

INSPECTION REPORT

WYMONDHAM COLLEGE

Wymondham, Norfolk

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121208

Principal: Victoria Musgrave

Lead inspector: William Goodall

Dates of inspection: 1st - 4th March 2004

Inspection number: 259329

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	963
School address:	Golf Links Road Wymondham Norfolk
Postcode:	NR18 9SZ
Telephone number:	(01953) 609000
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Rout
Date of previous inspection:	16/3/98

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The college is the largest state boarding school in the country with 963 boys and girls, 315 of whom are in the sixth form. Over half of its students are boarders and many of the day students take advantage of the opportunities of an extended day and evening activities. The college teaches for five and a half days in the week, although term dates are shorter than normal. The college admits students with the full ability range, although there are fewer than average students with special educational needs or whose first language is not English and the attainment on entry is above the national average. The entry is relatively advantaged in terms of its socio-economic circumstances, and is mainly from a white British background. The school is a Specialist Technology College with an emphasis on mathematics, science, design and technology and information and communications technology. It is also part of an area Excellence in Cities collaborative cluster of schools and is involved in a teacher training partnership.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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20629	J Bryson	Team inspector	English
20527	B King	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	S Hodge	Team inspector	Science, chemistry
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31918	D Hawley	Team inspector	Geography, citizenship
27226	R Cribb	Team inspector	Religious education
10209	V Gormally	Team inspector	Art and design
11676	G Thomas	Team inspector	Music
18755	R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education
14841	M Duffey	Team inspector	History
1782	A Lyons	Team inspector	Design technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school. It has made **very good** progress since the last inspection. The principal provides **excellent** leadership, supported by **very good** leadership and management from governors and other senior staff. She has introduced steady, but significant, changes to what was a very good, but traditional, situation and taken the school to a new level. Standards have improved steadily, results now being **very high** compared to national averages at all stages and in the top five per cent of similar schools for GCSE scores. Improvement in standards from the ages of 11 and 14 up to 16 is amongst the best in the country. This represents **excellent** achievement for a comprehensive school, even though the attainment on entry is above the national average. Teaching is **very good**, although there is a lack of challenge in some areas and the students' enthusiasm and application support their learning greatly. The ethos for learning is **excellent** and day students take full advantage of the facilities and extra time available to the boarders. The boarding provision is **very good** and helps to define the unique nature of the college. The sixth form provision is **very good**. It takes students from many other schools and all achieve **very good** results. The students play a full part in the life of the college. With average income and very good results the college provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Excellent leadership by the principal.
- Excellent progress by students across all stages.
- Exemplary attitudes and behaviour which support the students' learning.
- Excellent links with other schools that spread good practice in the area.
- Very good support from the governors and senior staff.
- Very good boarding provision which defines the overall excellent ethos for learning.
- Some inconsistencies in teaching and in the use of assessment.

Since the last inspection the college has made **very good** improvement. The issues raised have been clearly addressed and new agendas set as the college has developed. In addition the requirements for information and communication technology and the provision for religious education are now met. The excellent ethos has been maintained. Teaching and assessment have improved, but there is still work to be done to address inconsistencies. The already very high standards have improved further and the college is now oversubscribed for day and boarding places.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Standards by the age of 14 and 16 have consistently been **very high** in national terms and in 2003 the new value added scores indicated that students had achieved very well compared to predictions based on their standards at 11. The GCSE scores were in the top five per cent for similar schools. This represents **excellent** achievement. The standards seen in lessons and in folders were not quite that high. The best work was seen in Years 9 and 11, where standards were comparatively better than in Years 8 and 10. The students clearly work hard in the examination years and are prepared very well by the teachers. In the sixth form the standards remain **well above** the national averages and students progress well in most subjects: sports studies, economics, history, Spanish

and art and design, as well as in physics and chemistry. They do not progress as well from their GCSE scores in business studies, geography and mathematics.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** in Years 7 to 11 and **excellent** in the sixth form. There has been one permanent exclusion and the number of fixed period exclusions is low for a school of this size. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Attendance and punctuality are **excellent** throughout the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching is **very good**. Learning is also **very good** and stronger than teaching in a few subjects. Teaching and learning are much better in Years 9 and 11 than in the other years. The quality of the curriculum is **good** in all years. The opportunities for activities outside of lessons particularly in music, drama, and sport are **excellent**. The school has **very good** accommodation. Resources for learning are **good** overall and library provision is **very good**. Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety are **excellent**. The school provides **good** support, advice and guidance and involves students **outstandingly well** in its work and development. The school's links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are **excellent** in the main school and in the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the college are **very good**. The principal provides **excellent** leadership which has been inspirational for many. The governors and senior staff are **very effective** in their support for the college and their contribution to strategic planning. The college evaluates its work **very well** and uses the results of such evaluations to inform planning though at times the implementation of planned policies is not rigorous enough. There is a **very strong** commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community. The budget is managed **very well**, with the boarding provision and sixth form funding being clearly identified.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents have **very positive** views of the college. These were reflected in the questionnaire that a very large number returned and in their comments at the parents' meeting. Students' views were more mixed in their responses to the questionnaire. Although almost all supported the college **very strongly**, individual questions raised concerns that were thoroughly explored by the team in discussions with day students and boarders separately. These concerns were not evident in their answers. It appears that a lot of pupils made comments about a small number of (very few) incidents, all of which had been resolved satisfactorily in the past.

BOARDING PROVISION

The boarding provision is **very good**. It contributes to the excellent ethos of the school and the facilities available to boarders enhance the provision for all students. It is managed **very well** by a dedicated team of teachers and pastoral staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The college continues to seek ways to improve and is not resting on its laurels. A few relatively weaker areas were discussed, but provision for all of these was at least satisfactory and often good. To continue to improve further and raise standards even more the college should:

- Develop the use of assessment to identify what students need to do to improve and how teachers can help them.
- Identify the best practice in and across departments and ensure that all are brought up to the same high standard.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WYMONDHAM COLLEGE

The sixth form of 315 students is relatively large. Students follow GCE AS and A-level courses and advanced vocational courses. There is a collaborative arrangement with local sixth forms.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **very good** and it provides **very good** value for money. Standards are **very high** and have been improving steadily. There are a wide range of appropriate courses and this attracts students from other schools in the area and beyond. Care and support are strong, although advice to non-university applicants is weaker. The boarders provide a strong lead in the college houses and take a full part in college life. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection and the sixth form provides very good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very high standards and achievement.
- Strong support from the college pastoral teams.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Some subject areas are not improving as quickly as others.

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. Sociology, law and media studies were sampled and the findings included in the main report.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is very good . Standards are very high and students achieve very well. Provision in French is good . Both standards and achievement are very high. Provision in Spanish is very good , with some excellent features. Provision in German is good : Recent results are good.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good , with some areas for improvement. Standards are around the national average, but there are relatively few higher grades.
Science	Provision for physics is good . Standards are good, as is the teaching. Provision in biology is good . Recent results have been poor, but present standards are better and the teaching is good. Provision in chemistry is good . Standards are good, as are teaching and learning.
Information and communication technology	Provision for ICT is good . Achievement is very good, helped by very good teaching. Provision for ICT across the sixth form curriculum is good.
Humanities	Provision in history is very good . Standards are above average and the students achieve very well. Provision in geography is unsatisfactory . Standards are too low and achievement is unsatisfactory. Provision for RE is very good . Achievement is very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for art is very good . Standards are very high and students have a very mature approach to the subject. Provision for music is very good . Results are good and students work independently.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision for design and technology is good . Results are good and students are enthusiastic.
Sport, leisure and tourism	Provision for PE is very good . Results are very high and there is very good teaching. Provision for leisure and recreation is good . Students achieve well and teaching is good.

Business

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**. Standards are uneven and teaching on the vocational course is good. Provision in economics is **good**. Standards are above average and teaching and learning are good.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The students have strong support from the heads of house, their deputies, tutors and matrons. Day students also benefit from this support and so all students have far more support and guidance than is usual in a sixth form. They take a full part in college life and provide a strong lead in the college houses. Around half of those who responded to the questionnaire are dissatisfied with the information provided about courses available in the sixth form and with the careers advice. Many would have received this advice in their previous schools, but overall inspectors did not find their concerns justified. The information provided about the courses is good and the drop out rate is low. In addition, the guidance and advice about applications to higher education are very good. Students who do not intend to go to university, however, sometimes feel marginalized. Although they admit that the information is available if they spend time searching for it, they would prefer it to be more readily available. Inspectors agree with these views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is led and managed very well. The aims of the sixth form are integral to the aims of the whole school. The college leadership team and the head of sixth form provide a clear sense of purpose and direction for students and staff. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and a mutually supportive structure exists. Pastoral management is strong and monitoring students' progress is central to the role of the tutors. Good communication between house staff and subject teachers enables them to give students very good support and guidance, particularly in respect of university application. The good management of the curriculum enables a very wide range of subjects to be offered at GCE and advanced vocational levels.

The day-to-day management and administration of the sixth form are good. The examination results are well analysed and there are good annual subject reviews. As a result there is a clear vision for development with a focus on improving results and maximising the achievement of individuals. Students have clear targets and there are high expectations on them to work maturely and independently. Teaching is generally monitored but needs to be more rigorously evaluated, so that the ways in which students learn most effectively can be better identified.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Results and standards have improved consistently over the last three years, with a ten per cent increase in students gaining A-B grades at A-level. The school has been successful in implementing the new curriculum and courses. Sixth form finances are very well managed. The sixth form provides very good value for money.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

This college is exceptionally proactive about seeking students' views and has successfully established an ethos where they play an integral part in making decisions. For example, sixth form students chair the fortnightly house meetings and distil the views expressed by younger students lower down the school. They inform the senior leadership team through the principal's council which meets weekly, influence various decisions and make enquiries of their own. For example, students are now able to wear black jumpers or scarves in cold weather and they recently asked questions about exam retakes. In their responses to the questionnaire, many students expressed concerns. These were investigated in depth by the team, who interviewed boarders and day

students separately. Although many older students felt that the college was too strict with them, especially the Year 13 boarders, no other concerns were upheld.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Standards achieved in national tests and examinations at the age of 14 and 16 are **very good**. The pupils' achievement, judged by their progress from their attainment on entry to the college, is **excellent** overall. Standards in lessons seen were much higher in Years 9 and 11 than in Years 8 and 10. Standards in the sixth form are **very good**, as is achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at 14 and 16 in national tests and examinations are very good compared to national standards and excellent compared to those in similar schools.
- Achievement is excellent overall.
- Standards and achievement in the sixth form are very good.
- Standards have improved steadily since the last inspection.

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

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

Commentary

1. Standards achieved in national tests and examinations in 2003 at the age of 14 and 16 are very good. The standards compared to those of similar schools are in the top five per cent in the country for GCSE. Although the intake to the college is comprehensive, the overall attainment on entry is above national averages, with fewer pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Parents and students choosing the school accept a longer working day and a different ethos to what is usual. The tests at the age of 14 indicate that standards are very high compared to those in all schools nationally and in similar schools. New value added indicators which calculate how well students are progressing from the age of 11 indicate that they are doing significantly better than would be predicted from their primary school results or against any other measures by the ages of 14 and 16. The college is amongst the top 30 in the country on the aggregated scores, including the scores of selective schools. This represents excellent achievement. These standards have improved steadily since the last inspection.
2. Standards seen in classes were not quite as high as test and examination results might indicate. Standards judged against those expected to be seen were significantly higher in Years 9 and 11 than in Years 8 and 10. The students are prepared very thoroughly for external tests and make rapid progress as they approach them. Revision is very conscientiously carried out. All students can benefit from the facilities available for revision and homework which are a feature of the boarding provision. A key feature in the students' achievement is the ethos for learning in the college; their attitudes to work are very good. They work with enthusiasm and application in their lessons and complete class work and homework diligently, ready for the next challenge.
3. The progress made previously in GCSE examinations was maintained in the 2003 GCSE examinations, as the new value added measures indicated. Overall standards are very good compared to the national average and are well above those of similar schools. Standards in

2003 were particularly high in sports studies, geography, history and art and design. The achievement of students was excellent and trends of improvement were better than the national ones. Many subjects are exceeding the school's demanding targets.

4. The students' overall language and literacy skills and their fluency in working with numbers are very good and help them to progress quickly. Their grasp of the appropriate use of computers and communications technology is good but restricted for some students by the heavy demands on equipment in some areas. The levels of achievement of those identified as particularly gifted and talented are very good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is also very good throughout the school, both in the few lessons where they are withdrawn for extra support and also in mainstream classes. They achieve particularly well in English, religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) where the work set and the help they receive are very closely matched to their particular requirements. Overall, pupils whose first language is not English make good progress and usually achieve well. However, in some subjects pupils are not able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding fully, for example, in the listening paper in music.

The sixth form

5. Standards in the sixth form are **very good**. In 2003 they were well above the national averages in AS and A-level examinations and advanced vocational examinations and also in comparison with results in similar schools. Average points scores are now based on the new university system and so comparisons are difficult. However, there has been a steady improvement in results. The sixth form is relatively large. Seventy-five percent of GCSE students stay on to take the wide range of AS and A level examinations offered, which is well above the county level. We really need to compare with national averages average and they are joined by many students from other schools. There are now more vocational courses and collaborative arrangements with other schools.
6. Standards of attainment and levels of achievement have improved since the last inspection. The trends in results are above the national average. Particularly noteworthy are:
 - Very good GCE and advanced vocational course results, particularly in the higher grades.
 - Results in examinations have steadily improved.
 - Students have done very well compared to the predictions from their GCSE results
7. All students can apply to the sixth form, but five good grades at GCSE are required, unless interviews indicate a student with lower qualifications can cope. Almost all sixth form students pass their examinations, and a very high proportion gain the higher grades. The number of students reaching top grades was particularly high in Spanish, sports studies and art and design. Achievement in the sixth form is overall very good. As in the main school, these very good outcomes result in part from the students' very good skills in working with language, number and, to a lesser extent, computers. The students demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning and a very mature approach to their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** in Years 7 to 11 and **excellent** in the sixth form. There has been only one permanent exclusion and the number of fixed period exclusions is low for a school of this size. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Attendance and punctuality are **excellent** throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are exceptionally conscientious and committed to their studies.

- Relationships are excellent; this helps to create a calm and supportive environment that is very conducive to learning.
- Time keeping during the school day is very good, despite the widespread site.
- Sixth form students enjoy this stage of their education; they are exceptionally well motivated and work very hard in order to achieve their goals.
- Sixth form students are keen to take responsibility and they make a highly effective contribution to the life of the school.
- Although students' personal development is outstanding, students have too few opportunities to learn about cultural and ethnic diversity.

