

INSPECTION REPORT

BODMIN COLLEGE

Bodmin

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112049

Headteacher: Mr R. Mitchell

Lead inspector: John Carnaghan

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th March 2004

Inspection number: 259357

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:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,418
School address:	Lostwithiel Road Bodmin Cornwall
Postcode:	PL31 1DD
Telephone number:	01208 72114
Fax number:	01208 261036
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M. Roberts
Date of previous inspection:	18 th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bodmin College is a large 11 to 18 comprehensive school serving the town of Bodmin and surrounding countryside. The area it serves has greater deprivation than average. The college was designated a science college in September 2003. It includes separate provision, known as Greenfields, for 35 students with severe or moderate learning difficulties, who come from a wide geographical area. The school also runs a learning support centre for students with social, emotional or behavioural needs. The standards of students as they enter the school in Year 7 are below average. The number who take free school meals is average. Very few students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of speaking English. There are very small numbers of looked-after children and no refugees or travellers. The proportion of students with special educational needs is similar to the national average but there are well above average numbers of those with Statements of Special Educational Need because of the provision made for those with learning difficulties. The number of students who join or leave the school at a time other than the start of the academic year is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bodmin College is a good and improving school. It provides a good education and the improvements introduced by the headteacher are starting to take effect. Students' standards are broadly average, although GCSE results were below average in 2003. Achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Too much teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, especially in mathematics. Students behave well and have positive attitudes. The leadership of the college is good, promoting high expectations and setting ambitious goals. Management is good but there are variations that lead to weaknesses in some parts of the college's provision. Governance is good. The college spends more per student than average but given the improvements under way it gives satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's dynamic and thoughtful leadership is inspiring far-reaching improvements.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, so students learn well. However, too many lessons in Years 7 to 9 fail to challenge students sufficiently. Teaching in art and design is excellent.
- Students achieve well in their time at school and standards are improving.
- Unsatisfactory mathematics teaching in Years 7 to 9 means standards and achievement in this subject are too low.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, but improving. The college's procedures to promote better attendance are not effective enough.
- The college does not meet requirements for a daily act of collective worship or provide religious education in the sixth form.
- The curriculum is good and there are very good and excellent opportunities for enrichment.
- There are good links with other colleges and the local community.
- Provision and achievement in art and design, drama and physical education are very good.
- There are inconsistencies in management and some monitoring lacks rigour.

The previous inspection was in 1998. Most key issues have been successfully addressed. Standards in reading, German, design and technology and physical education have risen. Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) is better. Results in sixth form GNVQ courses in business and leisure and tourism are similar to previous levels. Assessment and reporting are more effective and banding issues no longer exist. Attendance has remained at similar percentages to those in the previous inspection but has lagged behind national improvements so is now below average. Students' standards in tests and examinations have kept pace with national improvements and current standards are average. Recent improvements have not fully reversed declines that occurred in the period before the appointment of the current headteacher in September 2002. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all colleges			similar colleges
		2001	2002	2003	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	D	D	C

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

For Year 11, similar colleges are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9

Students' achievement is good and current overall standards are broadly average. However, standards in mathematics in Years 7 to 11 are below average. Standards in Years 7 to 9 overall are average. On entering the college standards are below average, so these students achieve well. Current standards in Year 11 are average. Students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also good. The performance of boys and girls is generally similar to the national pattern. Students' achievement is very good in art and design and science in Years 10 and 11 but it is unsatisfactory in mathematics

in Years 7 to 9. There are too few students from different ethnic groups to make precise judgements on standards but they achieve better than their peers due to the very good support they receive. Students with special educational needs achieve well.

Students' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attitudes and behaviour are good and there are good relationships throughout the college. There is little misbehaviour. Attendance is unsatisfactory; while it has improved in recent years, it is below the national average. The way the college promotes high attendance is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good overall** and many lessons are very good or excellent. For the college as a whole, seven out of ten lessons are good or better and three out of ten are very good or excellent. Teaching is less effective in Years 7 to 9 because of the higher proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. Some teachers' expectations of these younger students are too low and there is insufficient challenge to meet the range of students' abilities in some lessons. As a result, learning in some lessons in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, particularly in mathematics. Because of lack of support staff, provision for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Students have good attitudes and constructive relationships contribute strongly to students' learning. Teachers support individuals very well. Older students participate very well in their learning and are receptive to teachers' expectations. Teachers are often innovative in employing interactive whiteboards to deliver exciting lessons.

The curriculum is good; it provides well for pupils and offers a range of vocational and other courses in addition to the more usual range of GCSE and A-level opportunities. Thus it does much to address students' needs. In many areas, like dance, drama, art and design and physical education, the quality of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that are provided is outstanding. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. Assessment is good; it provides the college with valuable information, which is used to set very clear improvement targets for students. The involvement of students in college life is very good. There are good links with the local community and other colleges and schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher is a very good leader and has brought strong vision and sense of purpose to the college. He has raised staff and student morale and inspired a climate of improvement. Management of the college is good, although line management can be inconsistent. Methods of self-evaluation are satisfactory and the college uses its knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses to initiate improvements. Governance is good. The governing body has not ensured that statutory requirements are all met. Governors currently understand the college's strengths and weaknesses very well and support it well.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are generally satisfied with the college. Most report that their children like college. A minority are concerned about behaviour, but in fact behaviour is good. Some feel that the college does not give sufficient information on children's progress. The inspection finds no evidence to support this. Some parents expressed concerns about the quality of teaching of students in mixed ability classes and the inspection finds some weaknesses in this area. Most students like college, saying that teaching is good. Although some showed concerns about behaviour and bullying in their questionnaires, students say during interviews that bullying is rare and the college deals with it well. Some students are unhappy over homework and report that they are not treated with sufficient respect. The inspection does not support these concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve attendance;
- develop greater consistency in teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9, by ensuring that rigorous monitoring and professional development leads to improvements in some teachers' practice;
- raise standards in mathematics;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide acts of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

