's very good questioning techniques helped students gain confidence in their critical analysis of the imagery that suggests the breakdown of repression in 'Mrs Dalloway'.

125. Leadership and management of the subject are good in spite of recent staffing problems. The department is without a co-ordinator, however there is a shared commitment amongst established staff and teachers new to the department to raise examination results to their former high standard. As a result, numbers opting to take AS and who continue to A Level are rising and the percentage of students gaining the higher grades is increasing. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The expansion of extra-curricular enrichment would further improve opportunities for students to gain the highest marks.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

126. The approach to teaching language and literacy through other subjects in the sixth form is good. Effective work was seen in subjects such as art, business studies and religious studies where teachers expect students to acquire and use a high level of technical vocabulary. Communications skills are developed well in modern foreign languages, biology, and sport. However, sixth formers state they have few opportunities to deliver parts of lessons to their peers in mathematics and general studies. Their skills of critical analysis are developed well in English, ICT, media studies and religious studies. The monitoring of students' work in geography does not always correct spelling of key words and written work in psychology shows limited understanding of technical vocabulary.

FRENCH

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Lessons have a high level of challenge and a very brisk pace.
- Teachers insist that students speak in French throughout the lessons.
- Relationships are very good.
- The support and monitoring of individuals is very good.

Commentary

127. Results at A Level in 2002 were well above average. Results in 2003 were also well above average. For the last four years all students have achieved an A to E pass and results have been consistently high. A Level groups have been mostly female since few male students have opted for the subject.

128. By the end of Year 13, students' listening and speaking skills are well above average and their reading skills are above average. Their written work is less well developed and is broadly average. In Year 12, students are already impressively at ease using spoken French for general communication and they cope very well with whole lessons conducted entirely in French. With support, students talk confidently about grammar in French using technical language. Their pronunciation is good. Students' knowledge of basic tenses is very fragmented, however and their written work contains many basic errors. In Year 13, students have good grammatical awareness and a good knowledge of specialist political and environmental vocabulary. They have very good listening comprehension skills and they speak confidently and accurately on a range of general topics. Their pronunciation and intonation are very good. Reading skills are also well developed and they tackle extended authentic texts with ease. Writing is less well developed than the other three skills, but broadly average. Progress from Year 12 to Year 13 is very good and students achieve very well.

129. Teaching and learning are very good overall and on occasions excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they have very good linguistic skills. Lessons are very well planned and have clear aims. The subject co-ordinator is an excellent role model in the classroom. Teachers are particularly good at developing students' speaking and listening skills. Students enjoy using French to communicate their ideas, opinions and feelings. Lessons are very brisk and purposeful and all students are fully supported and stretched. Students work very well in pairs and independently. Homework is used very effectively to consolidate learning. Relationships between students and with teachers are very positive.

130. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The teachers work very well together to ensure students have the right experiences and progress well. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A Level results in recent years have usually been above national averages.
- The standard of work which Year 13 students produce is above average and they are achieving well.
- Not enough use is made of ICT.
- The numbers of students taking AS and A2 courses, especially female students, have declined.

Commentary

131. The inspection covered the AS and A2 modules offered by the college that enable students to study statistics, pure mathematics and mechanics to gain up to further mathematics qualifications. In addition, the college offers GCSE retake for those students who wish to improve from a grade D and a free standing money management course which was not sampled.

132. At A Level, male students achieve results well above the national expectations whilst those of the smaller number of female students are broadly in line with the national average. The number of students entered has been in excess of 30 but declined last year and, again this year, partly due to staffing difficulties. A small number of students achieve well above average results in further mathematics. Students retaking GCSE usually do well, with above 60% gaining grade C and above. The free standing money management course is a recent introduction for students who have gained GCSE grades F and G.