Commentary

8. The school enjoys a very good reputation and students know when they enter that they will be expected to work hard and make full use of the opportunities provided. Students respond very well to these high expectations; they are proud of their school and very loyal towards it. The day students take full use of the facilities that a boarding school provides in extra-curricular and social activities.
9. In discussions, students say they especially like the school's friendly atmosphere and strong sense of identity. They get along very well with each other and they share ideas and resources amicably. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and they lead by example. Students share a strong work ethic and their sensible and mature behaviour has a very positive effect on the standard of their work and their academic progress. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations and the intellectual stimulation and challenge of their lessons. Working relationships are excellent and students particularly appreciate the way that teachers and other staff give up their time in order to help with any personal or academic problems. Adults value students as individuals and the friendly and supportive atmosphere makes a major contribution to students' high commitment to their studies and the standard of work achieved. Many older boarding students feel restricted by the close control that the college operates, but understand the duty of care that the teachers have towards them.
10. Attendance was excellent at the time of the previous inspection and this continues to be the case. Very few arrive late and they usually have very good reasons. Lessons start promptly and good time keeping during the day helps students to make very good use of their time at school.
11. The overwhelming majority of the students are mature and are very responsible. They live and work in an environment where respect and tolerance for others are paramount and this quickly becomes a natural way of life. During lessons observed, students' behaviour deteriorated only when the work set was inappropriately matched to their needs. When moving around the school in between lessons, students of all ages are unfailingly polite and considerate. Analysis of the students' questionnaire returns, however, shows that four out of ten know of incidents of bullying or racist abuse and one in five is dissatisfied with standards of behaviour. The inspection team explored these issues with both boarders and day students. Although students said that such incidents do occur from time to time, they agreed that the school attaches great urgency to such issues and deals with them very effectively. Inspectors agree with their positive views. Procedures for managing behaviour are excellent; there is very little bullying and racist incidents are exceptionally rare.
12. Students respond very well to the school's excellent provision for their personal development. House assemblies, chapel services and a developing appreciation of poetry, art and music make a significant contribution to students' spiritual awareness. Their moral and social development is effectively nurtured through day-to-day school life and students have numerous opportunities to think about and demonstrate their concern for others. The modern foreign languages faculty effectively develops a good awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity. There is, however, insufficient provision for this aspect in other departments.

13. Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to the school. Very well planned behavioural targets allied with help in class from learning support assistants and volunteer sixth form students lead to good behaviour and very good learning. The students are fully included in the life of the school, both in lessons and other school activities. They enjoy support lessons that have a good impact on their attitudes to learning.

Sixth form

14. The students' responses to the questionnaire indicate that the overwhelming majority are enjoying this stage of their education and appreciate the help and advice that teachers provide. In discussion, students say they value highly the many opportunities available and are very pleased and proud to be able to attend such a popular school. Students' outstanding attitudes to learning are exemplified by their excellent attendance, behaviour, personal organisation and commitment to their studies.
15. Sixth formers respond very well to the many opportunities provided for personal development and they mature into self-assured, articulate and confident young people. They have a high profile within the school and do their best to help younger students whenever they can. For example, volunteers run the 'Listening and Support Team' (LAST) and offer younger students friendship and support by providing lunchtime drop-in sessions for those who are experiencing difficulties. Students also help to organise and chair the fortnightly meetings of the individual house councils and serve on the principal's council.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **very good**, but there are some areas for improvement. Learning is also **very good** and stronger than teaching in a few subjects. Teaching and learning are much better in Years 9 and 11 than in the other years, but overall there is no difference between key stages. Assessment is good overall, but there are occasions when the information gathered is not used effectively to promote learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge, good planning and variety of teaching strategies result in the engagement of all students and very good learning.
- The knowledge of and relationships with, students allow teachers to challenge each and every student.
- High expectations of standards and behaviour ensure that this challenge is converted into good or very good learning.
- Assessment is frequently well used in order to help and inform students throughout the school day; verbal comments are very constructive, although marking is sometimes brief.
- In the vast majority of lessons, the ethos of learning allows the teacher to concentrate on the essentials of successful learning.
- For some teachers, a more traditional, formal approach or a focus on content and coverage rather than learning do not excite the students.
- For a few other teachers, ineffective use of time also fails to engage students sufficiently in their own learning.
- In some subjects, specifically at Key Stage 3, teachers do not involve students in the assessment of their own work or the evaluation of the impact of that work.

Commentary

16. Teaching is **very good** overall, with some areas for development. Whilst there is no difference in the quality of teaching and learning between the key stages, there is a significant difference between the quality of teaching and learning in Years 9 and 11 and that in the other years. This emphasis on the examination years is reflected in the high achievement in external tests

and examinations. The teaching seen in lessons during the inspection was very good overall in English and RE, with particular strengths also in art and design and Spanish. It was never less than good in chemistry and RE.

17. Where teaching is at least good:

- teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects;
- lessons are well planned to challenge all students;
- teachers employ a variety of strategies and methods to engage the students fully
- expectations are high;
- students are encouraged to be both independent and collaborative learners; and
- there is good rapport between the teachers and their students.

18. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers make very good use of the target language, expecting the students to converse about a wide variety of topics which extend their spiritual and moral development.

19. In the lessons graded less than good:

- the emphasis is on coverage of the syllabus rather than learning objectives;
- there is a reliance on pupils' self-motivation to achieve;
- this occasionally leads to learning being better than teaching, where the students still progress in their studies through their own efforts.

20. Examples of this were seen in mathematics and music. In the least successful lessons, there is a lack of challenge for able students. There is a reliance on worksheets, teaching is focused on content and coverage and students are not engaged in their learning as a result.

21. The college has a strong sense of community that pervades the classroom. Students want to be fully involved in their learning and behave accordingly, responding well to high expectations.

22. Assessment is good overall, but has some areas for improvement. Reports are well written and frequent; the school provides well for those parents who live at a distance. The quality of reports is constantly reviewed and they are concise, informative and an aid to improvement. However, there are a few areas where assessment is not linked to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3, where evaluation of the impact of students' work is neglected or where marking is not diagnostic. Discussions about work are very strong and students are frequently engaged in assessments of their progress in the classroom and in the preparatory sessions after school. In some subjects, students have no opportunity for assessing their own progress or that of their group. Teachers keep very good records of students' progress. Students, when interviewed, were confident that they were aware of how well they were doing and of what level or grade they were at. In lessons, some Key Stage 3 students were, again, aware of their levels but not of what those levels really meant.

23. Teaching of students with special educational needs is very good, both in support lessons and in the normal curriculum. Teachers all know the students' needs and plan lessons that match activities and resources to the needs of individual students. Their attitudes to students with special educational needs are constructive, based on praise for achievement. They have high expectations of their attainment, while providing necessary support. The learning support assistants work very well with teachers to provide well planned assistance that helps students to keep up with the work of the classes.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 148 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (5%)	47 (32%)	48 (32%)	41 (28%)	4 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

Sixth form

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **very good overall**.

24. Teaching and learning are better in Year 13 than in Year 12. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are very good in English, design technology, art and design, history, RE, sports studies and in information and communication technology. They are only less than good in geography, biology and physics, where there are inconsistencies or a lack of reference to learning. Teachers are able to demonstrate very good subject knowledge in many subjects and prepare their students very thoroughly for the examinations. Students are excellent collaborative learners and, in many subjects, show themselves to be very good at independent self-study. Assessment is generally good although the assessment data is not always used to inform teaching and learning, such as in economics. The leisure and tourism course does very well, but does not use assessment to promote its success and, therefore, to recruit a better range of students.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good** in all years. The opportunities for activities outside of lessons particularly in music, drama and sport are **excellent**. The school has **very good** accommodation. Resources for learning are **good** overall and library provision is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs and interests of all students.
- The excellent range of enrichment opportunities, including extra provision in music, drama and sport, enhances the quality of learning.
- A good programme of personal, social and health education and careers education prepares students for the future.
- Accommodation in most subject areas is very good.
- Library provision is very good, although books in some areas need updating.
- The length of the teaching week is well above the recommended time and most students take advantage of the opportunities offered at the end of the day.
- Provision in design and technology does not cover all the aspects of the National Curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- ICT is good overall but students have only limited access to the taught course in Year 11.

Commentary

25. The overall quality of the curriculum in the main school is **good**. The college provides courses for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to meet requirements of the National Curriculum and RE and these are supplemented by well organised tutorial and enrichment programmes. Although the college is a specialist technology college, students are now given the option to drop design and technology at age 14. The curriculum caters well for all needs and gives very good support to pupils with special educational needs and good support to students for whom English is an additional language. The time available for teaching in the week is well above average and, although the terms are shorter, this is helping subjects such as history and geography which are benefiting from more than usual time in Years 7, 8 and 9.
26. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum choice is very flexible and is not dominated by timetable requirements. Students have a core curriculum following the National Curriculum but then have a wide range of choices from 16 subjects including a third language. While the majority of students take dual award science, one group is encouraged to take three separate sciences and to use their own time for extra lessons. Current provision for ICT in Year 11 is limited but

by next year all students in Years 10 and 11 will be provided with an accredited vocational course in the subject. Provision for monitoring the curriculum by the governing body is very good with clear links to departments. Link governors sit on appointment panels for their subjects and know what is going on.

27. There are very strong enrichment programmes and after college activities. Almost all students stay after college to access these opportunities. Many stay on for supervised "prep" in the evening and take a full part in the activities available for boarders. These greatly enhance the learning ethos of the college.
28. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. They take a full part in extra-curricular activities. Physical access is very good especially for disabled students. In almost all subjects, especially English, physical education and ICT, staff adapt the curriculum very well to allow students to work to their strengths and to cope well with their areas of difficulty. The provision of support lessons as an optional alternative to an extra modern foreign language helps students very well to develop good strategies for learning and to improve their literacy. The school makes strenuous efforts to provide appropriate careers advice from expert agencies. It is very well resourced with suitable books, computer equipment and specialist software. ICT is used very well to help students to express their views and to develop basic skills.
29. Accommodation for all subjects is very good, particularly in the humanities and technology blocks and for physical education, although sports studies courses have to share their space as a staff dining room for part of the day. Modern foreign languages makes the best of some older buildings. Resources are good and the library is an impressive resource although books in some subjects require updating. Accommodation for learning support is well situated at the centre of the school.
30. Provision for personal and social education is very good. It underpins the strong sense of community which is central to the ethos of the school, providing firm support for both day students and boarders' personal development. It is particularly strong in providing good opportunities for drugs education. Students in Year 10 can opt to join a very impressive peer led scheme which has been successfully running for a number of years and which not only impacts on attitudes and behaviour in the school but also helps local primary schools and schools further afield and has gained significant national recognition.
31. The overall provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good. The school maintains an up-to-date register of EAL pupils and their progress is reviewed every half term. During a lunchtime session two Year 7 students and one from Year 10, new arrivals from abroad, were receiving extra help. They were practising the use of the words lend and borrow. By the end of the lunchtime they had grown in confidence and had begun to use the words competently. The learning support centre provides a welcoming environment where pupils gain confidence and learn well.
32. A coherent curriculum for careers is in place and is run in conjunction with personal and social education under the direction of an experienced coordinator. Discrete classes are taught as part of the enrichment programme in Years 9, 10 and 11, which builds on initial topics covered in tutorials in Years 7 and 8. Although the time available is limited, provision is enhanced by a Challenge at Work day in Year 9 and a Skills at Work day in Year 10. Students can access personal advice from Norfolk Connexions and make use of very good resources in the library. Whilst advice and support in choosing options and developing social skills are good, only a limited number of students participate in work experience at the end of Year 11.

Sixth form

The sixth form curriculum provision is **excellent**.

33. The college attracts about a third of its students from other schools, many because of the choice offered. The range of curriculum choice for academic subjects is very wide. The 29 subjects currently offered are nearly all available at both AS and A2 levels. The college also offers advanced vocational courses in a further four areas of the curriculum. Although take up of these courses is limited it has collaborative arrangements with another school to extend opportunities for both. The students follow a general studies course and opt for AS or A-level courses after the mock examinations. In addition all students follow well organised and relevant tutorial and enrichment programmes including an optional combined cadet force. The courses available provide impressive additional support to students' learning and include sessions on politics, financial literacy and science as well as religious studies, careers and health education. The extra-curricular provision in music, drama and sport is also excellent, including competitive sports, visits and shows.
34. Provision for careers in the sixth form is **good**. In Year 12 students have discrete careers time enhanced by tutorial sessions. The student questionnaires highlight the emphasis on choice for higher education. Other advice is made available but students are not always sufficiently proactive in accessing it. The school is aware that it could be seen to be focussing exclusively on university entrance and is actively attempting to change this.
35. The school is benefiting from its technology schools' initiative status. It receives additional funding and resources to enable the subjects of mathematics, science, information and communication technology as well as design and technology to be developed. In addition, as part of the bid structure, the college on its part has to share its expertise with the community. In the main, it is successful in meeting its objectives; for example, there are very strong and effective links with local primary schools and with the science department in a local special school, which benefits their pupils enormously. It not only provides good quality teaching of science in the special school but also contributes to the pupils' personal development by enabling them to enjoy the benefits of coming to the college and joining in part of its life.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety are **excellent**. The school provides **good** support, advice and guidance and involves students **outstandingly well** in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school attaches the highest importance to students' well-being and arrangements to meet their personal needs are outstandingly effective.
- Students have frequent opportunities to voice their views and the school acts upon their suggestions and concerns wherever possible.
- Excellent induction arrangements help new day and boarding students to settle quickly.
- The academic progress made by all students is closely tracked and this helps them to make very good progress in their work.
- Students receive good advice and guidance about the courses available in Years 10 and 11.
- Sixth form students serve on the principal's council and the school incorporates their views into future plans whenever possible.
- Students receive very good guidance about higher education but those who choose alternative pathways receive much less information.

Commentary

36. The college has maintained the strengths in care, support and guidance noted in the previous report. All members of staff work as a very good team and they share a wholehearted commitment to students' welfare. Relationships are excellent and students speak highly of the support they receive from their teachers and the pastoral team. Facilities provided primarily for the boarding students, such as the medical centre, are available to all students and they enable the school to provide an outstanding level of specialist expertise and support. Health

and safety and child protection procedures are very good and members of staff fully understand their individual responsibilities. Matrons within the individual houses provide very good support for day pupils as well as boarders and students speak warmly of the help and care they provide. Some issues of concern do arise from time to time, especially where students spend a lot of time together; they are rare but of great importance to the individuals concerned. The inspection team are satisfied that the college does all it can to resolve these issues quickly and fairly.

37. The school attaches great importance to students' views and regularly consults them on a wide range of issues. Each boarding house has its own council, including day students, which meets every two weeks and these provide very good opportunities for students to air their concerns and suggestions for the future. The school values their opinions highly and acts upon them whenever it can. For example, students recently decided how to spend a donation from the parents' association; some houses chose to spend it on furniture whereas others used it to improve their sports facilities.
38. Students and their parents speak very highly of induction procedures and inspectors agree with these positive views. For example, new boarders come along to a Friday night's 'sleep-over' during the term preceding their admission. They stay in their future dormitory, meet the house staff and other students they will be sharing with. Day pupils come along on the following morning and everyone gets to know each other as they undertake sporting and other activities. After their admission, boarding students undertake trips on the first two weekends and their families are able to accompany them for the day.
39. Teachers keep good records of how well their students are progressing and students have a clear idea of how well they are getting along with their work. This information gives students confidence for the future and contributes towards their outstandingly positive attitudes towards learning. Tutors are now responsible for both pastoral and academic progress, but students do not always have their work marked regularly or have a clear idea of what it is that they have to do in order to improve the standard of their work.
40. Teachers provide students with very good information about the courses they can follow in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. A dedicated and well-qualified team of teachers advises each individual on the most appropriate options. The strength of their advice is reflected in the students' examination success and the very low dropout rates from the various courses.
41. The school takes good care to identify and monitor students with special educational needs. Teachers work with the learning support co-ordinator to provide individual education plans that are detailed, practical working documents in regular use. As a result, teachers are well equipped to meet students' needs. Statements of special educational needs are met in all respects and are regularly updated in collaboration with parents, teachers and relevant external agencies. Boarding students' behavioural needs are supported very well by house staff.