The sixth form has 217 students, which is larger than average. Students follow AS, A-level and a variety of vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students' standards are broadly average and they achieve well. Teaching and learning and the assessment of students' work are all good. Students' attitudes towards their studies and school are good. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it does not provide the required course in religious education for all students. However, the variety and nature of courses offered are good. Numbers in the sixth form have fallen over recent years but the college is working well to reverse this trend. The management of the sixth form is good but governance is unsatisfactory because of long-term failures to ensure that religious education is taught. The sixth form gives satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students are still not provided with religious education, despite the recommendations of the previous two reports.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed so that they have clear targets for improvement.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a clear vision for its future.
- There are too few courses offered to students with previously low attainment.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- There are fewer enrichment opportunities in the sixth form than in Years 7 to 11.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication English	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students receive high quality support throughout their course, so they achieve well. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good.
English literature	Good. Good teaching and assessment promotes good achievement and standards are average. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good.
Mathematics	Good. With good teaching, standards and achievement are improving. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Science	
Biology	Good. Current standards are above average. Teaching and achievement are good and assessment data is used very well to bring about improvements.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are above average. Students work well independently and good teaching is driving up standards.
Physics	Good. Current standards are above average. Teachers provide interesting and exciting lessons and students achieve well. They are well prepared for the next steps in their education.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel Physical education	Good. Teaching is very good and students' achieve well. Standards are broadly average and students benefit from good quality support. Leadership is very good.

Visual and performing arts and media

Art and design, A-level

Very good. Students' standards are above average and achievement is very good. This is due to excellent teaching and students' very positive attitudes; leadership and management are very good.

Art and design, vocational

Very good. Excellent teaching means that students achieve very well and standards are well above average. Leadership and management are very good.

Humanities

Geography

Satisfactory. Standards are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. They have very good attitudes. Leadership and management 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 college. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The use of assessment to promote students' learning is good; form tutors make good use of the data to ensure that all students are suitably aware of their strengths and areas for improvement and to set appropriate targets. Most students feel they are given a good degree of responsibility and treated as young adults.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. The sixth form has a sense of purpose and aspirations for its future are high. The new sixth form centre, to be opened shortly after the inspection, will see marked improvements in facilities. The management of the links with the community and other schools and colleges is good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have a positive view of the sixth form. They say they enjoy sixth form life and get on well together. They applaud the quality of teaching. The college increasingly asks for and acts on students' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement across the school is good, given lower than average standards they show on entry to the school. The standards pupils currently attain are generally similar to the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average but are improving and students achieve well during their time at school.
- Standards and achievement in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 are too low.
- Standards in art and design, drama and physical education are above average. Students achieve very well in art and design and well in drama and physical education.
- The small number of students who speak English as an additional language achieve very well, because they are very well supported.

Commentary

1. The area of the school is one of some social and educational disadvantages. As a result, students start life at the school in Year 7 with academic standards that are below average. However, they settle into their new school quickly and achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Following carefully planned courses, the majority of students make worthwhile gains in knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.1 (34.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	33.8 (33.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.7 (33.3)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 230 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The school's results in tests at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated a little from year to year but, overall, the improvement in results in the last five years is similar to the rising national trend. There were variations between standards in the three main subjects. In 2003, compared with national averages, mathematics results were below average, science results were average and those in English were above average. However, when compared with these students' prior attainment in tests at the end of Year 6, mathematics results were average, those in science and English were well above average. These figures indicate generally good achievement for this group of students over Years 7 to 9. Girls' results were similar to those of boys.
3. Year 9 students' current standards are largely similar to what is expected nationally. They are above expectations in English, ICT, art and design, physical education and drama. However, they are below expectations in mathematics. These standards generally represent similar or better standards than those exemplified by national tests and indicate that the changes wrought in the school are having positive effects on students' performance. In terms of statutory targets for students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 based on students' prior attainment, the school comfortably exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science.
4. The gains that students make in Years 7 to 9 provide a sound foundation for their continuing studies. With generally better teaching, students' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. It is very good in science and art and design and satisfactory in English, mathematics, design and technology, music and business education.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40 (43)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	79 (80)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	91 (92)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	31.1 (34.7)	30.5 (34.7)