133. The quality of students' written work in Year 13 is well above average and higher than their oral work. The quality of Year 12 students' work is lower than in Year 13 and is in line with course expectations. Year 13 A2 students are particularly strong in their use of algebra demonstrating a thorough understanding of numerical analysis and Newton Raphson, carefully building upon the iterative methods learnt in Year 12. This understanding and attention to detail applies to each of their chosen modules. A small minority of Year 12 AS students has found the transition from GCSE difficult despite the sound advice given to them prior to commencing the course.

134. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. Year 13 students are very conscientious in their studies and preparation for examinations with three of this year's students striving towards Oxbridge entrance to read mathematics, engineering and law. However, some Year 12 AS students show a reluctance to participate in mechanics lessons. The students on the GCSE retake course are finding it more difficult than they anticipated as they prepare for the first module in November. In one of the two money management courses student numbers have fallen from 18 to 3 since September.

135. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have varying amounts of experience of teaching the sixth form courses, ranging from teaching which displays a wealth of knowledge and experience which benefits students, to much less experienced but no less enthusiastic teachers. Lessons are carefully planned with a clear structure emphasising understanding and preparation for examinations. Students are challenged by questions such as 'why?' and 'how?' building up their independent learning skills. Teaching methods are formal and Year 13 students could not recall being asked to give oral presentations of their work. Students' files do not contain any examples of where mathematics is related to practical situations or where ICT has been used to enhance their studies.

136. The management of the mathematics department is satisfactory. The new co-ordinator has had to deal with other priorities in the college and has yet to make a significant impact upon the sixth form development. Work on reversing the decline in student numbers and the fact that few female students continue their mathematical studies to AS and A2 examinations is now being made a priority. The majority of teachers travel from one site or another to teach sixth form lessons and this

does not make teamwork easy but it is being developed. The students, however, are not disadvantaged, as they are able to ask an experienced teacher, based at the Centre, for assistance when needed. Regular assessment procedures have been introduced that aid the identification of students' strengths and weaknesses, which helps their progress in their chosen courses. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

137. The teachers teach the appropriate mathematical skills within individual subjects. For example, in PE, students are able to analyse recovery rates from lactic acid and oxygen data taken from sportsmen and women, and business studies students become proficient at cash flow analysis. However, numeracy has not been a focus for whole-college development and unless taking a subject which involves the use of mathematical skills students do not have the opportunity to sharpen or extend this key skill.

SCIENCE

The main focus for the inspection was biology and chemistry, but work in physics was sampled. In the physics lesson seen, students made good progress in understanding capacitors because the teacher involved them in a self-assessment activity. This was particularly effective in improving their understanding because they had to explain their reasoning to the group.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and as a result students learn well and make good progress.
- GCE A Level results in 2002 were well above average and were significantly above expectations based upon prior attainment.
- Effective revision techniques are employed.
- The range of teaching and learning styles is being broadened, but is too narrow at present.
- Leadership and management of biology are both good.

Commentary

138. GCE A Level results have improved in recent years and were well above average in 2002. The college's analysis shows that the results were significantly above what might have been expected from students previous standards. Standards of students' work in Year 13 are well above average in terms of understanding of work on water potential, the biochemistry of DNA and details of protein structure. Students achieve well. They enjoy the subject and make good progress in lessons.

139. Teaching is good and as a result students learn well and make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their explanations are clear. Concepts are developed and reinforced through a mixture of written and practical activities. Effective use is made of model making to clarify concepts such as the structure of the cell membrane. Students are set some essay tasks, which, together with the fieldwork, develop students' skills in working independently. Over the course as a whole there is insufficient emphasis upon skills of working independently and on problem-solving approaches. Effective use is made of student presentations, but at present these are used mainly for revision at the end of topics. Use of ICT has been insufficient because of a lack of resources, which is currently being rectified. The procedures to consolidate students' learning are good and help them revise. In addition to presentations, there are regular topic tests, which are graded on the A Level scale and the use of 'Bite-size' revision software and homework booklets of past questions. Module summaries give students a useful overview of the key learning points. Marking of students' work is thorough and gives students specific guidance on how to improve. One lesson of human biology was seen during the inspection. Students made satisfactory progress in their understanding of osmosis and water potential.