Sixth form

42. This school is exceptionally proactive about seeking students' views and has successfully established an ethos where they play an integral part in the decision making process. For example, sixth form students chair the fortnightly house meetings and distil the views expressed by younger students lower down the school. They inform the senior leadership team through the weekly meetings of the principal's council, influence various decisions and make enquiries of their own. For example, students are now able to wear black jumpers or scarves in cold weather as a result of students' views and students recently asked questions concerning exam retakes.
43. Students' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires show that around half of those who responded are dissatisfied with the information provided about courses available in the sixth

form and with the careers advice. Many of these students would have received this advice in their previous schools, but overall inspectors did not find their concerns justified. The information provided about the courses is good and the drop out rate is low. In addition, the guidance and advice about applications to higher education are very good. Students who do not intend to go to university, however, sometimes feel marginalized. Although they admit that the information is available if they spend time searching for it, they would prefer it to be more readily available. Inspectors agree with these views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are **excellent** in the main school and in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in very high regard and provide outstanding support for their children's education.
- Links with other schools and colleges are excellent and are developing leadership expertise in the area, enriching the sixth form curriculum and strongly supporting students' personal development.
- The quality of information provided for parents about day-to-day school life, the curriculum and their children's progress is very good.
- There are some minor omissions from the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

Commentary

44. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and comments from the parents' meeting with inspectors show that parents have no significant concerns about any aspect of the school's work. Although many do not live near the school, parents still manage to provide wholehearted support for the school and for their children's learning. For example, attendance at the annual consultation evening is very good and many travel significant distances in order to speak with their children's teachers. Parents of day students encourage their children to attend regularly and many turn out at the weekend in order to support the school teams. Parents' wholehearted support for the school puts their children in a position where they are able to commit themselves fully to their studies and to achieve very well. The parents' association also receives very good support and has recently made generous donations to each of the six houses.
45. This school tries very hard to keep parents informed and provides each senior tutor with a mobile phone so that parents can contact them directly. In addition, the school has developed its Internet links so that parents can obtain up-to-date information from the website and e-mail the school. Parents receive a written report five times a year which provides a very informative cumulative record of their child's progress. Although the overall quality of information is very good, some information is missing from the school prospectus and the governors' annual report. The college is aware of this and is taking steps to remedy it with immediate effect.
46. The links with other local schools are excellent, with the college taking an important role. For example, it lent the head of English to another school in challenging circumstances for a year. Other headteachers and representatives of the local education authority are very appreciative of the role the college is taking in helping to develop expertise across the area to benefit all pupils.
47. The learning support co-ordinator maintains close links with parents of students with SEN through regular telephone calls and also at the time of reviews. The school makes strenuous efforts to link with external agencies to support its SEN students, with varying degrees of success.

Sixth form

48. Links with colleges and other schools have developed further since the previous inspection and are now outstanding. As a member of the local Leadership Incentive Group, the principal liaises with other schools and she is also a member of several local education authority working parties. Links with the Universities of Essex and East Anglia are close; representatives come into school to talk and students are able to attend a local higher education convention. The college also helps to train students as part of an initial teacher training programme.
49. Collaborative arrangements have been made with Attleborough High School, timetables harmonised and students can attend lessons in several subjects at either school, including business studies and health and social care at the college. Students also make regular visits to nearby special and mainstream schools and help the pupils when they undertake science lessons. These activities contribute to the life of the community and also help students to develop as caring and responsible citizens.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the college are **very good**. The principal provides excellent leadership, supported by a strong team. The governors are very effective in their support for the college and their contribution to strategic planning. The college evaluates its work very well and uses the results of such evaluations to inform planning, though at times the implementation of planned policies is not rigorous enough. There is a very strong commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principal provides excellent direction in establishing the school's key aims and is inspirational in driving for continuous improvement and innovation.
- Governors give very good support in strategic planning and monitoring school performance.
- There is very good teamwork and leadership from key staff.
- Planning for the future direction of the college is very effective.
- All available funding is used very well to improve the facilities and support curriculum developments.
- The monitoring of teaching and its impact upon learning outcomes lack rigour.
- Although the college generally monitors its work well, management systems are not consistently applied at departmental level.
- Although most staff support the ethos and vision for the future, a small minority are resistant to change.

Commentary

50. The governors are very well informed, caring and committed. They challenge and support the principal and the leadership team very effectively. Governors work very closely with the college and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They have backed the principal in carrying out difficult decisions to develop and improve the college. They have ensured that the college fulfils most statutory duties, including promoting inclusive policies in relation to special educational needs, race equality, disability and sex education. It has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to providing national comparators for GCSE and GCE results in its annual report to parents, but is exploring ways of doing so. There is also a minor statutory issue in design and technology to which the college has now been alerted.
51. Each governor on the committee has clearly designated responsibilities. The governors set their agendas, indicating that they are very aware of their responsibility to ensure the high quality of all aspects of provision to the students. They are and have been very actively involved in identifying priorities and planning for the future development of the college,

especially with regard to acquiring specialist college status. The college admits students through clearly defined local education authority (LEA) procedures and the governors abide by appeals made by an independent appeals panel.

52. The principal is an excellent and highly effective leader, who has made significant improvements to the college since her appointment. She has built on the firm foundations of a very good traditional college and taken it to a new level, not without some resistance. She and the leadership team have a very clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the college. There is a very strong commitment to promoting the college as a part of the community, particularly through the excellent links with local secondary schools and the LEA through the collaborative arrangements financed by the leadership incentive grant (LIG). The strategic planning is very effective and fully reflects and supports this vision. The leadership team inspire and motivate staff and students to give of their best. In general the leadership at departmental level is good or very good and nowhere is it deemed unsatisfactory.
53. The management of the college is good. The management of the leadership team is very good and effective procedures are in place to monitor progress in achieving college targets. There is excellent use made in the monitoring of assessment by the assistant headteacher from another school, facilitated by the LIG funding. However, there are inconsistencies in the way policies on such matters as assessment, marking and homework are implemented at department level. A significant number of departments do not monitor how teaching impacts upon students' learning with sufficient rigour. The performance management of teaching and support staff is now seen by most staff as an important tool to enable them to improve. It is linked closely to staff development, which is very well managed. The college's self-assessment was very accurate; it was harder on teaching than the judgements the inspection team made and this is a reflection of the challenges the college sees ahead in its ambition to improve even further. The departments produce very good, accurate annual reviews. The principal is making sure that no one rests on their laurels and thinks that very good is good enough.
54. The special educational needs department is very effectively managed. Procedures for the recording of the progress of individual students are very good and an important factor in their very good progress. All heads of department are well informed and there is a consistent approach to students with special educational needs across all departments. The leadership of the learning support co-ordinator is very good, as she provides very clear guidance to colleagues on the means of helping not only students at the level of Action Plus and those with statements of special educational needs, but also a large proportion of those at the level of School Action.
55. She has provided very good guidance to colleagues on the means by which they should work along with learning support assistants, whose work is therefore very effective in helping students. Her management is very good in that she communicates very well with colleagues, manages withdrawal classes very well to the high satisfaction of individual students while maintaining their entitlement to the entire curriculum. She keeps very good records and has very good knowledge of individual students.
56. The named governor for special educational needs has good expertise in the area combined with good understanding of the department in the college. She communicates regularly with the learning support co-ordinator and keeps the governors in touch with important issues affecting special educational needs. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements.
57. The college's financial management and control are very good. Budgets for boarding provision and main school are kept separate to the satisfaction of the LEA. The responsible governor and finance committee are closely involved in financial planning, working to a well-structured timetable throughout the budget planning and the very thorough monitoring cycle. Significant expertise is brought to bear in both supporting the college and holding it rigorously to account. Very good financial administration and control are carried out in line with best practice and are

very thoroughly scrutinised annually by means of external audit. Office staff work particularly efficiently and promote the friendly ethos of the school.

58. The budget is planned in full recognition of the priorities identified in the college's development plan. In addition to basic funding, subject departments can bid for funding for curriculum development. Although the proportion of the budget allocated to resources for learning is low in comparison to national averages, subject departments are all adequately funded. The principles of best value are fully embedded in the college's principles and practice at all levels and are very well applied in accordance with its best value statement.

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,607,900
Total expenditure	3,606,300
Expenditure per pupil	3,737

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to the next year	1,600

Sixth form

59. The sixth form is led and managed **very well**. The aims of the sixth form are integral to the aims of the whole school. The college leadership team and the head of sixth form provide a clear sense of purpose and direction for students and staff. The principal and her team are committed to maintaining a centre of excellence, having been described by the local education authority (LEA) review as 'the highest performing sixth form in the LEA'. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and a mutually supportive structure exists. Pastoral management is strong and monitoring students' progress is central to the role of the tutors. They ensure that those who join the college at this stage of their education are very well integrated and supported. By promoting self-responsibility, the team creates and manages a thriving learning environment amongst the students. Good communication between house staff and subject teachers enables them to give students very good support and guidance, particularly in respect of university application. The good management of the curriculum enables a very wide range of subjects to be offered at GCE level. This was particularly mentioned by a significant number of students as the reason for their choosing the college for their post-16 work. However, students who do not wish to go into higher education say that they are less well supported in seeking progression routes into employment or further training.
60. The day-to-day management and administration of the sixth form are good. The examination results are well analysed and there are good annual subject reviews. As a result there is a clear vision for development with a focus on improving results and maximising the achievement of individuals. Students have clear targets and there are high expectations on them to work maturely and independently. Teaching is generally monitored but needs to be more rigorously evaluated, so that the ways in which students learn most effectively can be better identified.
61. The governors know the many strengths and few weaknesses of the sixth form and are active in their role as critical friends. They have now fulfilled their statutory duty by providing for the teaching of religious education and a daily collective act of worship. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Results and standards have improved consistently over the last three years, with a 10 per cent increase in students gaining A-B grades at GCE A level. The school has been successful in implementing the new curriculum and courses. The sixth form is cost effective. Sixth form finances are very well managed. There is an appropriate balance between the income and expenditure of the main school and the sixth form, which is appropriately monitored. The college provides very good value for money.

What is the effectiveness of the boarding provision?

62. The boarding provision is **very good**. It contributes to the excellent ethos of the school and the facilities available to boarders enhance the provision for all students. It is managed very well by a dedicated team of teachers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The boarding provision extends the opportunities for all students.
- There are very effective policies and practices in place to ensure students' personal and academic progress.
- House staff know the students well and are aware of their physical, emotional and academic needs.

Commentary

63. The boarding provision is an integral part of the college and contributes to its very positive ethos for learning. Day students are attached to each of the college houses and take full advantage of the very good educational and recreational facilities available to boarders. They study and work together in a family atmosphere. Day boarders also attend before and after college activities such as clubs, societies, visits and events.
64. The heads of house are now assistant principals, led by a vice principal, who is director of boarding and they have a whole school leadership role. The tutors have taken on responsibility for academic as well as pastoral monitoring, although sometimes they refer issues back rather than dealing with them themselves. The matrons play a key role in developing a positive atmosphere. The house staff know the students very well, are fully aware of their needs and are positive and supportive. The chaplain takes a full part in the life of the whole school, both in lessons and as a spiritual leader. The chapel is used regularly for services and other activities.
65. Students are thoroughly aware of health and safety issues, there are nurses available all week and a doctor is on call. Staff supervise the students conscientiously. This is a very close and intimate environment and a few personal issues have inevitably arisen. The college has very good systems to identify and remedy these problems and although they are very important to the individuals involved, most are sorted out very quickly and the college does what it can to deal with everyone fairly. Child protection policies are clear and understood and the students have someone to talk to when needed. Some older students believe that they are treated too strictly, but the balance between freedom, privacy and supervision is very good.
66. The supervision and management of the boarding provision are very good. Finances are kept separate from the main budget and money from lettings over the summer goes into the school account and is used well to improve provision. The recent NCSC in full report on the boarding provision did not highlight any serious issues.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 national test and GCSE results are high.
- Departmental policy documents are clear and well focused on raising attainment.
- Leadership and management of the English department are very good.
- Teaching and learning need to be formally monitored so that teachers and students receive further guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

67. In 2003 the Year 9 national test results were well above average. GCSE English results were also high. GCSE English literature results were very high. All students entered for GCSE English and English literature examinations gained A* to C grades.
68. For current students, standards are very high in Years 9 and 11. Achievement is very good. In Year 9 students speak with a high degree of fluency and respond thoughtfully to what they hear. Their evaluations of their classmates' presentations are articulate and objective, yet expressed with courtesy and empathy. When reading, they identify stylistic features of literature and analyse with insight. For example, one class identified ways in which Shakespeare uses the witches in Macbeth to increase dramatic tension. Their writing is confident, very well developed, very organised and very accurate. In Years 10 and 11, students contribute eloquently to speaking and listening tasks. They use vocabulary precisely to suit specific purposes. Their coursework includes very good discursive and analytical writing. Their response to literature is detailed and evaluative. Most students employ ambitious vocabulary. Their writing demonstrates an assured control of a range of styles.
69. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the college and often excellent. One poor lesson was observed. Teachers use their specialist knowledge to give students a very good understanding of texts and of the features that make writing more effective. Activities are well matched to lesson objectives and motivate students very well. Teachers create numerous opportunities for students to present ideas to and receive criticism from their classmates. The marking of formal assessment tasks encourages students by recognising their strengths and setting out clear targets for improvement. Marking in exercise books is also of this high standard. Teachers' high expectations are demonstrated in the demanding texts chosen for study and in written tasks designed to stimulate the students. Homework is challenging, requiring students to apply independently the skills and knowledge they acquire in lessons.
70. The acting head leads and manages his department very well. Teamwork is very good. Teachers make good use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades to assess and track students' progress. Teaching and learning need to be formally monitored so that teachers and students receive further guidance on how to improve. The high standards noted during the previous inspection have been maintained and progress has been good.
71. The collective strength of the team of teachers, plus very good leadership, give grounds to believe that the department's capacity for further improvement is very high.

Example of outstanding practice

Challenge, encouragement and inspiration promote excellent learning opportunities

A teacher's planning for and management of an excellent Year 7 media lesson enabled all of the class to understand the differences between local, regional, national and international news. The structure of the lesson and the tasks involved stemmed from an expert knowledge of the curriculum and how to teach it. The starter activity required each pupil to present a piece of recent personal news. Pairs of pupils followed this with analysis and presentation of news items. The initial fast-paced phases of the lesson allowed each pupil to gain an insight into different levels of news, appreciate layers of meaning and respond critically but sensitively. The third phase of the lesson involved a small group *Newsnight* presentation. Two students video recorded the presentation whilst their classmates prepared a peer assessment. The final plenary involved all pupils in an effective evaluation of their learning.

Drama

72. Each student in Years 7 to 9 has one lesson of drama a fortnight and it is a GCSE option. In 2003, GCSE results were very high. Students are very enthusiastic about the subject and it makes a good contribution to their personal development. In the excellent Year 11 lesson observed, students learned very well because the teacher planned and delivered a stimulating set of tasks. Consequently, the students developed, rehearsed and presented their pieces extremely well. This was enhanced by excellent peer assessment. There are very good activities to enrich the drama curriculum. The leadership and management of the acting head of department are very good. Provision in drama has improved significantly during the current academic year.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Standards of literacy are very high and enable students to achieve very well. Students are eloquent and thoroughly enjoy discussions. They read fluently, with very good comprehension. They make effective use of higher order reading skills such as skimming and scanning. They communicate their knowledge of subjects very clearly in writing.
74. The governors have recently ratified the college's comprehensive literacy policy, designed to raise the achievement of all students by developing further their speaking, listening, reading and writing. The policy provides clear guidance on the contribution each subject should make to the raising of standards and explicit ways in which the delivery of the college's literacy strategy will be monitored.
75. Some subjects make very good provision for the development of literacy skills. For example, teachers in art and design, geography, history and ICT promote the precise use of technical vocabulary. Hence, students are accurate in its use.
76. The literacy framework is in place in English classes. Teachers have been trained effectively and subject leaders are required to include literacy issues when writing schemes of work. The college's new multi-faceted monitoring programme should ensure that all subject areas deliver a well-planned programme of literacy development. Overall, the level of competence in literacy is well above expectations throughout the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good** with some outstanding aspects, particularly in Spanish.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards at GCSE and at Key Stage 3 with outstanding achievement in Spanish.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching in German and outstanding teaching in Spanish.
- Good communication in the foreign language in the classroom, especially in Spanish.