There were 233 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. GCSE results lag behind the improving national trend for the five years up to and including 2003. Results in 2003 were below average in comparison with all schools nationally but were average when compared with these students' Year 9 results. Results fell in 2003. There were a number of circumstances that contributed to this dip. Large numbers of permanent exclusions in these students' Year 10 (before the arrival of the current headteacher) means that 16 of the students listed for the examination gained no GCSE points because they no longer attended the school. Unusually, there were also 12 Year 11 students from the Greenfields centre for students with severe learning difficulties on the school roll. Naturally, these students also gained no GCSE points. Careful analysis of the current Year 11 indicates that standards are likely to rise and the inspection of these students' current standards confirms this. Most subjects' GCSE results in 2003 were average. However, there were some exceptions. German, physical education and drama results were above average. Standards were below average in design and technology. In French and business education standards were well below average. The percentage of students who gained five GCSE A*-C grades and their average points scores fell short of the school's 2003 target. Again, this indicates considerable difficulties experienced with this particular group. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
6. Year 11 students' current standards are generally in line with what is expected, and this is better than the GCSE standards in the previous year. Again, this illustrates the strong impact that the new leadership has had. Standards are much better than expected in science, ICT, art and design, modern foreign languages, physical education and drama. They are below what is expected in mathematics, design and technology and business education.
7. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. Their achievement in art and design and physical education is very good. Their achievement in mathematics in Year 7 is unsatisfactory because too much teaching is insufficiently adapted to meet their needs.
8. Students in Greenfields make good progress overall and very good progress in looking after themselves, making friends and taking initiative. This is because of the very high emphasis placed on these key skills by all staff, which permeates every activity and is reinforced in most conversations. Very good progress in mathematics results from consistently strong teaching, characterised by high expectations and careful planning to meet individual needs.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	99.6 (89.8)	97.7 (97.7)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	37.9 (14.6)	42.1 (40.8)
Average point score per student	228.6 (172)	253.1 (263.3)

There were 104 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

9. Students' standards in the sixth form are currently average. In 2003 examinations, the average points score of students was in line with the national average. Female students performed better than their male counterparts, in line with the national trend.
10. Given that students enter the sixth form with standards that are generally similar to those expected nationally, their examination results and standards seen during the inspection represent good achievement. The good teaching and positive attitudes seen in the sixth form are leading to improvements in students' achievement. In the subjects inspected, standards seen were in line with expectations in English literature, mathematics, geography and physical education. Standards are better than expected in English language, biology, chemistry and physics. In vocational art and design standards are well above expectations. Students' achievement is good in English language and literature, mathematics, physics, biology and physical education. It is very good in both A-level and vocational art and design.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitudes and behaviour of students are good. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of students is good. Attendance is unsatisfactory; punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many students are involved in the after-school activities in the arts and sport.
- The learning support centre makes a significant contribution to the provision for students who have difficulty in managing their behaviour.
- A third of all students have an attendance level below 90 per cent.

Commentary

11. A high number of students are involved in after-school activities. They gain great enjoyment out of these creative and sporting activities, which enrich their educational experience. Students' attitudes to learning are good, often very good and on occasions excellent. In religious education lessons, for example, students are inspired to learn by the interesting, challenging teaching they experience. In some lessons students are too dependent on their teachers and are not sufficiently encouraged to develop independent learning skills. A small number of students throughout the school show an indifference to education and teachers have to work extremely hard to motivate them.
12. The behaviour of students is good. This concurs with the views expressed by both parents and students. Relationships between students are generally very positive. Good, collaborative, supportive work was seen in many lessons, particularly in performing arts. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and there are effective strategies for managing students if they fail to respond to their teachers. Parents and students expressed some concerns about bullying. The inspection team found that procedures for managing incidents of bullying are very good and that students are taught how to handle incidents if they occur. Students interviewed all felt that bullying was not an issue within the school and that incidents were well handled.

13. Exclusions for autumn term compared with the same period in 2002 show a marked reduction. There were no permanent exclusions. The rise of exclusions since previous inspection is due to the implementation of a new code of standards of behaviour. As behaviour in the school has improved so the rate of exclusions is falling.
14. The spiritual development of students is satisfactory. Religious education provides many good activities promoting the spiritual development of students. Similar opportunities exist in other subjects, such as music, art and design and drama, which enhance this feature of personal development. However, not all subjects have clearly identified this aspect in their teaching and opportunities are often missed. The moral and social development of students is good. Students are well aware of right and wrong actions and most have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Most are able to demonstrate an understanding of the effect of their actions on others. In a drama lesson, for example, students role-played the moral dilemma of having to decide whom to save in an accident. Various appealing ways of taking responsibility exist, for example, in the year and school councils and the achievement of leadership awards in physical education, art and science. Students' cultural development is good. A range of visits extends students' cultural knowledge and understanding. It is promoted well in many subjects. Religious education, music, art and design and drama have a well-planned element of multicultural education in lessons, but most other subjects have not approached this systematically. The school provides a programme of assemblies but these do not all include an act of worship. The school does not, therefore, comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
15. The work of staff in the learning support centre to develop the social skills and self-esteem of students with social, emotional or behavioural needs is very good. This is enhanced by the active involvement of students from the sixth form who provide excellent role models. There is a wide, thoughtfully planned range of activities that are very effective in helping students to recognise and address their needs. Students are well motivated by teaching activities including high quality creative arts work linked to the curriculum in art and music.
16. Students in Greenfields have strong, trusting relationships with staff that are crucial to their very positive approach to meeting new challenges. During the inspection there were countless examples of students persevering impressively in areas of significant difficulty for them. Students recognised their new achievements and shared these with justifiable pride, whether recalling French vocabulary or calculating '50 per cent of three digit numbers' with unprecedented accuracy and understanding.
17. Attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national average. Currently, the attendance of a third of students is below 90 per cent. This significantly affects their overall level of attainment. The level of attendance is the same as at the previous inspection but national standards have risen. There was deterioration in 2001/02 that has now been rectified. There are clearly stated procedures in place to monitor attendance but they are not effective in dealing with the considerable number of students who attend for 80 to 90 per cent of the time. Form tutors are responsible for this group of students but have too little time allocated to enable them to act effectively. A small number of parents do not support the school by ensuring the regular attendance of their child. The education welfare officer provides very good support to the school and, in conjunction with heads of year, works with students and parents whose attendance is below 80 per cent. Punctuality to school and lessons is good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	8.4
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.8
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1291	109	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	93	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	13	0	0