140. The new subject co-ordinator has a clear view of how standards can be improved further. Schemes of work are being produced which give guidance to staff on teaching and learning approaches and teaching is regularly monitored. The clear plans for the development of biology are evaluated and updated as appropriate. The improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are well matched to the curriculum and deliver it in a stimulating manner.
- Students are very positive about the subject and enjoy the challenge the curriculum offers.
- Good teaching leads to good learning and progress.
- Achievement is above average.
- ICT access is limited and restricts the range of activities available in lessons.
- Although data are well used for tracking performance, they are not used sufficiently in planning the curriculum.
- Enrichment activities are limited.

Commentary

141. In recent years, the pass rate in the A Level examination has been 100% and most students have made good progress. In 2002, the A Level results were above average, overall and boys' results were well above average. Results in 2003 were still above average overall, although the percentage of A/B grades dropped.

142. Standards in Year 13 lessons seen were above average. Students listened with interest to their teachers and carried out practical work efficiently. They recalled facts well and applied their understanding of previous work to new situations. They were able to pinpoint what they did and did not understand. In a lesson on acids and alkalis, they clearly enjoyed the extension of their understanding of equilibrium constants and the meaning of pH. Their written work showed that they had made good progress during the course. Higher attaining students could express themselves very well, even on difficult topics such as entropy. They had good numeracy skills and could apply these to calculations. There was a clear difference in the work of students of different attainments, but all tried hard to cope with the demands of the subject. Standards in Year 12 were above average overall, but covered a wider range than those seen in Year 13. In the Year 12 lesson seen, students watched a demonstration of volumetric procedures attentively. They were able to do the molar calculations in preparation for their own practical work.

143. Learning is good because teachers have very good subject knowledge which allows them to deliver stimulating lessons at a pace which enables all students to progress well. They expect students to acquire and use a high level of technical vocabulary and to apply the ideas they are learning.

144. Relationships are very good between both students and teachers. Teachers mark work thoroughly and support students out of lessons. They also recognise different learning styles and encourage independent learning. Students respond well to the challenge of the course and are well motivated and eager to learn. They enjoy practical work and extensions of lessons beyond the text book. Lessons that fail to provide these elements are less successful.

145. Leadership is satisfactory. The team works well together with a shared commitment to learning. However, limited monitoring has meant that good practice is not fully shared. The management of the department is good leading to efficient organisation on a daily basis. Students are very well tracked but data are less well used to plan the curriculum. The delivery of the curriculum would benefit from further use of ICT within lessons and the provision of more enrichment activities. The department provides useful study guides to each module of work which students find

helpful in becoming independent learners. There was no specific reference to A Level chemistry in the last report making it impossible to comment on improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Curriculum leadership is very good.
- Support for students is good.
- Open access support for students' research and study is good.

Commentary

146. The provision is good because the curriculum is taught effectively and is very well organised. Current standards are in line with expectations as were the A Level results in 2002. AS Level results in 2002 were above the national average. Vocational course results were good. 2003 results were affected by staff illness and were not as good as expected. Since the previous inspection examination results have varied, but overall achievement has improved and is good.

147. The introduction of new courses to complement the vocational and A Level courses has improved the opportunities at all levels for students' to develop ICT knowledge and skills. The Oracle course links programming with business skills. Basic certificate and GCSE courses are available and standards are above expectations when students' prior attainment is taken into account. Both lower and higher attaining students achieve well in ICT due to the range of appropriate courses, open access use and careful teaching.

148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in A level courses. In vocational courses the standard of teaching and learning is good. Students' attitudes to learning are positive and their independent study is effective. They are keen to learn more and respond well to complex tasks though group work needs additional support in the early stages of the Oracle course.