- Speaking and writing at length are both strong features in all languages.
- Lack of regular, formal development time inhibits the extension of good or innovative practice.
- Use of data to inform strategic development, planning and to support advice to individual students is at an early stage of development.
- Good level of improvement since the last inspection; issues have been successfully addressed, strengths maintained and standards are higher.

Commentary

77. Almost all students learn French and German in Years 7 and 8 and in Year 9 they may start to learn Spanish in place of either French or German. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment in their first foreign language has been consistently very high over the last three years. Few have studied any languages previously.
78. Students normally learn a foreign language to the age of 16 and have the option to continue with one or two languages. The percentage of students entered for GCSE, particularly in German and Spanish, is much higher than in most schools. Results in French, German and Spanish have been significantly higher than national averages for the last few years and in 2003 results in German and Spanish were similar to results in selective schools. Girls' attainment in each language is higher than that of boys, especially at grades A*/A. The differential in attainment between boys and girls is smaller in Spanish. Boys perform better than boys nationally in the three languages.
79. By the end of Year 9 students are achieving well above expectations in French and German. They achieve exceptionally well in Spanish, making rapid progress in one year to attain standards in line with national expectations for a first foreign language. By the end of Year 11 students' achievement is well above expectations in French and German and the rapid progress in Spanish is maintained so that achievement is excellent.
80. Standards of work seen reflect a similar pattern. In a Year 7 German lesson, students spoke with good accents, acquired new vocabulary rapidly and enjoyed being challenged to use their very good, existing knowledge of vocabulary and of patterns of word endings and cognates to work out the meaning of compound nouns and the gender of new words. By Year 9 students are at ease with German as the main language of classroom communication. They are able to explain the structure and use of separable and reflexive verbs and use them with correct word order. Written work seen in French and German is of an above average standard or better. Students frequently write at length using a range of tenses, complex phrases and interesting vocabulary. Students write fluently in Spanish with very good levels of accuracy. In a Year 10 Spanish lesson, all students were able to cope with the lesson conducted almost solely in Spanish. By Year 11 students in a Spanish lesson spoke at length from memory and read aloud fluently and with good accents. They also worked rapidly and confidently at manipulating a text from third into first person. Writing is of a very good standard in French, German and Spanish. Levels of accuracy are very good and students write fluently on a wide range of topics using a good range of structures and vocabulary.
81. In half the lessons seen, the teaching was very good or excellent and it was always at least satisfactory. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and the department benefits from some exceptionally fluent foreign language speakers. Lessons have clear objectives drawn from detailed schemes of work although the support for differentiation does not completely meet the needs of teachers catering for the mixed ability groups in Year 10 that have resulted from this year's option arrangements. In the best lessons, the pace was brisk and the teacher frequently challenged students to explain structures, to explain comprehension techniques and to use the language at length. In those lessons where the teachers scarcely used English and challenged students to speak in the foreign language, students' understanding and spontaneous communication were very good. All teachers started lessons well, gaining students' interest and raising confidence by briefly using cards, transparencies and props to prompt revision of recently taught language. All teachers have high expectations and plan activities that help students to practise high-level language use.

For example, they provide models of high-level language and frequently give opportunities for all students to speak and write at length and to work out and explain grammatical structures. These approaches supported all students in achieving well and allowed the most able to progress further. Good vocabulary acquisition is fostered by a range of reinforcement activities with visual prompts such as: writing up key words, choral repetition, checking acquisition during end of lesson activities, frequent testing and the requirement to communicate frequently from memory. Where lessons were only satisfactory, there was less use of the foreign language and some activities were overlong and too teacher led. Relationships between teachers and students are positive. Teachers keep the emphasis on how to achieve well, praising good contributions and insisting on application to tasks whilst creating a climate where students can risk trying out language and receive clear feedback on how to improve. Students' work is marked with great care and teachers indicate strengths and weaknesses.

82. The leadership of the head of department is very good. She provides an outstanding role model and has drawn around her a dedicated and supportive team. Enthusiasm for language learning and for the countries where the languages are spoken and delight in students' achievements are evident in conversations and displays. The drive for high achievement is tangible in all aspects of planning and delivery. Management has many good features but development is inhibited by a lack of regular, formal department meetings, opportunities to observe, share and extend good or innovative practice and the underdeveloped use of data to inform strategic development and individual student support.
83. Although accommodation is old and damp the department makes the most of it, creating interesting and celebratory displays and experimenting with varied seating arrangements that create a good learning environment. Good use is made of audio equipment and overhead projectors. The ICT room is frequently booked for class use and individual post-16 students particularly are often seen using computers for their assignments. ICT use is limited currently with word processing as the major tool. However, several new software packages have been purchased that will support the development of more independent learning.
84. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All issues have been addressed. Standards have risen, teaching has improved and strengths in teaching and leadership have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 are well above national averages.
- There is a strong determination to raise standards even higher with steps being taken to increase the number of A* grades at GCSE.
- Marking of students' work is often unsatisfactory, guidance for improvement is inadequate.
- There are good ICT facilities for mathematics but National Curriculum requirements are not being fully covered.

Commentary

85. Overall standards are **very good**. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are very high and above those in similar schools. Over nine-tenths of students attained at least the nationally expected Level 5 in each of the last three years. In 2003 half reached the two highest levels of 7 or 8. There is a consistent rising trend. Results of boys slightly exceed those of girls. Achievement of both boys and girls, when compared to standards at their entry into the school, was satisfactory in 2002 and in 2003 it was excellent. At GCSE nine-tenths of candidates gain grades A*-C and all gain at least grade E, results well above average. In 2003 the proportion of A*/A grades was significantly higher than previously. Both boys and girls

achieve higher results in mathematics relative to their other subjects. Overall achievement is **very good**. There is a determination to raise standards even higher. Work seen during the inspection did not meet such high levels but summer term revision programmes coupled with strong student motivation make such targets realistic.

86. Overall teaching is **good**. Students benefit from tuition by specialist mathematicians and from the learning atmosphere prevalent in the college. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better. There is a range of teaching styles. The most effective actively involve and stimulate students, with frequent question-and-answer interaction promoting understanding. Very good lessons were with a Year 9 class producing high quality trigonometric work, a Year 11 class using laptops for function transformations and a different Year 11 class discussing metric and imperial units. In each, enthusiastic teaching led to very good learning. In contrast some lessons are too teacher directed, uninspiring, have insufficient student participation and learning becomes mechanistic. The pace of work, often impressive, can be too demanding for some students who, needing reinforcement, wait for answers to be given rather than devising solutions themselves. Keener awareness is required to cover the spread of needs in a class, even where set by ability, the more so in Year 7 mixed-ability classes.
87. Students are attentive, diligent and motivated. Many reach high standards. They undertake extensive study beyond class, so overall learning is **very good**. Mid- and lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs, make very good progress. Coursework investigations significantly improve by Year 11. Many students enter mathematics challenge tests, very good results being obtained.
88. Marking of work is, however, inconsistent and does not follow school policy. Many exercise books show little evidence of being marked. This is unsatisfactory. Little advice as to how students can improve their work is recorded, though verbal feedback may occur and comments are sometimes provided in reports to parents. Target-setting is restricted to the provision of levels or grades and only relates to national criteria in assessment tests.
89. Leadership and management of the department are **satisfactory**. There is a quest for raising standards. Teamwork is strong. Teachers are readily accessible to assist students who need help. The departmental suite of rooms is conducive to learning. Resources are well used. A good range of computer software is available. Funding for further data projectors and interactive whiteboards is allocated. The library has many mathematics texts, but much is old stock. The flexible teaching programme is clearly effective but the use of ICT is inadequately incorporated, so that the national framework is inconsistently applied. Areas for improvement identified in previous school reviews remain: schemes of work need further updating, documentation lacks detail, monitoring is inconsistent, and analysis of performance by gender, ethnicity or boarders/day-students is inadequate.
90. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in standards. Students are motivated, feel supported, have confidence in their teachers and know they are receiving a good education. Achievement is impressive. There is much for the department to be proud of. Nevertheless there are improvements that can and should be made and which in themselves would promote even higher standards.

Numeracy across the curriculum

91. Considerable development of numerical skills occurs within the mathematics curriculum. Pupils build well on previous knowledge, gaining confidence and accuracy in mental and written calculation. They are encouraged to calculate without the use of a calculator, except when sensibly required, so their mental recall is strengthened. They proceed to areas of shapes, Pythagoras and algebraic manipulation, the vast majority being very competent at these by the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining pupils deal well with statistical concepts, trigonometry and more complex computation.

92. This solid grounding means that progress in no subject is held back by shortcomings in mathematics. Very good use of numeracy was evident in science, geography, design and technology and ICT. Graphical work is well done, with appreciation of appropriate choice of graph to a situation, though interpretation is sometimes less sure. There is a full Numeracy policy, including exemplar material that could beneficially be consulted by all departments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in external examinations are well above average.
- Students work very hard both in and out of lessons and are very keen to do well. As a result achievement overall is very good.
- Teaching presents too few opportunities for students to work independently in lessons or to think ideas through for themselves.
- The head of department promotes high standards and provides a very good role model for others.
- Insufficient emphasis on evaluating teaching and learning across the department is hindering the development of the very good practice that exists.
- ICT is used very effectively to develop students' understanding.

Commentary

93. Students enter the college with above average attainment levels in science. The Year 9 test results in 2003 were well above average and very high in comparison with results in similar schools; standards were higher than in 2002. Boys' attainment was higher than that of girls. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average and students achieve very well. GCSE examination results in 2003 were significantly above average and were higher than in 2002. The standards reached by girls and boys were similar. However, the performance of both boys and girls in science was worse than in many other subjects.
94. Standards seen during the inspection were above average, but were not as high as those reached in examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. Although many students have a very good knowledge and awareness of scientific ideas, a significant minority do not achieve their full potential in lessons. This is because teaching sometimes fails to develop students' understanding sufficiently. Where students are not actively involved in their own learning, they tend to be passive or occasionally lose interest and become restless. Girls often achieve better than boys in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4, because they concentrate more. However, most students are very keen to succeed and work hard to improve. Planned revision programmes and very good guidance from teachers help most students achieve very well by the end of each key stage. Very good numeracy and literacy skills help students develop their subject knowledge very well. However, more challenging teaching would address weaknesses in the students' detailed understanding of scientific concepts and raise standards further, particularly at GCSE level.
95. Teaching and learning are good overall. The work in lessons is invariably well planned and structured and teachers provide good support, particularly for students with special educational needs. As a result students make good progress. Very good use is made of ICT, which helps to promote students' learning very well, particularly in planned investigations. Sometimes, however, the work is too teacher directed and fails to provide students with enough opportunities to think ideas through for themselves. Where teaching is very good, students are encouraged to challenge their own understanding and very good use is made of imaginative and exciting ways of explaining scientific concepts. Very good accommodation and a good range of teaching and learning resources help to raise standards further. Excellent support is provided by the team of technicians.

96. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has high expectations and has established a good basis for making further improvements. Planning is effective and work in the subject is well structured. However, difficulties in arranging team meetings limit the opportunities for sharing good practice and developing commonly agreed approaches. In addition, a lack of monitoring of lessons leads to insufficient evaluation of individual strengths and weaknesses in the department. This results in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Since similar weaknesses existed at the time of the last inspection, the overall improvement in provision in the subject is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall provision for ICT in the main school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement throughout the main school is very good.
- Teachers' planning supports students very well at all levels.
- Assessment of the work of GNVQ students makes clear to them the means of improvement.
- ICT is used widely and appropriately to assist learning in other subject.
- As there is no taught course for all in Year 11 there is no means at present of ensuring that the students' standards are developed.

Commentary

97. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 last year shows that students' standards were above average with broadly similar performance by both boys and girls. This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection. The few students taking the GNVQ course in Year 11 show improving standards over the last three years and results are now in line with the national average. The introduction of the course to all students in Years 9 and 10 has further improved the students' overall standard in ICT. This is clear from the work seen during the inspection, which is very good in Year 9 in terms of range and quality of technical skills. However, there is not enough consideration of matching the purpose of the document to the outcomes. Students' evaluation tends to be too descriptive, in terms of personal preference rather than researched and reasoned judgement. They are still inexperienced in the design and use of spreadsheets in which they can insert formulae but give insufficient comment on their findings. Attainment of the GNVQ group in Year 11 is average but is good in relation to their ability. Year 11 students' use of ICT across the curriculum in general shows above average capability in application to different circumstances. Year 10 students struggle with data handling because of a lack of prior experience but their standard overall is good.
98. Achievement overall is very good. In Years 7 to 9, despite the lack of time for taught ICT, students are adaptable in their overall use of ICT. The Year 11 GNVQ group have improved well in relation to their previous standard in that they are meeting all of the criteria in a very well structured course. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because of the attention to their needs.
99. Teaching is good overall. Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge. Well planned materials support students with basic skills. Teaching methods are very good in almost all classes with clear introductions and very good attention to the needs of individual students. Assessment in the GNVQ course gives students a good record of how to improve their standard in relation to the criteria. Teachers use the network well to store guidance to which students have constant access. In Years 7 and 8 the emphasis on skills development at the expense of the consideration of the appropriate use of ICT does not encourage higher levels of thinking. Non-specialist teachers do not implement in full the learning style that gives students independence along with supportive questioning.
100. The leadership and management of ICT have both improved since the last inspection and are now good. The department with the support of the school's senior management has analysed

areas of difficulty and put in place firm plans for improvement. The head of department provides a good role model and guidance for inexperienced teachers in the department.

101. Departmental planning is very good. The school is now well equipped with a very reliable network that makes it possible for students to use ICT in all subjects. The school has recognised that a shortage of time for the taught course in Years 8 and 9 could have had a detrimental impact on the students' attainment and that all students in Year 11 should have an opportunity to develop their ability to apply ICT. These deficiencies have been amended in planning for the next academic year. There is, however, still no monitoring of the teachers of ICT who are specialists in other areas to make sure that their style is appropriate for the course.
102. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with an improvement in students' standards, in provision through the availability of taught courses, level of equipment and in the staffing of the department.

ICT across the curriculum

103. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good in that it benefits learning in other subjects and the students' standard is such that they can cope with all that is asked of them. ICT is used well in most subjects and there is no area in which it is totally unsatisfactory. There is very good use in English at all ages and in aspects of design and technology. Science makes very good use of data logging. There is, however, little attempt either to match the ICT curriculum in Years 7 to 9 to the needs of other subjects or to ensure that the use of ICT develops students' standards in ICT where they do not take it as an option.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY

The overall quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths and areas for improvement

- The results and achievement of students are good or very good.
- The time allocated to history in Years 7, 8 and 9 has helped improve standards.
- Assessment tasks in Years 7, 8 and 9 produce very good results.
- School assessment data could be better used to target individual student performance.
- Stability in staffing in Years 7 and 8 is necessary for continuity.
- There needs to be more consistency in marking from all teachers.