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

Sixth form

18. Students' attitudes towards their studies and school are good. They are actively involved with the main school through peer mentoring initiatives such as working with students in the learning support centre and paired reading sessions. This year they will take part in the transition process for Year 6 students, visiting primary schools and acting as support for Year 7 tutor groups. Students take an active lead in the school council and provide good role models for younger students. Relationships between students and with teaching staff are very good and students value the support given to them. Attendance overall is satisfactory. There are effective systems for identifying students whose attendance is a cause for concern.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is good. Teaching is good overall, although it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is good. The school provides good care for students and there are good links with the local community and with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching, learning and assessment are all good. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Students' positive attitudes to their work ensure that their learning is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A large proportion of teaching is good or better and many lessons are exciting and innovative.
- Too much teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory; some teachers do not use strategies to ensure that all students are properly challenged.
- Strong, constructive relationships and consistently good behaviour make a positive contribution to learning.
- Marking is good and clearly indicates to students what their academic standards are and what they should do to improve.

- The school gathers assessment information well and uses it with increasing effectiveness to promote achievement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 177 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
13 (7%)	42 (24%)	68 (38%)	48 (28%)	6 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

- Teaching and learning are good, overall. While in the majority of lessons teaching is good or very good, there are considerable inconsistencies. For example, the proportion of excellent teaching is high; in contrast there are too many unsatisfactory lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in mathematics generally. The reason for this is inconsistency in the effectiveness of monitoring. Learning is a major focus for the school and it is a significant element in teachers' continuing professional development; however, monitoring of lessons lacks sufficient rigour and weaker classroom practice is not challenged enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where three of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory.
- Two-thirds of lessons are good or better. These lessons are thoroughly planned, with careful attention given to ensuring that all students are given the correct degree of challenge. Learning builds well on earlier work and the structure of lessons encourages strong consolidation of learning in closing sessions. Students are encouraged and engaged and relationships in the classroom are constructive. They are effectively managed by their teachers. Behaviour and attitudes are good and often very good and this encourages a brisk pace in lessons. Students are active learners, listen well and enjoy their work; they are tolerant where teaching is less effective. Students rapidly develop independence in their learning. They show growing confidence when asked to undertake extended work or research and teaching frequently promotes their independence. Teachers' expectations of students taking GCSE and other examination courses are high and students respond well, working hard with a strong emphasis on meeting the requirements of the examinations.
- Exceptional teaching involves close collaboration with students. Many teachers display great enthusiasm for their subjects and this, in turn, promotes a passion for learning among students. The college has initiated thorough staff training in the use of interactive whiteboards. Increasing staff expertise and confidence encourages innovative use of this technology. Illustrations and works of art are impressively displayed and teachers zoom in and out in order to highlight significant elements. Information from the Internet can be instantly displayed to enliven teaching and in some subjects, such as physics, students play an active role in using the whiteboards.
- While in most subjects teaching is satisfactory or better, there are still too many unsatisfactory lessons. The school has not adapted its teaching sufficiently to meet the learning needs of students in Years 7 to 9. In particular, where there are classes of mixed ability students, a number of teachers do not provide sufficiently challenging work. As a result, students with above average and below average abilities have too little work that meets their learning needs.
- The school has placed great emphasis on developing a strong culture for learning and the most effective ways in which it may be promoted. It has promoted the significant elements of the Key Stage 3 strategy and the increasing use of the recommended lesson pattern enables a strong focus on learning outcomes to be maintained. Secure knowledge of the demands of examinations in Years 10 to 13 ensures that students' learning is relevant and well focused. Learning is good in Years 10 to 13 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

24. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs are good in all subjects except mathematics, and very good in art and physical education. Departments plan well to meet the needs of most students. However, there are occasions when teachers and support staff are unaware of how a student's special educational needs might affect their learning. This is because the information provided by the special needs department is not sufficiently detailed. Teaching and learning in Year 7 in mathematics are unsatisfactory because work has not been well enough planned to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties. Where teaching assistants are involved in planning to meet students' needs, the quality of their work is good and results in students making good progress.
25. Teaching and learning in Greenfields are good overall and are supported by good relationships between staff and students. Students benefit from having teachers who teach their own subject specialism or work closely with subject departments in the main school. The teaching of mathematics and social skills is very good because of teachers' high expectations and planning to meet the different needs of individual students. When teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is because expectations are too high. This results in teachers having to slow the pace of the lesson or losing sight of very clear intentions for individual students. There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of students' writing. It is possible for this to happen because the specific goals set for individual students are not always evident in lessons. During the inspection very good teaching of Greenfields students by teachers from subject departments was seen. On these occasions teachers worked very closely with Greenfields staff to support high expectations successfully with sensitive guidance.
26. The school has put considerable energy into developing its systems of assessment. Students take nationally recognised tests on entry to the school and at other times. The results of these tests are used effectively in setting targets for students to aim at as they progress through the school. All teachers have copies of students' prior attainment records and their targets. These goals are well known to students and are regularly reviewed. This means they are of great practical value to students. The data the college gathers is also used to track students' progress, to predict grades in examinations and to trigger intervention if required. In this way, assessment is effectively used to promote higher standards.
27. Assessment of students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Standardised tests are used well to monitor students' progress in reading. The special educational needs department gives satisfactory support to other departments, helping them set effective targets for individual education plans. The co-ordinator provides all teachers with information about students' special educational needs, but this information is not detailed enough to help teachers in their planning.
28. Marking has been a major focus of recent college developments. Newly introduced marking guidelines inform students of their National Curriculum or examination levels, a policy which is consistently applied. Students have good knowledge of their current standards and they are set straightforward, achievable targets. These benefit their achievement. The development of a centrally held, universally accessible system of recording assessment has, however, been delayed by difficulties with the appropriate computer software.