149. The quality of leadership and management is very good. It is effective because decisions are made quickly, maximising resources of all types. Changes in the teaching courses have been efficiently led. Teamwork is developing well. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

ICT across the curriculum

150. The provision for cross-curricular ICT is good. Despite this, the college recognises this as an area for development to keep up with modern trends and course demands. The college has recently made many improvements in provision on central site. The ratio of computers to students has improved in quantity and quality since the previous inspection but ratios are lower than national averages. This restricts access and the provision is inadequate on the centre site. However plans to address some of these problems are well-advanced. Much better use is made of communication software than in the previous inspection and software tools are used in a more sophisticated and adaptable way. Drop-in facilities and enrichment activities are good to support out-of-hours learning. More computer rooms could be booked to increase access and efficient use of resources. Students make extensive use of the internet to support projects and some careers research. Internet filters are in place and are effective.

HUMANITIES

The college offers a number of humanities subjects. Geography and psychology were inspected in depth, work in RE, government and politics and history was sampled. In the Year 13 RE lesson sampled, teaching and learning were good. Students explored the text of St John's Gospel in terms of symbol, myth, verification and falsehood. They showed maturity in their discussions and made very good use of the teacher's very good subject knowledge. In the government and politics lesson, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject enabled students to acquire a good understanding of complex issues and make good comparisons of the American and British political systems.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths

- Results and standards at the end of Year 13 are very good.
- Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good.
- Teaching, learning are good, students are highly motivated and value their learning.
- The curriculum is broad, varied and stimulating.
- Good leadership and management.

Commentary

151. A Level results have been well above average in recent years, including 2002, although slightly lower in 2003. From the work seen during the inspection, standards are similar to the examination results. Students have very good understanding of urbanisation and can apply their theoretical knowledge to case studies such as Cairo, Delhi and Birmingham. They have learned to understand the links between physical and human geography through their study of Los Angeles and they have used published research material to analyse data, both statistical and spatial. Their skills are being developed very well so that they can evaluate material, decide whether they have sufficient information or whether other sources are needed. They understand and distinguish between quantitative and qualitative data and use graphical methods to display statistics. Their work shows individual research. All students achieve well and are able to build upon their previous learning. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are all satisfactory and students can use these in research, extended writing and in handling statistics and data. For a few lower attaining students, their difficulty in spelling and grammar limits their achievement.

152. Teaching and learning are good, with very strong features, and students are treated as mature and independent learners, developing their skills and extending their thinking. Relationships with teachers are mature and mutually respectful. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and their confidence inspires self-confidence in the students who are very highly motivated to learn and to do well. In one lesson, the work had been planned to provide a good balance between presenting theoretical information, in this case, Reilly's Law of Retail Gravitation, and the opportunity for students to use this and apply it to the local area. Through this, students understood their new knowledge, gained confidence through using it and also identified situations when the theory may not apply. Homework set is good and plays an important contribution to their achievement. Teachers make good use of regular practise questions, particularly for students in Year 13, and these are marked carefully and in detail. This feedback tells them clearly about the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve. This is less consistent in Year 12. Although the teaching was consistently good, there were minor areas for improvement. For example, students were preparing for a debate about global warming and the greenhouse effect. The work was to take place over three lessons. However, the limited target set for the first lesson meant that, after a good introduction, the work lost momentum.

153. The curriculum is very good, providing a wide range of stimulating, challenging and up-to-date material and opportunities. Good quality fieldwork undertaken through a trip to the Isle of Wight enables students to draw on direct experience. The balance is good between opportunities for enquiry, acquiring theoretical information and investigating case studies. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has a clear vision, is innovative and provides a good role model for other teachers. The schemes of work, guidance for teachers and resource material provided are very comprehensive. Students are assessed well, particularly in Year 13 and their achievements are closely monitored and evaluated. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good rapport between teacher and students creates positive learning environment.
- Students are well motivated and therefore work purposefully.
- Examination results are very poor.
- Non-specialist teachers are unable to advise students how to improve.
- Uncertain leadership and planning result in ineffective teaching and learning.
- Resources are insufficient to support independent learning.