Commentary

104. The results of teachers' assessment in history at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. In contrast to national trends boys are performing as well as girls. These results are supported by inspection evidence and current standards in Years 7 and 8, while varied, are generally above average. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and in one class observed standards are outstanding.
105. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 for all pupils were well above average. Girls gained a significantly higher number of the top grades than boys. The number of top grades achieved was double that of the previous year and overall results reflect the continuing improvement over the past five years.
106. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good across the ability range. Pupils are benefiting from the increase in time allocated to history since the last inspection. The achievement of pupils in some of these classes, however, is being negatively affected by having more than one teacher due to temporary staffing problems. In Year 9 where staffing is more stable achievement is

very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils' knowledge and understanding of the relevant key features of the past and their ability to understand change over time are good. They benefit from the structured use of sources and an emphasis on extended writing. Pupils' work reflects their very good literacy skills which are enhanced by the emphasis placed on the correct use of terminology, spelling and presentation of work. Less able pupils in Year 8, with more limited literacy skills, benefit from the use of ICT and are able to sequence events accurately and show good understanding of causation in relation to the English Civil War.

107. The skills and attention to detail learnt in Years 7, 8 and 9 impact on the very good achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in line with their abilities and expectations. Pupils make very good progress and this contributes to the well above average results achieved at the end of Year 11.
108. Teaching and learning are generally good or very good across all years. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and set varied structured tasks that challenge students and enable them to make progress. They set high standards and establish calm and purposeful learning environments in which students enjoy their work, contribute to class discussions and work constructively together in groups. The contribution of students in a Year 9 class was particularly impressive. They had an excellent grasp of the aims underpinning Hitler's foreign policy and of the chronology of events leading to the Second World War. They were also able to speculate and hypothesise sensibly on alternative policies to appeasement in preparing imaginary speeches for Chamberlain and Churchill. The assessment tasks done each term in Years 7, 8 and 9 result in work of an above average standard and are a very good measure of the achievement of students and the progress that they are making. The marking of work, other than for assessment tasks, lacks consistency and should be monitored more effectively.
109. Leadership and management in the department are good despite some temporary staffing difficulties. There is a strong commitment to the maintenance of high standards and an appreciation of the importance of monitoring students' work and evaluating teaching as well as making more use of assessment data.
110. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have improved and more time has been allocated to history in Years 7, 8 and 9. ICT is now more securely embedded in the schemes of work and in teaching although access to computers remains a problem.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests and examinations and the achievement of students are very good.
- Good attention is given to advising students on the structuring of written work and extending answers to achieve better standards.
- The quality of feedback to students on marked work giving clear indication on how to improve.
- Students are not provided with opportunities and strategies to review, amend and improve marked work.
- The use of ICT needs strengthening to enhance geographical learning.
- Lesson activities are not sufficiently linked to key geographical ideas and questions for students to achieve the highest levels of learning.

Commentary

111. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above the national average. Teacher assessments of students at the age of 14 show standards are above average and this is supported by inspection evidence indicating that current standards in Years 7, 8 and 9, whilst varied, are overall above average, so achievement is satisfactory.

112. Results in GCSE in 2002 were above the national average in the top grades overall, but performance in the highest grades was below the national average. In 2003, the results in GCSE were well above national average in the highest and top grades, against the national trend. Achievement by the age of 16 is very good.
113. Teaching and learning are generally good across all years. Teachers have very good relationships with students and set high standards to establish calm and purposeful learning environments in which students enjoy their work, contribute to class discussions and work constructively together.
114. Teachers use a variety of appropriate methods and set structured tasks that enable students to make progress. A good range of skills is developed including regular use of maps, annotated diagrams, graphs and data tables. There is good emphasis placed on the introduction and reinforcement of geographical terms and extended writing activities are set as assessment tasks. ICT is used mainly for information searches and the presentation of work, but insufficient emphasis is given to how ICT can be used effectively to enhance geographical learning.
115. Where teaching is good, the aims of lessons are shared with students, questioning is used to challenge and extend their understanding and case studies and images are used effectively to give geographical context. Where teaching is less challenging, lessons provide too few opportunities for students to consider key geographical questions and identify trends and patterns or to use their knowledge to predict and review the sorts of geographical changes that might happen. The national Key Stage 3 Strategy has, as of yet, only made a small impact on the teaching techniques employed.
116. Assessment is good and marking is a particular strength, with very good feedback that gives constructive comments to highlight misconceptions and challenge students to extend and improve standards. However, students are not provided with opportunities and strategies to review, amend and improve marked work and this slows their progress. Students are aware of target grades and the overall quality of their work. In Years 10 and 11 good attention is given by teachers to advice and support on the structuring of written work and to extending answers to achieve high standards.
117. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a strong commitment to the maintenance of high standards and the importance of assessment for learning. There is a vision and plan of ideas to strengthen the quality of provision in the geography department although the coordination of staff and time to implement these has yet to be realised. Monitoring and evaluation within the department are not sufficiently developed to ensure consistency of teaching and departmental meetings are not held regularly enough for effective professional and departmental development.
118. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There has been improvement in standards at the age of 16 and more time has been allocated to geography in Years 7, 8 and 9. The fieldwork programme in these years has been strengthened and students in Years 8 and 9 undertake fieldwork in the local area. ICT is now firmly embedded in the curriculum although the breadth and quality of ICT experiences to enhance geographical learning need strengthening.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn very well because of the pace of teaching and the very good planning of lessons.

- Students' response to their work is very good and enables them to achieve very well in the GCSE examination.
- Students' spirituality and understanding of faith are very well developed through their courses.
- Teachers' high expectations lead students to act very maturely in tackling very sensitive issues.
- The provision of a full time chaplain is very beneficial for all students.

Commentary

119. Standards of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above expectations for their age. Students enter the college with knowledge and understanding of Christianity above expectation for their age. Students generally achieve well and, by the age of 14, have a good knowledge and understanding of the religious beliefs of the major world faiths.
120. Standards in the work of Years 10 and 11 GCSE students are well above expectation. They interpret religious beliefs and the gospels achieving very well. Enrichment course students express views about major religious questions with maturity and achieve well.
121. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their considerable knowledge to plan and deliver lessons at a very good pace. This ensures that students enjoy the work and are very well challenged. Year 7 students' understanding and knowledge of religious symbols were very well developed in a lesson. This enabled them to make very good comparisons between religious symbols and other, familiar symbols. Challenge is very appropriate to the students' prior knowledge and understanding. In a Year 11 enrichment lesson, students showed a very good grasp of key questions about the purpose of life and death. They achieved very well in exploring how beliefs affect the ways that different faiths view existence. Students who are deemed gifted and those with special educational needs are given very good support by teachers. Those in the early stages of learning English are well supported and teachers help them develop their religious vocabulary well. Whilst most books are well marked, there is a need to check the quality of marking more rigorously. Monitoring of the effect of teaching on students' learning also needs developing further.
122. The leadership and management of religious education are good. Students have a real sense of the spiritual and the teaching team are very committed to incorporating moments of awe and wonder into the sessions. Schemes of work are thorough and in line with the requirements of the Norfolk agreed syllabus, although the time allocated to enrichment courses is lower than the recommendation. Assessment procedures are developing and marking generally helps students to gain a good idea of their progress. The number of candidates entering the GCSE course is rising well.
123. Attitudes towards religious education are very good. The chaplain is available for both day students and boarders, taking a full part in the life of the college. The curriculum gives them very good opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, cultural and social skills. There is great sensitivity in relationships between the teachers and their students. The involvement of students in confirmation groups, the Alpha programme, Christian Union meetings and assemblies is a very good indication of their response to the subject and there is a very strong understanding of faith amongst many of the students.
124. Very good improvement has taken place since the time of the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results that are significantly better than the national standards
- The results that students gain in design and technology are lower than in the majority of their other subjects.
- The high quality accommodation for design and technology that gives a wide range of well furnished working spaces.
- The restricted resources and the limited range of work, so that students do not get their full entitlement to the whole of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3
- The mobility of staffing which means that some areas of experience are taught without the expertise they need.
- Poor attention to cleaning which means that rooms are not properly cleaned prior to Monday teaching.

Commentary

125. Students' attainment on entry is just above the national average; they cover the National Curriculum for design and technology well in their primary schools. Teacher assessments in 2003 at the end of Year 9 showed that the standards attained were above national expectations. The present Year 9 students are at a similar level, which is confirmed by a study of class work and project work. However, the range and quality of work that students produce are limited. Some areas, such as modern materials, including plastics and "smart" materials and control technology, are not sufficiently taught to cover the whole of the National Curriculum.
126. Since the last inspection the average number of candidates gaining a C grade or above in the GCSE examinations is significantly above the national average. Last year's standards continued the trend. Current Year 11 students maintain these standards and their coursework and books show very high standards and most students are working at above national average levels. Boys' practical work is most often better than their portfolios.
127. The percentage of students entered for the examination is far higher than the national average. However, most students do less well in their design and technology examinations than in most of their other subjects and boys follow the national pattern and do worse than the girls, the difference in their performance being much larger than the national difference. Lower attaining students and those who hold statements of special educational needs, make similar progress to the other students because the projects are interesting and engage them and the tasks are well matched to their needs and interests. Overall, achievement improves as the students move through the school into their examination years.
128. Teaching and learning are good overall. Some lessons were weaker, but others were very good. The full-time teachers have worked with the head of department to develop schemes of work that are well organised, but they do not include all the statutory requirements. In Years 7, 8 and 9, different groups get different projects and experiences.
129. Students are motivated, work hard in lessons and listen well to their teachers so that they learn well. Practical work is enjoyed, with students using the equipment well. Lessons are effective and very orderly and the design and theory lessons progress without fuss or interruption, except where teaching is less than satisfactory and some students take advantage. In Years 10 and 11, the assessment criteria from the examination boards are used well to ratchet up standards. Teachers identify what has been achieved and what is needed to gain higher grades.
130. Accommodation is very good with well furnished rooms, although they are not cleaned every day after students have worked in them. Resources are deficient in some areas to support the full range of the subject. The department is developing well its use of computer aided design and computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) . The recruitment of specialist staff has been difficult. Although the school has made attempts to rectify the matter, some lessons are taught

by non-specialists. Not all Year 10 students study the subject to examination level although they can choose to; students in Years 7 to 9 have differing experiences of design and technology; and the technical support in the department has been reduced as the technician has opted to teach some groups and makes up most of the time at weekends.

131. Along with the good leadership of the head of department, all of the staff have cooperated well to plan the raising of standards. Some progress is still being made, but the difficulty in appointing suitably experienced staff means that plans are sometimes put on hold. The management of the situation is good because the effects of the staff shortages have been minimised. However, the impact of the problems means that areas of development planned as part of the schools technology schools initiative, as well as at Key Stage 3, are incomplete and more planning and leadership are required to identify what needs to be done and how it is to be achieved.
132. There have been improvements since the last inspection, but there have also been problems. Currently examination standards are being maintained, but the long-term impact of the limited provision in the early years is starting to be seen. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent extra-curricular provision for all students.
- Very good support from a large team of peripatetic teachers enhances the students' musical education.
- Enthusiastic vocal work, including singing, is a feature of the music department.
- The music department makes a very good contribution to the social and cultural development of the students.
- Some classroom teaching lacks rigour, pace and challenge, resulting in under-achievement for some students.

Commentary

133. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were around the national average, although girls attained higher levels than boys. GCSE results have been consistently good since 1999, with 100 per cent grades A* to C. Whilst this represents good or even very good progress, in 2003 there were very few higher grades with some 55% of students gaining grade B. Group work is very strong, reflecting the very good relationships that exist within the school community. In Years 7 and 8, there is a large amount of practical work, which is particularly appropriate and successful since a third of the school population receive instrumental or vocal lessons. Year 9 work consolidates this and there is more written work, which is of a good standard, despite the lack of diagnostic marking. GCSE composition, making very good use of the "Sibelius" software, is of a high standard with students demonstrating their sound knowledge of structure and extended melody writing.
134. Students learn well and respond to the teachers' expectations. Achievement reflects the quality of teaching, but would benefit from the use of explicit learning objectives during lessons. Where teaching is at its best, as in a Year 8 lesson on graphic scores, expectations are high. All students are challenged, make rapid progress and evaluate their work constructively. On the few occasions where teaching is less successful, students are not fully engaged in their learning and are insufficiently challenged. Assessment procedures are generally very good although marking is weak.

135. The director of music leads the department very well, with commitment to the involvement and welfare of all students. There is an excellent programme of extra-curricular music, which involves a high proportion of students in choirs, ensemble groups, musical productions and there are many examples of links with the local community, including schools and concerts in high profile venues. The visiting music tutors are managed very well and make a very good contribution to the school's provision for music. The accommodation is ample, but is poorly soundproofed, inhibiting concentration in general and listening in particular.
136. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Curriculum time is now adequate. Even more visiting teachers provide lessons for 317 students. Assessment has improved, there is support from a technician and boys' participation has increased immensely. Examination results at GCSE have remained high, there is excellent extra-curricular provision and the director of music has continued to provide the enthusiastic leadership of his predecessor. Further improvement is needed in the schemes of work for Key Stage 3 (learning objectives, reference to the National Curriculum and differentiation), access to ICT at Key Stage 3 and in expectations for the more able students.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very good standards at all levels.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good.

Commentary

137. At the end of Year 9, students have achieved above average results in the teacher assessments, girls gaining marginally better results than boys. In GCSE at the end of Year 11, results are well above the national average and girls continue to gain somewhat better results than boys, as is the national picture. In the most recent years, the proportion of very high grades gained by students in GCSE examinations has been consistently high.
138. These results represent good achievement and progress from attainment on entry to attainment at the end of Year 9 and very good achievement through Years 10 and 11. Work seen during the inspection is consistent in quality with the assessment and examination results. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students produce very good drawing and painting based upon the local landscape, using the work of major artists as additional source material. Printmaking and etching reach a high standard and course notebooks provide good evidence of continuous progress. These also allow students to review and assess their own development. Limitations in resources limit progress in three-dimensional work but, despite this, lively experimental work in wire and papier-mâché is produced.
139. In Years 10 and 11, students develop strengths in drawing and painting and produce some very expressive large-scale work in the course of GCSE projects. There is a selective use of computers at this stage for both research and the development of ideas. However, the relatively limited resources available in studios are a constraint. The new GCSE in art textiles is developing well and there is much three-dimensional work in this area.
140. The quality of teaching is very good overall. There is a high level of commitment and a very good level of challenge is maintained in lessons. Good subject expertise is also evident together with versatility in one-to-one tuition. This promotes very good progress across different levels and aptitudes. Students who have English as a second language are encouraged by this sensitive individual tuition and achieve well.

141. Students enhance their own prospects by the quality of their response. They show high levels of interest and enthusiasm for the subject together with a capacity for working independently. This is developed by the teaching which is concerned with helping students shape the direction of their work for themselves. Literacy is enhanced by the analysis of subject terms as they arise in lessons and work in perspective and pattern extends numeracy. A minor weakness in isolated lessons is the tendency to use secondary sources in drawing rather than drawing from direct observation. Assessment is thorough and good progress is being made in the development of criteria for National Curriculum assessments.
142. The subject is well led by a head of department who takes a full part in the teaching. Management is innovative in the development of schemes of work and there are very good relationships among all staff, who are supported by an excellent non-teaching technician.
143. Standards have improved well since the last inspection and there has been a major improvement in accommodation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good** with some **very good features**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good standards in GCSE and A level.
- Some very good teaching and learning, which is raising standards especially in GCSE and A-level work.
- The very good attitude of students enhances their learning.
- Students enhance their skills through an excellent extra-curricular programme.
- Teachers do not always use assessment to help students know what they can do and how to improve.