Sixth form

29. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. The quality of teaching promotes the good achievement seen among sixth form students. Students have positive attitudes, this helps ensure that lessons have good pace. Teachers consistently encourage students and foster constructive relationships. The attention continuously given to the requirements of examinations is good and ensures that teachers' planning of lessons has a strong focus on learning objectives.
30. The use of assessment to promote sixth form students' learning is good. The school collects and analyses data to predict expected grades in A and AS level and other examinations. Departments use this data to ensure that all students are making good progress and are aware

of their strengths and areas for improvement. The use of assessment data to set realistically challenging short- and long-term targets for students is a significant factor in ensuring their good achievement in their time in the sixth form.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. Enrichment of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, is very good. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an innovative curriculum and the richly diverse range of lunchtime and after-school activities enhance it well.
- There is no daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Participation in sports and the arts is excellent.
- There is a very good equality of access and opportunity for all students.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is good but the match of support staff is unsatisfactory.
- The provision for ICT across the curriculum is good.
- Accommodation and resources are good, except for art.

Commentary

31. The curriculum provides students with a good range of courses to match their needs and aspirations. Since the last inspection the range of courses has been increased and fully meets statutory requirements. ICT is now provided across the curriculum and there is a better equality of access for all students. There is no daily act of collective worship for all students.
32. The overall structure of the curriculum is good and meets the needs of students well. It is particularly strong in the creative and performing arts. As a specialist science college, the overall curriculum provision for science is good. Many innovative curriculum developments are under discussion, such as the development of a cross-curricular foundation curriculum for Year 7. These are giving a greater breadth to the curriculum. Good links are made with primary schools to determine what the students know and can do before they join the school. The curriculum is kept under regular review and governors receive satisfactory information about developments. Good links are made with careers advice services and links with local businesses, which help to prepare students well for the later stages of education and employment.
33. Opportunities for the provision of personal, social and health education are sometimes not taken. The present arrangement of a fortnightly focus for the teaching of the subject is satisfactory. However, there are lost opportunities to widen its provision through a better and more structured use of tutorial time.
34. There are weaknesses in the provision for students who have special educational needs in Years 7 to 9. Some staff are unsure about how to provide for their needs in the subjects they teach. The provision for their English and literacy needs is good. However, the provision for mathematics and numeracy is not properly matched to students' needs and is unsatisfactory. The mentoring of students with special educational needs is good and the learning support centre for students who are at risk provides well for students with social, emotional and behavioural needs.
35. The range of extra-curricular activities provided to enrich the curriculum is very good. These are arranged across the working day, at lunchtimes, in the evenings and during holiday periods. They include formal and informal support for students to further their studies in many subjects through clubs, activities, residential visits, expeditions and field trips. There are good opportunities for students to put forward their views through a school council and in role-play in drama as well as regular discussions with staff and through skilful questioning by teachers. The range and large number of sporting and arts activities offered is particularly impressive.

36. The match of teaching staff to the requirements of the curriculum is very good and they are well qualified and experienced to teach their subjects. The provision of resources across the school is good. Resources for mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education and dance are very good. Good improvements have been made in the range and availability of ICT equipment, particularly in providing many classrooms with digital interactive whiteboards. The accommodation is good. It is very good for physical education, mathematics, and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory for art and design. Accommodation and resources for students with special educational needs are good. The day-to-day maintenance and cleaning of the site is good.
37. For students with special educational needs, teaching and support staff are experienced and have a good range of skills and specialisms. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school recently made major changes to its provision for students in Years 7 to 9, moving from teaching them in separate groups to including them in mainstream lessons. There are too few teaching assistants for students with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9. This sometimes leaves students who were formerly taught in extraction groups without sufficient support in mainstream lessons. Where students are withdrawn from classes for small group or individual work the withdrawal is well planned and students achieve well. ICT is well used to support learning in subjects and to provide access for students with specific needs such as dyslexia. It is used imaginatively in the performing arts and the learning centre to help students with communication difficulties to express their ideas. There are weaknesses in the curriculum provided for these students. Planning in mathematics is unsatisfactory.
38. Provision for students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 is good. The curriculum is flexible and includes all students. The occupational studies course is very well designed with clear criteria for including students and very high expectations of them. This has resulted in improved attendance. Students have access to a wide range of courses leading to work-related qualifications and many have their progress recognised through ASDAN (a course specifically tailored to their needs), in addition to gaining GCSE qualifications. The school is planning to extend this course into the sixth form, improving the current provision, which offers a limited range of Level two vocational courses.
39. Greenfields successfully provides a relevant, well-balanced curriculum for its students which is considerably enriched with a regular programme of residential trips. These excursions vary in length but are planned with great care to enhance students' skills and provide them with a relevant context for their classroom learning. They are highly valued by the students themselves and parents and carers appreciate their worth. There is a very close link between good teaching and curriculum for these students. For instance, the success of science, design and technology and French lessons is attributable in part to staff successfully planning a meaningful curriculum for students.