Commentary

154. The college offers AS Level psychology in Year 12. The results achieved by students at AS Level in 2002 were very low and the results in 2003 were similar. At the time of the inspection Year 12 students had been studying psychology for only a few weeks and there was too little evidence on which to base a secure judgement of standards. From the work scrutinised, however, it is evident that new knowledge is not being reinforced or attention given to precise psychological terminology, for example the use of 'replicate' instead of 'repeat', or 'support' instead of 'prove'. There is some grasp of the methodology of psychological investigation but misunderstandings of concepts such as variables and participant observation are not being picked up. Students are able to write fluently but their work lacks academic rigour and clear expression, which results in lazy and imprecise language. Despite their ability and match for the course (most students have English GCSE B grade) they have little understanding of the demands of the syllabus and do not know how to improve their evaluation skills. Achievement is therefore unsatisfactory.

155. Teachers have a very good rapport with students and this creates a positive climate for learning, because they are interested, motivated and work purposefully. Teaching observed during inspection was satisfactory because the group work and discussion strategies used enabled the students to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. They could relate it to their own experiences of stress, for example and its physiological symptoms. Teachers are doing their best to enable students to study psychology, and this has made a good contribution to their personal development in understanding human motivation and behaviour. However, the teachers' insecure knowledge of how to deliver the subject is resulting in poor achievement because they are unable to help and advise students on how to improve their levels of attainment. For example, the marking of students' work is not rigorous enough, nor is it tied securely enough to the students' learning needs. Although teaching observed was satisfactory, the match of teachers to the subject is not good enough and a judgement can be made that, over time, and given the very poor examination results, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.

156. The leadership and management in this subject are not satisfactory because responsibilities have not been clearly defined, with the result that there has been no proper development plan, effective schemes of work, or vision for the future to improve students' learning. There has been no observation of teaching in this subject since its introduction two years ago. Steps have now being taken to provide essential specialist expertise and some professional training is now in place in order to help students learn better. Resources, however, are meagre and insufficient to provide support for

the independent learning, research and wider reading which are essential if higher grades are to be achieved.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The area was not a focus for the inspection, but work in A Level design was sampled. Teaching in the Year 13 design lesson observed was good and enabled students to develop individual creative ideas and personal skills. Some students already have very good technical knowledge and use Computer Aided Design programmes to very good effect. Emerging standards of folder work are good. Students use a variety of presentation skills, have begun to collect a range of relevant research materials and make good use of computers to support work. Teaching is well organised to meet examination requirements.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus for the inspection was A Level art and media studies, but work in music and theatre studies was sampled. Standards in music in the sixth form are good. Year 13 students develop their listening skills and were able to evaluate performance and explain their emotional response to jazz because of their good rapport with the teacher. Very good teaching and high expectations in a practical lesson supported students to improve through self-learning. Standards in the theatre studies lesson observed were very good. Students learned very well because of their positive response to high quality input. They made very good progress in their use of body language to express different states of tension in a central character.

Art

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievements and examination results are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding.
- Work journals and student presentations demonstrate high levels of critical analysis.
- Students have been inspired by visits to national and international centres and galleries.
- Few male students are recruited onto advanced courses.

Commentary

157. The combined A Level results for art and ceramics have been very high for several years and are in the top 5% nationally. As in previous years, in 2002 all students attained either A or B grades. The results in A/S examinations were above average and very high in 2003. Advanced course results have remained at a similar high level for several years but significantly fewer male students take the subject than female students. Students who begin courses complete them.

158. The work of current students reflects the same extremely high standards. From their differing starting points students' achievement is excellent. They take full advantage of the opportunities available to them through the very rich curriculum. The course includes a very challenging programme of practical work, staff and student presentations, visits and tutorials. Students work independently and some join the weekly life drawing class. Several visited Florence earlier in the year, a place that moved and inspired them. Students' sketchbooks and work journals tell stories of how initial ideas have grown and been shaped by firsthand observations and experiences and nourished by personal research and investigative reading.