Commentary

144. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above national averages. In core physical education standards were above national averages. By the end of Year 9 standards are above national averages. In general girls standards are in line with those of boys.
145. When students enter the school, standards are in line with national averages. Standards are above national averages by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, strategies focussing on the development of good basic techniques have produced good achievement. Students in soccer lessons are able to explain good technique of passing and control using correct terminology. They can then transfer this knowledge and understanding to the performance of the technique.
146. By the end of Year 11 the very high standards in GCSE physical education represent very good achievement. This is due to high expectations by teachers, which result in students developing very good techniques and individual learning skills. Students are able to maintain the quality of these techniques when using them in a game situation. For example, using their very good knowledge and understanding of netball in order to create space and make decisions about appropriate distribution when attacking. In core physical education students' achievement is good. They can transfer basic techniques to the game situation and develop good unit and team skills. However, students are not aware of the levels that they are working at during some lessons and consequently do not have targets for improvement. Students with special educational needs generally achieve at the same rate as other students.
147. Teaching and learning are overall good with some very good teaching. Learning is enhanced by the very good attitudes of most students. In Years 7 to 9 students particularly benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Teachers target the work well to the standards students are at, with students often working with different equipment and on different tasks. Where learning is not

as good teachers do not always use assessment findings so that students know what they can do and how to improve. In GCSE physical education lessons, students are engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities, which motivate them and keep them on task. The students are developing good independent learning skills and can effectively work on tasks, which require them to take responsibility for their own work. In Years 10 and 11 core physical education teaching is focused on the development of basic techniques when under pressure of game situations. This enables many students to make good progress. However, some students are moved on to activities before they are ready to do so. A large number of students enhance their performance in sport through an excellent extra-curricular programme.

148. Leadership and management are good. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. There are good management systems, which support teachers. Assessment procedures ensure that teachers have a good knowledge of standards. Additional analysis of the assessment data should now take place to further inform curricular development. There is a need for the department to develop a shared vision for raising standards more quickly.

BUSINESS STUDIES

The overall quality of provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GCSE examination results are well above average.
- Teachers' subject knowledge of the theory is good.
- Teachers' expectations are high.
- Schemes of work are not developed to meet students' needs.

Commentary

149. Students take business studies in Years 10 and 11. The GCSE examination results have been well above average in each of the last five years and have improved significantly since the last inspection. The results for 2003 show that three-quarters of students achieved the A * to C grades and all students achieved pass grades.
150. The standards of written work and its presentation are good. It is neat, diagrams are accurately recorded and students organise their work well. Standards of coursework in Year 11 are generally good. Students know how to use primary research to test the market for a new product and deploy analytic techniques such as "SWOT" analyses to inform the marketing strategies for their product. However, a few students have greater difficulty in completing their coursework to achieve the deadline and they need further teacher support. Students are especially confident in their use of accounting methods to assess a firm's viability. Value added is good at this stage.
151. The quality of teaching at this stage is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is especially well matched to the teaching requirements at GCSE and this is imparted to students in an efficient manner with clear exposition of key business concepts. Teachers set high standards with high expectations for the most able students. However, those students who need more time to understand and learn often require additional support to ensure they can successfully complete the work. There is little evidence from the scheme of work, or the lessons seen, that students have sufficient opportunities to express their opinion, or engage in discussion. Teachers' marking is careful and precise, but does not always provide encouragement for the less able students. Equally, there is little evidence that citizenship, or social and moral issues are well integrated into lessons. Key skills in ICT, numeracy and literacy are well developed at this stage of the curriculum.
152. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Delivery of the curriculum is efficient. However, the schemes of work have not yet been adapted to meet all students' needs. Course development does not incorporate learning activities, objectives, targets or an

evaluation strategy. Similarly assessment, target setting and feedback to students are not yet fully developed. Staff have good opportunities for professional development, but there is little monitoring of teaching within the department to promote and learn from best practice. Resources are very good and provide a very agreeable learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The positive ethos within the college promotes the values of citizenship.
- The coordinator has a strong vision of how to take the subject forward.
- Time allocated to specific citizenship provision is not sufficient to provide good learning.
- Pupils are not aware of where citizenship is taught across the curriculum.

Commentary

153. Overall, standards are satisfactory in all year groups. Students acquire satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding and develop a range of enquiry skills that enable them to communicate effectively. Students are strongly encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, reflect upon their experience and to consider the values of others. All students engage in non-curricular activities that promote citizenship, such as the democratic process of representation on college councils, where minutes of meetings are made available to all pupils, with resolutions and suggestions being taken seriously by college staff. However, although the principles of the subject are implicit in much of what they do, few students are able to identify citizenship links in other subjects and this limits their progress in understanding.
154. The school has successfully established an ethos that promotes the values of good citizenship. There is a structured scheme of work for citizenship education delivered by a small team of suitably experienced and qualified staff as part of the college enrichment programme. Year 7 students receive eight hours of citizenship lessons, Year 8 are taught for six hours of lessons and Years 9, 10 and 11 are allocated four hours of teaching over one term. In addition to the National Curriculum in citizenship, there is a short course of five one-hour lessons of citizenship education taught as part of the Year 12 enrichment programme. To support the teaching set textbooks are used and supplemented by a good variety of resources. Reports to parents give an outline of the structured provision for citizenship education in each year, but do not report on students' achievement and attainment in detail. Assessment procedures are not well developed.
155. During the inspection no specific lessons of citizenship education were observed, but discussions with students indicate that the profile of citizenship education within the college is relatively low. Inspection evidence identified good opportunities for education in citizenship within other subject areas. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson there was an excellent discussion on bullying. However, the citizenship education objectives offered by this and other opportunities were not shared with students, so that the citizenship learning was incidental rather than planned. As a result, the breadth of overall provision is not sufficient to secure good levels of understanding and application of citizenship.
156. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. A citizenship coordinator, appointed in January 2004 and supported by a senior member of staff, has made a good start in raising the profile and coordination of citizenship. The coordinator has a clear vision, understanding and commitment to the subject. For example, a recent audit of provision in all subjects has identified a wide range of opportunities for teaching citizenship across the curriculum and a plan is being developed to strengthen such opportunities and identify the citizenship objectives within the teaching of other subjects.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 19 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 school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. The college does not have the appropriate data for AS level examinations.

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	32	100	98.6	81.3	50.2	106.9	87.5
Biology	23	100	96.4	34.7	39.2	81.3	78.6
Business studies	23	100	98.7	26	36.8	76.8	80.1
Chemistry	16	100	97.6	43.8	54.5	90.9	84.9
Design and technology	25	100	97.8	52.2	35	78.5	76.6
Dutch	1	100	NA	100.0	NA	NA	NA
Economics	9	100	98.9	77.7	52	93.3	88.3
English literature	44	100	99.5	56.8	46.5	94.1	86.5
Further maths	4	100	NA	25.0	NA	NA	NA
French	15	100	98.8	46.7	51.5	84	87.6
General studies	36	100	94.7	33.3	31	82.6	73.1
Geography	24	100	98.7	17.4	44.5	70.4	84
German	8	100	98.4	55.6	47.9	95.6	84.8
History	30	100	99	65.5	44.6	96.6	84.6
ICT	22	91	95.6	15	24.6	65	69.5
Law	14	100	NA	57.1	NA	NA	NA
Maths	38	92	96.7	44.4	55.6	84.4	88.8
Media studies	17	100	NA	35.3	NA	NA	NA
Music	3	100	81.1	66.7	66.7	100	81.1
Physics	17	100	96.7	41.1	44.6	80	81.7
Portuguese	1	100	NA	100.0	NA	NA	NA
Religious studies	10	100	98.8	50.0	46.7	80	85.6
Sociology	11	100	98.2	45.4	44.3	85.5	83.6
Spanish	10	100	98.3	70.0	50.2	100	86.9
Sport studies	14	100	98	78.5	30.9	104.3	75.2
Theatre studies	7	100	99.5	71.4	40.1	97.1	83.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and achievement are high.
- A large proportion of students gain higher grades in GCE AS and A-Level.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The subject is strongly led and well managed.
- Teaching and learning need to be formally monitored so that teachers and pupils receive further guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

157. In 2003 the performance of students in GCE A-level English literature examinations was well above average. Three out of five students gained the higher grades of A and B. This represents very good achievement. It is the result of very good teaching, the positive attitudes shown by students and their exemplary behaviour.
158. Standards in Year 13 are well above average. Most students' writing is consistently evaluative and analytical. Students have a detailed knowledge of the themes and narrative structure of texts. They evaluate the contemporary values that influence authors and comment astutely on interpretations of set books. Most write accurately and persuasively. In Year 12, students make very good progress in developing analytical skills in lessons and are beginning to transfer these skills to their written work.
159. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very experienced and well read. As a result, students make very good progress in improving their analysis and their argumentative writing. Challenge and high expectations are features in all lessons. Learning is highly interactive, with many opportunities for whole class and group discussion. The variety of learning activities, including audio and video recordings plus Internet research, encourages and motivates students. Students of all abilities carry out their essay work with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Marking is very good. Teachers use written and spoken comments to clarify what each student needs to do to improve.
160. The acting head of department leads and manages the subject very well. Target setting is effective. The sharing of assessment objectives clarifies for students what they have to improve to achieve their goals. Teachers have very high aspirations for their students. Their enthusiasm for literature is outstanding and provides an excellent example. Teaching and learning need to be formally monitored so that teachers and students receive further guidance on how to improve. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

161. Students' communication skills in writing and speaking are very high in all sixth form subjects. Their general expression is clear. They rarely lapse into inappropriate colloquialisms. Research skills are also well above average.
162. Teachers provide very good support for students' communication skills. Many subjects expect students to give presentations. High expectations are set for coherent delivery and explanations.
163. Students write well to communicate information, ideas and opinions to intended audiences.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is high; students are very well motivated and show genuine intellectual curiosity.
- Year 13 students particularly show an unusual ability successfully to engage, in French, with ideas from other cultures and to express their own points of view on difficult moral and religious issues.
- Lessons tend to be formal in approach and textbook focused; students said they preferred teacher-set tasks. This view corresponds with inspection findings.
- Many lessons are formal in character and dependent on the textbook, with the teacher talking for much of the lesson. This tends to prevent students pursuing independent learning activities.
- Some teacher-centred lessons tend to lack pace and variety.
- Language skills are high. Both speaking and writing are strengths.
- Although the departmental scheme of work includes ICT within the curriculum, no evidence of this was seen during the inspection.

Commentary

164. Standards and achievement observed were high. A-level results in French in 2003 were in line with the national average and girls performed better than boys. The college provides detailed guidance and support to students in respect of course choices and the department has made examination success a priority in recent years.
165. The quality of teaching in French is never less than satisfactory and in half the lessons seen it was good. The general approach is often a formal, structured one, with the teacher as the focus of attention, spending a large proportion of the lesson talking. This approach is often accompanied by tasks drawn directly from the textbook. While the textbook is interesting and appropriate, spending large amounts of time in a formal mode working through the textbook is not a challenging and interesting approach for the students. This was confirmed on two occasions by seeking students' views. Students claimed that they preferred teacher-devised tasks, or at least using the textbook materials in a wider variety of ways.
166. The students themselves have impressively high levels of motivation and displayed very positive attitudes to their work, in the lessons observed. When required to do so they participate willingly in challenging and extended French conversation, on topics that would be taxing even in the native language. For example, in Year 13 a full 50-minute lesson was devoted to a discussion of the ethics of cloning and linked subjects, such as abortion, *in vitro* fertilisation and scientific experimentation on animals. In another lesson, in debate format, the five Year 13 students had prepared an explanation of five of the world's major religions, which they presented orally. The teacher then asked further questions, summarising where appropriate. The second part of the lesson involved speaking about the students' personal experience of God; a task that had also been prepared in advance, with most students using word processing in French. They willingly gave personal views and discussed more detailed, probing questions that arose, using complex explanations as required. On occasion the students spontaneously asked the teacher questions themselves, in French, showing genuine curiosity and interest in the response. Progress since the last inspection has been good, although it is not clear that the department yet uses lesson observations to inform and improve practice; some observation of other departments has, however, been undertaken.

German

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Half the candidates gained the higher A/B grades at A-Level in 2003.
- Standards have remained steadily in line with national results over the last four years.
- Understanding of grammar and the ability to use it are good.
- Students are able to speak and write fluently about challenging issues such as refugees with empathy and a grasp of the cultural and social contexts.
- There is a team of dedicated, specialist teachers.

Commentary

167. Although numbers choosing to study German are small, interest has remained steady and retention is good. Over the last five years, students' attainment has generally been in line with national averages and sometimes above that level. Results in 2003 were good with five out of nine students gaining A/B grades. Students generally gained challenging target grades.
168. Standards of work seen reflect a similar pattern. In a Year 12 lesson, German was the working language. Students extracted information from challenging texts well and reused the language very well to discuss war and refugee issues with increasing fluency. Students had a good grasp of the subjunctive; when to use it and how to conjugate irregular verbs. Achievement seen in the lesson and in their files was very good, for example, in the redrafting of writing and in the effort shown to make progress. By Year 13, students could read authentic texts and report back but their pace of work was slow, their speaking was tentative and their attainment variable.
169. The students' folders reflected similar standards to their work in class. Year 12 students included an impressive variety of vocabulary, tenses and complex structures in their writing. Year 13 students wrote fluently and showed evidence of reading around subjects but levels of accuracy were variable.
170. In lessons seen, some teaching was very good and teaching was always satisfactory. Good aspects were an environment where speaking German was natural, difficulties were anticipated, key language was reinforced naturally and students were challenged in a good humoured way and praised for their achievements in the lesson. Teacher advice in folders was helpfully specific. Where teaching was only satisfactory, there were many good aspects, but the rate of progress was lower and the language was not used well to challenge all students.
171. The opportunity to visit Germany, the use of the Internet and authentic texts provide other valuable means by which students extend their knowledge. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Spanish

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some outstanding teaching.
- Standards at A-level have been above or well above average for the last five years.
- Results at A-level in 2002 and 2003 were very good.
- The ease and fluency with which students speak Spanish.
- Cogent writing that includes an impressive range of vocabulary and idiom gained from extensive reading.

- The broad cultural knowledge and moral awareness displayed in students' writing.

Commentary

172. Numbers opting to study Spanish have risen steadily and retention is good. The trend in students' attainment is above average and achievement is very good. In 2003 seven out of ten students gained A/B grades and four candidates achieved higher than their target.
173. Standards of work seen reflect a similar pattern. In a Year 12 lesson students spoke with increasing confidence, expressing opinions and understood language spoken at speed. By Year 13 the level of speaking is excellent; students were able to discuss issues of global poverty fluently. They were able to recall a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures and had strategies to ask for, understand and give definitions.
174. Students' folders contain a wealth of well organised reading and language practice. Their work shows an increasingly good knowledge of Spanish and South American cultures gained from the themes studied. Their ability to understand and debate social and moral issues is very good and grows out of well planned introductory activities, further reading, vocabulary learning and extensive essay writing practice.
175. In lessons seen, the teaching was excellent. Lessons were conducted with enthusiasm, pace and rigour solely in Spanish. Expectations were high. The importance of learning vocabulary was emphasised and students were taken to task for unsatisfactory attention to a learning homework. On the other hand, their good efforts were praised. Students in a Year 12 lesson were helped to improve their work by considering in pairs how to correct the common errors made in a previous task and discussing them. Students made very good progress because their interest was engaged and their confidence was raised, for example by discussing pictures prior to reading for information. Consequently they were able to anticipate the issues described in challenging texts and appreciate how to use previous knowledge to tackle new themes. Their knowledge of grammar was supported by brief demands for explanations and examples when structures occurred in texts. Feedback on performance in class and in written work was detailed and clearly identified strengths and weaknesses.
176. Students enjoy borrowing tapes and videos for individual use. They have a clear sense of making rapid progress due to the clarity of purpose of the lessons and of homework tasks, the brisk pace of lessons and knowledge of examination criteria. Improvement has been good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**, with some areas for improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are around the national average, but there are fewer higher grades than predicted.
- Students achieve lower in mathematics than in their other subjects.
- The curriculum provides very good opportunities for students.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and able.
- Too many students discontinue mathematics at the end of Year 12.