Sixth form

40. The range and appropriateness of subjects provided in the sixth form is good. There is a wide and increasing range of examination courses. Recent developments in the provision of vocational courses, particularly for the arts, health and social care, leisure and recreation, child care and manufacturing are providing students with a good range of opportunities to obtain relevant employment or to go on to further studies in higher education. The college does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education for sixth form students.
41. The college does not offer such a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities to match the needs of sixth form students as it does for its younger students. The sixth form has its own school council but there is no debating society. Although the opportunity is available for sixth form students to take part in activities provided across the college, many do not avail themselves of this opportunity. This is sometimes due to the number of students who obtain part-time employment in the local community. Sixth form students are involved well in

mentoring of younger students, for example in volunteering for paired reading with Year 7 students.

42. Once the nearly completed new accommodation for the sixth form is opened, this will provide students with their own computer facilities, as well as places for independent study and leisure.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety is good. The support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring, students receive is satisfactory. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements for students coming into the school are good.
- Additional academic support for Year 11 students is improving achievement in GCSE examinations.
- The growing involvement of students in the school's work and development is making a positive contribution towards their personal development.
- Lack of time prevents the pastoral and guidance policy being fully implemented.
- The quality of daily tutorial periods is inconsistent.
- Not all students in Year 9 benefit from careers education before selecting their GCSE options.

Commentary

43. Induction arrangements for students entering the school in Year 7 are good. The transition programme is sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs. Gifted and talented students visit the school during Year 6 to take part in chemistry workshops. Tutors stay with their year group throughout students' time in school, helping them build strong relationships with the students and their families. Students interviewed were confident that they could ask members of staff for help, either academic or personal. Transition from Year 9 to Year 10 is satisfactory. However, not all students in Year 9 benefit from careers education before selecting their GCSE options and this is unsatisfactory. A small number of students in Year 9 are accurately identified as needing alternative curriculum arrangements in Years 10 and 11. These students benefit from attending colleges of further education to study a range of vocational courses and thus develop their confidence and self-esteem. An effective mentoring system for Year 11 students helps them to prepare thoroughly for GCSE examinations.
44. The policy on guidance and pastoral care is a comprehensive document that clearly lays out a high standard of pastoral care for students. However, there is insufficient time allocated to ensure its full implementation. For example, the 15-minute daily tutorial sessions are often taken up with administrative tasks such as taking the register, signing planners and report cards and giving out notices. This leaves too little time for monitoring students' targets or following up on absences. There are variations in the constructive use of this time.
45. The school is working hard to involve students in its daily life and to provide ways for their views to be expressed. This aspect of the school's work is good. The school council has recently been formed and is now regarded as a very effective forum and is highly valued by students who also have very good access to the senior leadership team. Students feel that their voices are heard. They have, for example, been successful in improving conditions in the library, increasing access for sixth form students to ICT and were consulted about changes to the school uniform. Through recording their predicted grades, the levels they are currently working at, and setting targets for improvement in their planners, students are well motivated to take responsibility for monitoring and furthering their own academic progress.
46. Care and guidance for students with statements of special educational needs, students in the learning support centre and students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 are good. The opportunities to establish a supportive relationship with one adult are more limited for students in the categories school action and school action plus in Years 7 to 9, but are still satisfactory.

47. Members of staff in Greenfields know students very well. Providing each student with very clear guidance for developing their social skills is fundamental to their work and they do this very successfully. Programmes for extending students' experience in the main school are relatively new and implemented with sensible caution to ensure that students do not lose the confidence gained while in Greenfields. Staff rightly recognise that this aspect of their work is an area for continued development.

Sixth form

48. The advice, guidance and support sixth form students receive are good. The involvement of students through seeking and acting on their views is good. The pastoral support that students receive is also good. Students are given clear and useful guidance on how to improve their work in individual subjects. Individual tutorials allow students to discuss any difficulties they may be experiencing with tutors. They are well supported in their applications to higher education or when going into employment. Members of the sixth form play a leading role in the school. Members of the sixth form council have lunch half-termly with the headteacher who values their views on a range of issues.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is satisfactory. The quality of the school's links with the community is good. The school's links with other schools and colleges are good. The outreach work under the school's specialist status is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outreach work with primary schools in the expressive arts and sport is very good.
- The partnership established with the Eden Project and primary schools to develop ecology projects is good.
- Good links with local industry have supported the school in its application for science college status.
- Mathematics and science have no subject links to ease the transition of students from primary school.