Example of outstanding practice

Teaching and learning

In a life drawing class students achieved excellent results by abandoning the safety net of familiar academic drawing techniques to draw with charcoal and chalk attached to metre length garden canes. Large sheets of paper were laid on the floor and the teacher showed how the whole surface could be worked. By moving around the floor and using this 'long arm' the whole body came into play. Students were reminded that it was not necessary to record every detail - that looking closely and by selecting some and leaving out other information the viewer had to be actively involved in making sense of the visual information presented to them. Students' drawings were an exceptionally high standard -very physical, free but also descriptive and catching the pose and light to great effect.

159. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers have the highest expectations and students are intellectually challenged by the work that is set for them. A broad range of learning styles was expertly matched and chosen to address particular issues thrown-up by teachers' observations and assessments of students' work. Academic reading, debate and discussion play a large part in this work. Teachers know that by getting students to talk through and explain - what they are doing, why they have chosen to make connections with one artist rather than another and ask them to talk through unresolved decisions – they become more analytical and reflective and clearer about their decision making and next steps. This level of involvement means that students are confident and better able to work independently in their own time.

Example of outstanding practice

Teaching and learning

Midway through the unit students were asked to present their work, and to recount the journey they had travelled that had brought them to their current point. Arguments were fluent, convincing and passionate, based on 'real' and personal observations rather than simply meeting examination requirements. One student drew on studies of architectural themes. His explanations shifting between the expressionist impasto style of Auerbach and Kossoff and his own paintings of architecture in Florence and Barcelona where the interior columns 'resembled a geometric, patterned canopy'. Another student explained similarities and contrasting visual clues, in classical painting by Titian and contemporary work by Cindy Sherman where the figure suggests a provocative and sexually aware female. The teacher questioned students extremely skilfully, drawing out salient points and bringing in other students to support or challenge their views. By talking about their work and explaining the connections they had made students gained a deeper understanding that helped confirm what had to be done next. All students made very significant gains in critical and analytical study.

160. Leadership is excellent and management very good with a very good grasp of strengths and weaknesses. Plans to encourage more male students to take the subject are in hand. Since the last inspection the improvement has been very good. The very high standards have been maintained and built-upon.

Media studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are above average and there is a trend of improvement.
- The subject is very popular and in 2003 all students successfully completed the course.
- The teaching is very good and students progress very well.
- A wide range of excellent resources supplements the teaching.
- Teaching can be over directive at times.
- The provision for ICT is very limited.

Commentary

161. The A Level examination results in 2003 were above average. All students who took the examination achieved a pass grade and the number achieving the highest grades was in line with expectations. Given the starting point of the students this represented good achievement. The AS Level results were well above average, representing very good achievement. In 2002, results were average with fewer students achieving the higher grades; achievement, however, was still good.

162. The standards of work of current students are above average. In discussion and in their writing, students demonstrate very good understanding of the main concepts of the subject, such as stereotyping and representation. They are able to define and use specialist terms confidently and can apply them across a wide range of media. Discussion is lively and informed with students prepared to argue, justify and support their viewpoints, often challenging the teacher to do the same. Written coursework is of high quality with the chosen topics showing originality and flair. It is well presented demonstrating good ICT skills and standards of literacy, although the work of some of the lower-attaining students was marred by spelling and grammatical inaccuracies. There is no significant difference in achievement between girls and boys.

163. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, well informed by excellent subject knowledge and drawing on a wide range of contemporary media texts. Very good relationships between students and teacher enable learning to be brisk, purposeful and fun. The balance of activity within lessons is good with students working both independently and collaboratively. In a very good lesson looking at audience reaction to the aftermath of violence, students were able to explore successfully their own responses and then apply them to different theories of audience. Opportunities are provided for reflection, but some teaching is too didactic; students being given the answers before having the opportunity to debate the issues themselves. Marking is carried out diligently and conscientiously but not always in enough detail to help students improve. The systems for monitoring and reviewing individual students' progress are very good.