Commentary

177. Standards are **satisfactory** overall. Around half of advanced level candidates have, annually over the past seven years, attained grades A or B. Very few do not attain at least grade E. This standard dropped in 2003, to slightly below the national average and also below the average grades for the students in their other subjects. Boys tend to gain higher results than girls. Up to ten students enter further mathematics producing very good results, 70 per cent in 2001 and 2002 gaining A/B grades. The much smaller 2003 entry was less successful. The

achievement of students, including those who joined the college at the start of the sixth form, is satisfactory overall.

178. Candidates at AS-level at the end of Year 12 gained an even spread of results across the grades in 2003. Over fifty students commence the course, timetabled together in three groups. No form of setting is used, yet this is the case before sixth form entry. A third of them do not continue into the A-level syllabus. Some drop-out is to be expected, but most of those who did so gained at least grade B at GCSE. This is an unsatisfactory situation. The opportunity is provided for students taking other subjects to resit GCSE mathematics. Many succeed in reaching their grade C target, either in the November or summer examinations.
179. Teaching is satisfactory and learning is good. Students receive clear and accurate instruction from specialist staff. For A-level they take six modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics, whilst further mathematicians take 13 modules and include decision mathematics. Enthusiastic teaching was seen in Year 12 classes reviewing statistical techniques on quartiles and dealing with permutations and in applying integration methods for areas under curves with links to the trapezium rule. Students showed interest and capability. Year 13 students showed good understanding of calculus in dealing with advanced differentiation techniques, but in a mechanics lesson many struggled through not recognising that the centre of mass of a body must lie on the vertical through the point of suspension. Further mathematicians coped very well with advanced applications of integration and centres of mass.
180. Students work well and gain good understanding through attention to numerous exercises. They study effectively beyond lesson time, when independent learning is being enhanced. In class many tend to be passive. Marking is by self-assessment or at the end of topics. Presentation of work is variable. These are areas that could be improved. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but the issue of stretching the more able students to reach higher grades is a concern. The improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
181. The use of numeracy and mathematical techniques in other subjects is very good and contributes to success in these areas. Students are skilful in handling data and producing graphs. They are less confident in interpreting data - evident both in science and in a history lesson in interpreting world trade statistics. Supply and demand was well understood in economics and good computational work was evident in an AVCE leisure and tourism course. Clear numerical skills were evident in ICT in planning and developing a website. Good progress using population data occurred in geography.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently above the national average.
- Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding to develop students' learning effectively.
- Students work very hard and have a determination to succeed.
- Teachers do not always assess students' understanding sufficiently in lessons.
- Work in the subject is managed effectively with close attention being paid to course requirements.

Commentary

182. Standards in the subject have been above average for the past four years. In 2002, GCE A-level results were well above average. Girls' attainment was higher than that of boys. All

students gained at least grade E. In 2003 standards were lower than in 2002 but remained above average; fewer students gained A and B grades. Boys' results were better than those of girls. In both 2002 and 2003, students, particularly girls, did not do as well in chemistry as in their other subjects.

183. Standards seen during the inspection were above average. Students in Year 13 have a good understanding of chemical concepts which they apply well to new situations. They are generally secure in their use of chemical terminology and formulae and carry out practical work effectively. While some students find it difficult to remember basic concepts, teaching provides good opportunities for earlier work to be consolidated. Students in Year 12 are coping well with the demands of AS level work and are using more advanced ideas effectively. However, some students lack confidence and are not yet fully independent learners; they do not always ask for enough help. As a result, they occasionally work slowly and without full understanding, particularly when carrying out their own investigations. Because students are very keen to develop their own learning, they work very hard to overcome their difficulties. This, combined with effective and supportive teaching, results in good achievement overall. The subject is popular with students and retention rates are very good. However, while students generally enjoy the work and do well, for some, chemistry is a career requirement and is not necessarily their strongest option.
184. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to explain and develop chemical concepts clearly. Lessons are planned effectively and the work is structured well around the learning needs of students. Teachers have a very good understanding of course and examination requirements and provide very high levels of support and guidance. Teaching is usually enthusiastic and engages students fully in lessons. As a result they learn well. Where teaching is very good, particular care is taken to make explicit links with earlier work and to ensure that students are able to use the more difficult ideas effectively. Although most students are able to follow the work well in lessons, teachers sometimes need to ensure that they identify more precisely where students are having difficulties. Occasionally there is not enough time given for students to think for themselves before teachers provide the answers to questions asked.
185. Leadership and management are good. Work is well organised with good attention being given to course requirements. However, although there is effective co-ordination and planning between the three teachers involved, the monitoring of teaching and learning is too informal and provides limited information for standards in the subject to be fully evaluated and improved. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of students attaining higher grades in examinations has increased, assessment practice has been improved and students now invariably show interest in the work.

Biology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards in Year 13 are above average.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning is good.
- Attitudes to learning are very good. This enhances learning.
- A-level results in 2003 were below average and well below those of the previous year.
- In too many lessons pupils spend valuable lesson time making notes.
- Marking is weak and feedback to pupils on how to improve is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

186. The A-level results in 2003 showed students' performance to be below national averages, particularly at the higher grades A and B. This was a sharp drop from the previous year when

students' performance was well above average. Current standards in Year 13 are above average but below those at the time of the last inspection.

187. The standards of work seen in Year 13 during this inspection are good. In one Year 13 class students were able to explain, for example, why pressure varies during the flow of blood into or out of the liver. In another Year 13 lesson students were studying the internal structure of the liver and showed good understanding of the portal system. Students are motivated and show mature attitudes to learning. They apply themselves to tasks and take responsibility for their own learning.
188. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is about average. In one lesson pupils studying the functions of the gaseous exchange system made good drawings of the observations they made using a microscope. They were less secure in their understanding of the process of gaseous exchange. In another Year 12 class the higher attaining pupils were well motivated and made good notes from a video presentation on the immune system. The lower and the middle attaining pupils showed less interest and made less progress.
189. Overall teaching is good. Attitudes to learning are very good. This enhances learning. Pupils in Year 13 learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide good support and guidance for coursework and for examination preparation. Relationships are very good. However, learning objectives are often not made clear and in too many lessons pupils remain passive and use valuable lesson time for making notes. Marking is weak and feedback to pupils on how to improve is limited. These factors inhibit achievement. Overall achievement is satisfactory.
190. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The monitoring of the students' progress is in place. Strategies for addressing weaknesses are not fully developed and improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Physics

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 13 are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Attitudes to learning are very good.
- Middle and higher attaining students achieve less well than they should.
- Feedback to on how to improve is inadequate.

Commentary

191. Performance in the A-level examinations in 2003 was in line with national averages. Although this represents a decline in standards from previous years the results indicate that these had made better than average progress over time. Current standards are above average and are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.
192. The standards of work of Year 13 students seen during this inspection are good. They show good understanding of Rayleigh's criteria, for example and are able to carry out wavelength calculations using the small angle approximation. They know that blue and red light belong to the family of electromagnetic waves. They can name some other members of this family, such as ultraviolet and microwaves. They are less sure of how the small angle approximation is arrived at and are unable to describe fully the nature and characteristics of EM waves.
193. A discussion with Year 12 students indicated that standards were satisfactory. They have studied the effects of forces on the movement of objects and their knowledge of forces and their effects on the motion of an object is sound. The work seen in books is also of a

satisfactory standard. They have covered a broad range of topics and have carried out a good selection of experiments. Their analytical skills, however, are less well developed. They make very little reference to the key variables when interpreting graphs or writing conclusions.

194. Teaching overall is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In Year 13 lessons teachers provide good guidance on preparation for tests and examinations and they make good use of the available time and resources. Attitudes to learning are very good. This contributes to learning. Overall learning is good. There is, however, insufficient challenge presented to students. This inhibits the achievement of the higher and the middle attaining students particularly. Feedback to on how to improve is too general to meet individual needs. Overall achievement is satisfactory.
195. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the leadership and management of the subject, but improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision for ICT in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in coursework and lessons seen during the inspection were good.
- Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching with very good support and challenge to students at all levels.
- The ICT component in the enrichment programme for the whole of Year 12 is not flexible enough to help all students.

Commentary

196. Examination results in 2003 were around the national average and were good in relation to the predicted results. Work seen during the inspection indicates that present standards are above average, with all of the examination criteria carefully met. Year 13 students' design of business solutions shows good research and independent thinking. Students in Year 12 have good ability to apply newly learned procedures. Girls work with care and concentration and therefore make steady progress but the boys' standard is higher overall. The attainment of students with special educational needs is well above their projected grades because of the teacher's attention to their learning needs.
197. Students' achievement is very good as a result of very clear following of the criteria for the examination. The achievement of students with special educational needs is excellent because of the attention to their needs. Very good teaching is the main cause of this achievement, especially very good attention to the needs of individuals and excellent support for students with special educational needs. Teachers make sure that students know exactly what is expected of them. They give high quality feedback so that students know how to improve their work. Teachers give students a high level of confidence resulting in a high level of commitment to the course and very good relationships. The working atmosphere is therefore very positive.
198. Leadership and management are both good, with the head of department responsible for a well-constructed and well selected course and providing a good role model for his colleagues.
199. Improvement since the last inspection is very good, in the improvement of resources, the development of a vocational course and the improved use of ICT to help learning in other subjects.

ICT across the sixth form curriculum

200. Good natural use is made of ICT wherever appropriate. Standards overall are good. The ICT component in the enrichment programme does not challenge all students to improve their standards. This is especially true of those taking the AVCE ICT course who could be using their skills more profitably to improve their work in the AVCE programme.

HUMANITIES

History

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good results in national examinations.
- Very good subject knowledge and examination expertise of staff.
- Good monitoring and reporting of student performance and good support given to students to ensure high standards.
- Students' note taking and the organisation of their folders is weak.
- Insufficient use made of ICT to improve learning.
- Inconsistency in the marking of students' work.

Commentary

201. Standards in history are well above average. Results in 2003 AS and A level GCEs were well above average and a slight improvement upon results in 2002. In both years girls gained a higher proportion of higher grades than boys. Standards observed in the inspection in Year 13 are well above average. In Year 12 standards are above average, although the students are as yet insecure in their knowledge of the chronology of Palmerston's foreign policy having only recently begun studying the topic.
202. Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students enter the sixth form with above average standards and leave with well above average standards. They benefit from the quality of teaching and the level of extra support they receive from their teachers and from the fact that they are very talented, highly motivated and hard working.
203. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced in teaching A and AS levels. They divide responsibilities for the different papers and pay close attention to the requirements of the examination board in preparing students. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and a wide range of sources including the production of course booklets to cut down on note taking and increase the time available for discussion. Students in a Year 12 class were analysing and debating, in some depth, the changing international situation after 1870 and using a variety of statistical information to analyse Britain's relative economic decline. They were able to think critically and use previous knowledge to make sensible deductions. In Year 13 students showed excellent understanding of Napoleon's military leadership and were able to use a variety of sources, including film, to begin to make informed judgements in analysing the proposition that he was a 'military genius'. All students show a good understanding of historical terminology and concepts. Their work benefits from their very good literacy skills and the attention paid to essay writing skills by their teachers.
204. Teachers set and mark work regularly. Some of the marking is exemplary – detailed, informative, illuminating, encouraging and setting clear targets for improvement. Other marking is less helpful and lacks detail about how to improve. Similarly students' files and notes are not checked and this is a weakness as the organisational skills of students vary considerably and poor notes and lack of organisation affect revision. Increasing use is being made of ICT for research and the completion of coursework but ICT has yet to impact as a teaching tool.

205. The leadership and management of the department are good. Results in the department have improved over the past five years. This is a significant factor in the increased numbers of students opting to study history in the sixth form. Despite unforeseen changes in the role of current staff, which has resulted in some disruption in the department, staff work well together and there continues to be a commitment to ensuring that standards remain high.
206. Improving results and increasing numbers are indicative of good improvement since the last inspection.

Geography

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and engage the interest and cooperation of students.
- Monitoring and supporting of students in coursework help improve quality.
- The quality of detail within the curriculum scheme of work is very variable.
- Greater consistency in teaching approaches that challenge students is required.
- More rigorous analysis and use of assessment data to identify strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and student performance is needed.

Commentary

207. Standards at the end of Year 13 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
208. In 2003 the average attainment of students on entry to Year 12 was in line with the national expectations. AS examination results in 2003 were well below the national average and A2 examination results in 2002 and 2003 were below national averages. Whilst results in the previous four years (1998 to 2001) were at least in line with the national average, there were significant inconsistencies in overall performance. With the exception of 2001, the achievement of girls has been consistently higher than that of boys.
209. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory with some good features. Teachers have very good relationships with their students who listen and work diligently and cooperatively in lessons. A few aspects of the curriculum are soundly planned, but a number of teaching modules have only an outline of content with no clear guidance on appropriate teaching approaches, use of resources or expected outcomes. Teachers have good subject knowledge that results in clear explanations although the quality of teaching varies. Whilst the general aims of lessons are shared with students these are not sufficiently focused to give clear outline to the purpose and direction of the learning and to allow students to recognise, review and assess their understanding and progress effectively.
210. In work seen during the inspection the most effective teaching used a variety of resources to engage students, encouraged critical thinking, caused them to consider the spatial impacts of topics studied and challenged the students to assess and amend their understanding in an active way. Where less satisfactory, a more didactic approach was adopted or key knowledge and ideas were not sufficiently outlined, emphasized and summarised to enable students to reach the highest levels of achievement. In some lessons, there was a constructive focus on structuring extended examination style answers to achieve better outcomes. Some attention is given to exemplar place case studies but with insufficient emphasis on the application and drawing out of key geographical ideas for students to gain higher understanding of the implications of these examples.
211. Assessment is satisfactory. Work is marked regularly and comments provide feedback on what to improve to raise achievement. Coursework is supported by appropriate guidance and

supervision that helps improve the quality of work. A system of student self-review is in development but has not yet had an impact on standards.

212. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. There is a strong commitment to improving standards and a start has been made through strengthening the teaching team and assessment. Departmental meetings are not held regularly enough for effective professional and departmental development of post-16 teaching. The scheme of work is not yet sufficiently detailed to support effective curriculum planning and the linking of the different geographical components of the syllabus in order to impact on standards. Teaching styles and approaches are not monitored effectively to ensure consistency and the matching of teaching to the demands of the curriculum. Analysis and use of data are not rigorous and sophisticated enough to identify and highlight strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and for the monitoring of the students' performance levels and outcomes.
213. There has been inadequate improvement in the provision of post-16 geography since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is highly enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, motivating students to learn very successfully.
- Students develop high levels of intellectual understanding and accept the challenge of very well planned lessons.
- Students enjoy the lively teaching and have very good relationships with their teacher.
- The extremely mature response by students underpins their high standards.
- The full time chaplain and dedicated chapel are a very good resource for all students.