Commentary

49. The school's partnership with its parents is satisfactory. A recent survey carried out by the school showed that the school is well regarded by its parents. There is a commitment by the school to continue to improve its links with parents. Currently there is no parents' association. Annual consultation meetings are held to discuss progress with parents. Annual reports to parents are clear and most give them a good understanding of what their child has studied and how they are achieving. Most set targets to help students improve their work. If problems occur, parents attend meetings with school staff to look at ways forward and to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Workshops for parents have recently taken place on topics such as drug and alcohol abuse.
50. The school's links with the community are good. The school benefits from effective links with local business and industry. These provide a source of sponsorship and for placements that give students' experience of the world of work. Members of the community support the school well in its personal, social and health education course by providing specialist speakers on a range of topics. Negotiations with local companies are under way for sixth form students to gain an understanding of the challenges facing industry today and to undertake work shadowing. There is increasing use of the school's facilities by the local community and there are plans to develop this area further.
51. There is a good partnership with other schools and colleges. There are close, consultative, working relationships with primary schools. The mechanisms for the transfer of students into school are good but there are no curriculum bridging units in place in mathematics and science

that support continuity and progression in their learning. Some teachers do go into primary schools during the summer term and gifted and talented Year 6 students benefit from attending chemistry workshops at the school. Links with other secondary schools are developing. The school has recently become a member of a consortium to increase the range of post-16 courses available to students. Arrangements for students entering the sixth form are satisfactory.

52. The outreach work that the school undertakes is very good, particularly with primary students in music, dance, drama, art and design and physical education. An ecology project in partnership with primary schools and the Eden Project has recently started and staff are helping to develop units of work to support this. An outreach worker has recently been employed to work with single mothers and the unemployed, to encourage them back into education. A good range of useful courses, such as literacy, numeracy and ICT, is offered in partnership with a local further education college to meet their needs.
53. For students with special educational needs, occupational studies, the learning support centre and the special educational needs department work very effectively with a range of education providers and agencies. Partnership with primary schools and induction is satisfactory. Transition into Years 10 and 11 courses and post-16 education is very carefully planned and fully involves students and their parents. Partnership with parents is good. The learning support centre works closely with parents, who appreciate the prompt and effective responses from the special needs department.
54. Greenfields maintains close links with parents, who appreciate its work and the progress their children make.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher is very good. Leadership of other key staff is good as is management, although there are some weaknesses in the monitoring by senior managers. The governance is good, although governors have not ensured the requirements for a daily act of worship are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is a very good leader and has brought a vision and sense of purpose to the college.
- Leadership and management of departments are good with effective teamwork and high quality teaching in many departments.
- The monitoring of departmental effectiveness by some senior managers can lack rigour and this is reflected in some variations in the overall effectiveness of individual departments.
- Management of some subjects and management of the attendance of students have some weaknesses.
- The governors have a very good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the college.
- Training, support and professional development for staff are bringing about very good improvement in many aspects of the college's work.
- Statutory requirements for the provision of a daily collective act of worship are not met.

Commentary

55. The headteacher, in the last 18 months since his appointment, has brought very effective leadership to the college. He is enthusiastic, energetic and inspirational. As a result, he has raised both staff and student morale and brought a very clear focus to raising standards. He has improved the effectiveness of many staff by ensuring that they have the confidence and authority to develop their own areas of expertise. Bodmin College is now, largely as a result of this very effective leadership, a good and improving school. The learning forum, the academic board and the self-managing teams contribute very effectively to the improvement process.

56. Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively, apart from those statutory duties relating to the provision of a daily act of worship. They have a very clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and were instrumental in developing and supporting the successful science college bid. Governors play a full part in planning the strategic direction of the college's developments. They appreciate the advice that they receive from the headteacher but do not automatically accept all of his recommendations, as in the case of the new school uniform. They ask probing questions. They act as critical friends of the college and are keen to know the views of both staff and students. Systems of financial management are good and the development of the business sponsorship for the science college initiative was led very effectively by the governors. The college has been successful in funding a new and much needed sixth form centre and this accounts for the substantial financial carry forward of funds.
57. The headteacher has established a new sense of purpose with an improvement plan linked very closely to improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the college. He has established a new leadership team that is effective, particularly in the development of the very good programmes for continuing professional development. These now include all members of staff. For example, the induction of new staff both from within and outside the college is very impressive. The leadership and management of key staff are good. There are a few areas for further improvement, particularly in subject management and in the monitoring and improvement of students' attendance. However, measures taken have ensured that students' attendance has improved steadily in the last two years.
58. Middle management is good. There are effective teams within the most successful departments which have a positive influence on the raising of standards. The management of art and design, physical education and geography are very good. In English, science, history, religious education and music it is good. The management of mathematics is unsatisfactory and that of the other departments is satisfactory. Monitoring, and particularly the evaluation of teaching and learning in several departments by a few of the senior managers, lacks rigour and results in the variable performance. The college has a comprehensive programme of review. The outcomes of this evaluation process provide a clear agenda for improvement, which is at the centre of its improvement plan.
59. The main aids to students' achievement are generally effective teaching methods, high expectations of students' achievement, the very strong leadership of the headteacher, good departmental leadership and good attitudes to work. The main barriers to raising achievement are the unsatisfactory attendance rate of some students, some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9, and the varying effectiveness of departmental monitoring by some senior managers.
60. Leadership of special educational needs is satisfactory. Senior and middle managers with responsibility for different aspects of special educational needs all have a clear vision for the development of provision in which all students can be fully included in the life of the school. Practice in the learning support centre and in occupational studies is innovative and highly effective staff teams have been built. However, policies to match the changes underway are not in place. Consequently, governors are not able to monitor the effectiveness of these changes. Most aspects of the change from extraction groups to mainstream teaching for students with special educational needs have been successful. However, there are gaps in provision for students in Years 7 to 9 and in training for teachers. Management of special educational needs is satisfactory. Documentation and general guidance on special educational needs are good. Students' records are well maintained. The management of teaching assistants is good. Their role has been clearly described and they meet regularly to share information about students. The use of the co-ordinator's time is unsatisfactory. Too much time is allocated to small group teaching, leaving too little to support subject areas or to monitor the implementation of students' individual plans.
61. Greenfields is led and managed well, with considerable passion and commitment. The teacher in charge has prioritised developments in the provision sensibly and thus has overseen a good