164. Media studies is a popular choice in the sixth form and virtually all students who start the course complete it. Students are diligent and show very good attitudes to their work. Personal development is good with students encouraged to consider the wider role of the media in society. Students keep their notes thoughtfully and with care, although girls display better levels of personal organisation than boys. The leadership of the subject is good. Schemes of work are thoughtful, imaginative, stimulating and challenging; incorporating tasks for the highest attainers alongside revision check lists, key vocabulary and internet links. Management is very good. The department is well organised and efficient with each media module having excellent support materials. Accommodation is good but ICT facilities are inadequate, limiting the range of practical work that can be undertaken.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The main focus in this area was on A Level PE and intermediate level GNVQ Leisure and Tourism. Work in dance, which is only offered in Year 12 at AS Level, and the BTEC first diploma in sport were also sampled. Throughout the dance lesson the teacher's very focused and constructive feedback enabled students to evaluate and improve their performance. The use of video camera playback deepened students' analysis even further. They have not studied dance at GCSE and their achievement in relation to prior experience is very good. Students in the Year 12 sport lesson develop a secure grasp of how to use fitness test data to advise clients on how to improve their fitness. Good quality teaching ensures a positive learning atmosphere where students support each other and make good progress towards meeting the requirements for their BTEC coursework.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in the GNVQ foundation course in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths

- The course offers an opportunity for students who would not otherwise have the opportunity, to experience further education.
- It enables the students to develop their basic skills in learning and in personal and social development.

- It gives an opportunity for students to move on to further study; academic and vocational.

Commentary

165. The college offers a one year GNVQ course in leisure and tourism in the sixth form, which is aimed at students who have had personal or learning difficulties earlier in the college and who would not normally stay on in college after the age of sixteen. All the students who completed the course last year passed and almost half achieved a merit pass. Current students are achieving well on the course and reaching the required standards.

166. Teaching and learning were good. The students were clearly developing their skills in understanding the basic principles of tourism in National Parks and in searching for information on the internet. They are also able to discuss what they are doing in a mature and sensible manner. They showed initiative in working on their own at the computers. The teaching had clear objectives, which were discussed with the students well, using questioning which involved and motivated them all. The teacher had high expectations of their ability to work on their own and offered discrete, well-directed advice and support during their web search.

167. The course is managed effectively to ensure it provides well for the need of these students. As well as studying leisure and tourism, the students also do courses in basic literacy and numeracy and in ICT. They are engaged in community projects and do one day a week work experience. As a result of this, they develop their assertiveness and self-esteem and many end up doing GCSE short courses. Some students develop their skills to the extent where they are able to move on to BTEC and A Level courses while others move into apprenticeships.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**, and has been greatly enhanced as a result of the college gaining specialist community and sports status.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good quality teaching and learning and results in very good progress in lessons.
- The achievement of students in Year 13 is very good.
- The very positive attitudes of students to their learning create a very productive atmosphere in lessons.
- Leadership and management of post-16 provision are very good.
- Not all schemes of work include planned support for students' key skills development.
- Students' leadership skills are developed very well through the community sports leaders award (CSLA) course.

Commentary

168. Results in the A Level examination in 2002 were above the national average and AS Level results were very high. As nationally, females performed better than males. Provisional results at A Level for 2003 showed a modest decline in the proportion of students attaining A or B grade passes. However, department data shows that students are doing better than could have been expected from their GCSE results.

169. In Year 13, standards of work seen are good for the majority. Clearly structured lessons and focused teaching have ensured students have a good grasp of drive theory and performance. Students are also developing very well their knowledge and understanding of aggression theories. In one very good lesson, effective use of the interactive whiteboard and the active involvement of students in observational analysis helped maintain motivation throughout. Similarly, in another lesson, students were fully involved in discussing the main theories of aggression in sports psychology. They were deepening their knowledge and understanding through linking these theories to contemporary and real-life sporting situations. Students' achievement is very good in relation to their capabilities and is a clear result of very good quality teaching. Sixteen post-16 students have gained county representative honours and six have gained national representative honours in a variety of sports. One student has gained international representative honours.