Commentary

214. The school has recently re-established GCE A and AS level courses in religious studies. In 2003, results were average compared to national data. However, half of the candidates gained B grades and all passed. These results show very good achievement, given that most students did not study the subject at GCSE level.
215. Teaching and learning are very good. Very good planning of lessons leads students to develop very clear opinions on complex interpretations and to explore the subject in great depth. Their response is exceptionally good and they show considerable maturity of understanding. The highly enthusiastic teaching is always challenging. Students' extended writing is often of the highest quality, because of the teachers' skilled delivery and support.
216. The teachers' considerable knowledge is used to provide very clear guidance on what students need to do to give high quality answers in the examination. The marking of students' written work is very thorough. The very effective use of film and the Internet help students to explore the life of Jesus and to explore philosophical arguments very thoroughly. The students say that they particularly enjoy the debate and analysis in lessons. The intellectually challenging quotations from philosophers and scholars, such as Plato, Aristotle and Anselm, intrigue them. Students say the enthusiastic and lively teaching helps them to have very positive attitudes and they are determined to complete the course successfully and meet their targets.
217. Students are very well supported. They have the opportunity to discuss work very thoroughly and are given very good advice when they write essays. Their notes are, however, not marked consistently and some students' notes are very disorganised. The setting of homework is

based on personal reading to a great extent and for some of them this does not have the same impact as having to write to deadlines. It does, however, lead them to become independent learners.

218. Leadership and management are good. The role of the full-time chaplain is used well. The engagement of the students by the very well planned programme is a considerable strength of the course. Schemes of work are thorough and students clearly enjoy the challenge of their work. Students particularly enjoy the philosophy of religious belief work. Synoptic gospels studies, based mainly on Mark's account of Jesus, gives them a very good understanding of the complexities of interpreting scripture. This is very challenging, particularly for those who began the course without taking the GCSE in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Sample of sociology observed

219. One lesson was sampled, in which teaching and learning were both very good. The teacher used an up-to-date resource well to encourage students to link direct observation with sociological theory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of interesting student projects that the school is able to support.
- The enthusiastic and hardworking students who produce projects of quality.
- The well structured feedback to students that enable them to raise their standard of attainment.
- The good and very good teaching that supports learning effectively.

Commentary

220. The inspectors inspected the product design AS and A-level examination courses. Only a few candidates who followed the AS course 'cashed-in' their results so the published results are inconclusive. In the A-level examination last year, 25 candidates entered and 24 passed; 12 gaining A or B grades. Results were good, matching the schools' expectations and were above the national average. A study of class work and project work showed that both of the current years' work was of a similar high standard. Students attain well, at least in line with their prior achievement and at or above their forecast grades.
221. Practical work is thoroughly made to a very good standard and the finish achieved is high. Written work is of a high standard because students are very literate and numerate and they are taught the subject content well. Students are able to research for themselves very effectively and develop and extend their writing and designing; they are thoughtful, thorough and conscientious. It is because students set high standards for themselves that they are prepared to work very hard and produce work in every area of high quality. Although the students know and understand the design and practical work as they do it, it needs more regular ongoing revision if they are to consolidate their learning and answer questions later in the examination.
222. Computers are used as a tool of investigation and learning and students use them well and present their work very effectively. The quality of research is good and often design work is innovative and meets clear needs. The department is equipped with a suitable number of

computers and CAD/CAM (computer aided design and computer aided manufacture) is very well integrated into the course as required.

223. Teaching and learning in lessons are good and often very good. In the lessons seen students were working on their coursework and working hard to raise their standards. Teachers provide helpful information based on the examination board criteria, which enables students to focus on raising their achievement. Students' practical skills are high and their teachers are able to further develop their practical skills well because of their expertise.
224. Accommodation and resources are good. The subject teachers are leading the subject very well and are enthusiastic and knowledgeable.
225. The management of resources and of the students is good. However, there is not enough detailed reflection and analysis of students' performance to ensure that standards are raised to students' full potential and to improve aspects of management. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Music

Provision for music in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The A and AS level courses are popular and successful.
- There is a high level of commitment and enthusiasm from staff and students.
- The department makes a good contribution to the social and cultural development of its students.
- Independent and collaborative learning are features of student success.
- Access to ICT is good although students could make even better use of it.

Commentary

226. Results in the sixth form are good with a 100 per cent pass rate at A level and at AS level, although attainment is only satisfactory. Students work maturely in a variety of situations, demonstrating a familiarity with a wide range of genres and styles. They are able to express themselves well, with a good use of musical vocabulary. However, Year 12 students are not yet comfortable with figured bass, displaying many basic errors in their understanding of and composing, two-part writing. Year 13 students demonstrated good consolidation of their listening work, especially in the use of skeleton scores.
227. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the sixth form. Students make good progress in lessons and contribute well in ensembles. There are good facilities for these students, including access to ICT and appropriate reference books. Overall, students appear to be stronger in the performing and composing elements of the course than in the historical and theoretical elements. They make good contributions to the musical life of the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A level are very high.
- Students show creative maturity.
- The use of ICT reaches a very high standard.

- Provision for three-dimensional work is limited.

Commentary

228. The provision for AS and A-level study allows for continuous experience from GCSE options. Students may continue their fine art studies and also specialist studies as an aspect of the A-level graphics option, as well as critical and contextual studies and photography. An innovatory multi-media course has been developed within the department as a form of this graphics extension. These courses are proving popular and are augmented by a 'link' course providing for study at the regional art college. In recent years, take-up has almost doubled to 32 taking A-level in 2003 and 40 taking the examination in 2003.
229. Results in A-level examinations have been very high in each of the two most recent years, a notable feature being the very high proportion of grades A and B gained in relation to the national average. The results in art and design also compare favourably with those of other subjects within the school, girls doing particularly well. These results represent very good achievement and the pattern over the last three years shows steady improvement. Work seen at AS level is of a high standard and students usually go straight on to A-level, not "cashing in" their grades.
230. Work in progress seen during the inspection confirms expectations from examination results. Fine artwork shows high standards in drawing and painting and very high standards in multi-media projects. Students in this latter area have developed advanced ICT skills including animation and, in some cases, basic programming. Work in course folders is very well presented and illustrates the methodical nature of progress. Many examples of drawing and painting derived from the art college 'link' course reach a near professional standard and testify to the value of this arrangement.
231. The quality of teaching at sixth form level is very good. It is at this level that the strength of teacher subject expertise makes a full impact. Students are encouraged to develop their ideas independently and show a very purposeful approach to learning. A very pleasant working atmosphere prevails in studios where excellent teacher-student relationships are apparent. An important feature is the very good progress made by students who have experienced difficulty in other academic areas.
232. The work of the sixth form is led very well. All teachers subscribing to the teaching contribute to the development of the curriculum and planning is imaginative and forward looking. Management is largely by consensus with regular departmental meetings, which are minuted. Very good relationships exist throughout the department.
233. Sixth-form students interviewed expressed enthusiasm for the course and an appreciation of the teaching and the 'link' course arrangements. The multi-media course is a positive development since the previous inspection and improvement has been good. The subject contributes extensively to students' experiences, with a wide range of extra curricular opportunities and visits to local, national and international exhibitions. The annual exhibition of students' work is a notable feature and raises the profile of the subject in the college.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above national averages.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Very good leadership and management.

- The excellent attitude of students enhances learning.

Commentary

234. Results in the 2003 examinations were well above national averages. This continues a trend of consistently high standards. In relation to their prior attainment, this represents very good achievement. The department offers AS and A2 courses in sports/PE studies.
235. Standards seen in the current Year 13 are well above those nationally and students are achieving very well. Overall standards seen in lessons and in students' work were well above average. Female students' achievement is in line with that of males in their group. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of receptor and muscle systems. They can relate this to examples of sporting activities. They respond to written questions clearly, evaluating data, making judgements and supporting their answers with reasons. Students research and select information and can present it fluently in written and oral form. Students have good communication and group skills. They are able to perform activities in pairs and to analyse outcomes. Most students enhance their personal performance through participation in extra-curricular activities, and Wednesday afternoon games are an important feature for all students. It is well attended and students take part enthusiastically.
236. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. Work is very well structured and planned to address all aspects of the syllabus and to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Students are engaged well in a variety of challenging activities, which motivates them and keeps them on task. Learning is enhanced by the development of key skills, which enables students to deal with the varied learning styles and high expectations of the teachers. Students are encouraged to discuss their work in groups. Students benefit from the support and guidance they receive from the teachers. They value the accessibility of their teachers beyond the timetabled lessons.
237. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision, which is focused on raising standards. The department does not have a base classroom for theory lessons, which restricts opportunities for the use of some learning styles such as information and communication technology as part of the lesson. Students are closely monitored and their achievements analysed. Improvement has been good since the last inspection.

Leisure and recreation

Provision in the subject is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because they have good motivation to succeed.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment gives students clear guidance on how to improve.
- Monitoring of teaching is insufficiently subject based.
- Insufficient promotion of the advanced level of the subject.

Commentary

238. Students' attainment in the advanced certificate in vocational education (AVCE) in 2003 was above the national average. Almost a third of students gained grade B. Students begin the course with average, or below average, attainment, so these results indicate good achievement, and for a few students this is very good. Students maintain these standards in the work seen.
239. The students' very good attitudes to learning help them to complete the assessed units of work. Students acquire skills of independent enquiry to obtain evidence; for example, they undertook first-hand experience of the Royal Norfolk Show to gather evidence of types of

visitor attractions. Students use their capability with ICT to gather data from the Internet and present their findings using word processing and graphical techniques. Higher attaining students score better because they show greater analytical skills in reaching conclusions. Students develop good skills in working together in teams. For example, undertaking all the preparation, costing and organisation for an aerial assault course for Year 7 students. They carefully evaluate their work and discuss openly how they can improve.

240. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan carefully to provide for classes that include students from both years 12 and 13, those doing a single award and those doing a double award (equivalent of two A-level subjects). Students acquire good insights and knowledge by learning how to ask questions. They framed questions on such topics as health and safety and lost property in preparation for a visit to the Norwich Castle Museum (an example of a visitor attraction). Students improved the sharpness of their questions because they shared them in a class discussion. Teachers helpfully guide students to consider the order of their questions to elicit the best responses. Teachers assess students' work regularly. This provides students with clear information on their progress and on any improvement needed. In one lesson, the teacher did not include all students in answering questions. Consequently, they missed the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding, or lack of them and to inform the teacher of their levels of achievement.
241. The subject co-ordinator gives satisfactory leadership and management. He has successfully established a new advanced level vocational course. Progress since the last inspection has been good, and students' attainment has risen. Students' success, and the content and rigour of the course are not widely appreciated by the whole college. Current students consider that more students would be interested if its promotion was more vigorous. Student numbers have remained static; however, the co-ordinator has retained students on the course with marked success.
242. Teachers do not observe enough teaching of the subject by others to provide the basis of informed discussion by the team. They underuse assessment to identify where to focus improvements in teaching and learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

The overall quality of provision is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching on the advanced vocational business studies course is good.
- Students learn well and enjoy the vocational pathway in business studies.
- Assessment and individual feedback to students are not sufficiently developed.
- The quality of teaching on the A/S and A-level courses is uneven.
- Implement action plan to raise standards as a matter of urgency.

Commentary

243. The results for 2003 A-level examinations were below the national average, and do not show any overall improvement since the last inspection. There is some evidence that boys perform less well than girls. The proportion of students achieving the best A and B grades has been below the national average in most years since the last inspection. The A/S level results follow a similar pattern. However the AVCE results for 2002 equalled the national average and boys achieved results above the national average.
244. The standards seen in class are satisfactory, however. The students use accounting methods, such as cash flow forecasting, profit and loss accounts and balance sheet analysis, to effectively evaluate new business proposals and develop business plans. However, in a Year

13 lesson students had more difficulty in quickly identifying the appropriate techniques of business analysis to inform strategic thinking to launch a new product. Students had many ideas but these were not sufficiently well organised or focused on business decision making. There is some evidence that students are not achieving as well as they could, based on their achievement at 16. By contrast the group of students following the vocational pathway achieve well.

245. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching observed. The best teaching was observed in a lesson on human resources where students had to write job descriptions. The teaching was underpinned by good subject knowledge, very stimulating questions and good content based on recent job advertisements for students to judge the most effective way of attracting applications. Students were constantly challenged, found the lesson interesting, responded well to the pace and learnt well. However, some teaching is over reliant on worksheets, which are read aloud in lessons, where the pace of teaching and learning is slow and teacher expectations low. Lesson planning is weak. Subject content in these lessons is not fully matched to the A-level curriculum and students are not fully stretched and their productivity is less than expected.
246. Teaching on the advanced vocational business course is good, exemplified by an especially effective lesson on the importance of communication strategy to business. The lesson was organised as a board meeting and students benefited from the adult approach with an emphasis on independent learning. This course is thoroughly appreciated by students. They make good progress, enjoy the challenges and achieve well.
247. The overall quality of leadership is satisfactory. The department has very recently produced an action plan to raise A-level standards. This needs to be implemented fully and rigorously as a matter of urgency. The department does not have a policy to monitor and promote best teaching practice in the department. This results in an uneven quality of teaching. Lesson planning is not co-ordinated across the department, which tends to result in each teacher focusing too narrowly on the unit which they are delivering. Schemes of work for the A-level provision need to be developed to ensure adequate opportunities for extension and independent investigative research. At present these simply reproduce examination board outlines. The department is beginning to relate its teaching to "real world" business policy, but this strategy needs to be developed to ensure that national and local issues are constantly to the fore. Students enjoy extra-curricular activities generated by the Youth Enterprise programme and visits to local business enterprises. Resources are good and fully sustain the requirements of the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Economics

Provision in the subject is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Able students attain well above average standards.
- Students' very high motivation leads them to very good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are good; occasionally they are very good.
- Assessment is underused.
- Teachers do not evaluate teaching and learning enough as a team.

Commentary

248. In the 2003 GCE A-level examination, students attained well above average at grades A to B and at grades A to E. Boys did better than girls overall, although girls gained a higher proportion of A grades in 2002. There is rising trend in results, but the proportion of students who attain grade A fluctuates widely. Current students' work is of a high standard, including the work of those with a special educational need. Students begin in Year 12 with average or above average GCSE attainment and they achieve very well. They use their sharp intellects

well to focus very keenly on issues; they write cogent answers, well illustrated by relevant diagrams and statistics, for example, to show the effect on the UK airline market of low-cost competition.

249. Teaching and learning are good overall and include examples of satisfactory and very good teaching. When teaching is very good, planning is excellent. In a lesson on globalisation for Year 13 students, the teacher used a newspaper clip on a local motor engineering company so that students could read about its expansion to China. She used a topical example of the Morecambe Bay cockle-pickers: students learned how the Spanish market for cockles is supplied by employing poorly paid Chinese migrants. Such well-chosen resources make economic theory a reality for students and stimulate their interest and understanding. In this lesson, a very good discussion took place on the factors of production related to globalisation. It provided evidence of students' mastery of subject language and concepts and their obvious respect for the teachers' excellent knowledge of economics.
250. In lessons where teaching is weaker, teachers do not make the learning objectives clear at the start, so students become confused about the purpose of the task. Occasionally, a teacher speaks too fast and does not provide time for discussion. Teachers know the different abilities of students but tasks are not always well matched to meet these needs, except where a student has a specific learning difficulty. Students receive helpful information on their progress in relation to target grades. Teachers' comments guide them towards improvement.
251. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department's high aspirations for improving attainment reflect the college's aims, although a strategy to make teaching and learning more consistent is not in place. Assessment information is not used enough to provide learning opportunities that help students maximise their potential. Economics teaching and learning are not monitored regularly and teachers do not meet often to share how to effect improvement. Schemes of work are a reproduction of the examination board's syllabus, rather than a working document of teaching and learning practices to deliver the subject's content. There is complete retention of students on the course.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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