170. Teachers have a very good command of the units of work being taught and are enthusiastic in their approach. Very good quality teaching is typified by pace, challenging work which builds on what students have already achieved, relevance and a structured variety of activities. ICT is effective in supporting students' learning, for example through using the interactive whiteboard and the use of the internet as a resource for independent research. As a result, all students are able to make very good progress. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and they comment very favourably on the quality of support and guidance teachers provide for them. Homework is consistently set and extends students' learning.

171. Leadership and management of post-16 provision are very good, two members of the department overseeing the delivery of the examination and leadership & vocational courses. Curricular provision is therefore very good. In addition, all Year 12 students have the opportunity to take part in weekly recreational sporting activities and the more capable post-16 students have opportunities to take part in competitive fixtures. Leadership has ensured a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and students have been consulted in this respect. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are consistently above the national averages.
- Achievement is good.
- Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and commitment.
- Students' attitudes and relationships are very good.
- Effective development and promotion of the subject by individual teachers.
- Further developments are required in the use of ICT and the general teaching environment.
- The monitoring of students' progress and target setting are not consistent enough.

Commentary

172. The subject is taught at AS and A Level and at AVCE. Units include marketing and finance, managing people and external influences on business. Students follow the course most appropriate to their abilities and interests.

173. Recent results in each level of examination have been higher than the national averages in business studies. Levels of attainment are good when viewed against the students' starting points of their courses. On average, boys achieve as well as girls. Students generally do better in business studies than they do in other subjects. The popularity of this option develops out of the success which students experience.

174. The high standards of attainment were confirmed in the good quality of work seen during the inspection. Students are confident and accurate in their use of business concepts and they are eager to apply them to real world situations. They demonstrate a sustained interest and commitment in extending their sources of evidence and interpreting specific issues. This was seen in the inspection in lessons examining e-commerce and communications and also sources of finance. All the teaching and learning seen was at least satisfactory and most of it was good. Teachers have very good command of their subject. The teaching strategies and resources used enable students to stay engaged throughout lessons and to acquire a broad range of key concepts and sources of information. On occasions, the strategies could be more varied and imaginative. The atmosphere and relationships within lessons support the opportunities for students to learn and attitudes are consistently mature. Students generally understand what is required of them at different stages of their course.

175. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The courses are clearly well matched to the immediate needs of students and to their ambitions. However, the monitoring of

individual progress and target setting are not used as effectively as they could be in promoting high achievement or in the management of the subject. Planning and policy documents are not focused enough on teaching and learning. Students have appropriate books and case study materials. The business studies area is not yet a sufficiently stimulating environment in which to model business practice and create distinctive opportunities in the subject. The recent move towards having ICT resources within the teaching area itself has the potential to be the key change which enables the subject to widen student experiences and further advance how business studies is provided within the college. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The subject is offered as a vocational certificate of education in the sixth form. Standards are above the national average. Results in 2002 were above the national average with all the students entered gaining grades A to E.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

The provision for AS general studies followed by students in Year 13 is satisfactory. The percentage of students achieving grades A to C has improved steadily and is better than the national average. In the lesson sampled students examined the moral, cultural and social influences on children's literature. The teacher has good subject knowledge and provides self-study materials for students to use in the Resource Centre. The unit of work is well planned to prepare students for Unit 1 of the examination, however most of the lesson was teacher led and there were few opportunities for discussion to extend students' views and sharpen critical skills.

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	3	3
How inclusive the college is		2
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the college	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	2	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	2	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the college		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well pupils learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities		1
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the college seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
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	2	2
The leadership and management of the college		3
The governance of the college	5	5
The leadership of the head teacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
The effectiveness of management	2	3

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