rate of improvement since the previous inspection. A direct result of this focused development is that students achieve well because they benefit from being taught by subject specialists in ability groups. They also enjoy a wide variety of subjects and experiences, enriched by residential trips. Students have plenty of computers to enhance learning across the curriculum and work in accommodation designed to support their social skills. Similarly, future developments are well chosen and planned sensibly. These rightly include forging greater links with more subject departments so that there will be more opportunities for individual students to work constructively outside the Greenfields base.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,983,335	Balance from previous year	172,917
Total expenditure	5,050,117	Balance carried forward to the next	106,135
Expenditure per student	3,561		

Sixth form

Sixth form leadership and management are good. The governance is unsatisfactory because of long-term failure to ensure that religious education is taught.

Commentary

62. The sixth form is cost effective, in relation to the school's expenditure as a whole. It provides a good quality of education for an increasing number of students. The college offers a wide range of courses, recently increased as a result of becoming a science college. The sixth form is about to move into a newly built block as a result of the good support and leadership of the governors who played an important part in securing this new facility.
63. Good leadership sets a clear direction for the future development of the sixth form. The college's senior staff and governing body know the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses very well. The head of the sixth form co-ordinates the work of the form tutors well. She has introduced an induction day and a driving awareness day for Year 12 and these have received a good response from the students. The range of courses reflects the requirements of students well and so the number of students studying at the college is increasing. The good use of assessment and the provision of good support and guidance by tutors and subject staff have helped to raise students' standards so that students achieve well in the sixth form.
64. The governors have not ensured that the curriculum entitlement of religious education for all sixth formers is in place, although they have sought students' views on a number of occasions.
65. The main aids to raising achievement are good teaching, a wide range of GCE and other courses, good management and the positive attitudes of students to their studies. The main barriers to higher achievement are the relatively high absence rate of some students and the limited range of vocational courses.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning does not sufficiently take into account the needs of the highest attaining students.
- Literacy skills are systematically developed in other subject areas.
- The detailed marking by teachers significantly supports the progress of students.
- Students use ICT confidently to improve their written work.

Commentary

66. Results of the national tests for students in Year 9 were above average in 2003. The results were similar to those in 2002 and students achieved well in relation to their attainment on entry. GCSE results were average in English and English literature and represent satisfactory achievement. Results have risen since the previous inspection in line with the national trend. Higher attaining students make less satisfactory progress than other students. Boys perform less well than girls, but the gap is in line with that found nationally. Students did less well in English and English literature than in their other subjects in 2003, especially in terms of achieving the higher grades.
67. Standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection were above average, representing good achievement relative to their attainment on entry. Students are fluent and confident readers and writers. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys. Standards of Year 11 work seen during the inspection were average. Students' achievement in all attainment areas is satisfactory. Lower-attaining students lack confidence, but are well supported by writing frames and key words.
68. Students with special educational needs achieve well. They receive good support, with class teachers and support teachers working well together. They benefit from resources being directed specifically to their needs. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress. Though these students are identified, there is not enough provision for their needs.
69. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subject well, give clear explanations and ask searching questions. The best lessons use a range of teaching methods, including group and paired work and drama, ensuring that interest is maintained and students are involved in their learning. ICT is used to enhance learning, through such activities as the production of tourist information brochures for the local area. On occasion lessons move too slowly to maintain the enthusiasm of the higher-attaining students, and lesson content does not sufficiently challenge gifted and talented students. Students listen well and translate what they learn into good written pieces, but even in the older classes many are reluctant to extend their ideas if the teachers do not structure the lessons carefully. A good example of a well-planned lesson occurred in Year 11 where students compared two poems from the examination anthology using key words and a prompt sheet to aid their discussion. Assessment of students' work is good and helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a clear basis for assessing what students know and understand. Assessment informs teaching and learning and the planning of new work. The department sets clear targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, students are clear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.

70. Management is good and leadership is satisfactory. The development of existing systems of monitoring, assessment and planning are starting to develop a more consistent approach within the department. It is developing into a cohesive unit. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

71. Standards of literacy across other subjects are good. The college's literacy policy is effective. Students have many chances to read aloud in class and many subject teachers encourage them to write in different styles, including note making, letters, diary entries and formal reports. In art, students are shown how to structure an obituary before writing one for Van Gogh. In history lessons, starters focus on meaning and spelling of key words and in science song writing is used to consolidate learning of key terms. Materials from the National Literacy Strategy are used to support individual students in Year 7 and Year 9.
72. Reading is above average and is a strong feature of the school. Teachers promote the importance of reading in many subjects. Teachers set varied and interesting activities to help students to extend their understanding and enjoyment of a range of different genres and authors. Sixth-form students act as reading partners for those younger students who find the task difficult, and help them to improve. This additionally promotes good social development. The library is full of attractive and appealing works of fiction suitable for all tastes and many students take advantage of this valuable resource. Students in all year groups read aloud with conviction. A breakfast club is held once a term to promote reading and is well attended by students and staff.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department works well to ensure the success of students of all levels of attainment.
- GCSE results in German are well above the national average.
- Not all students have the opportunity to use computers in their learning.
- The department needs strategic planning to ensure consistency.

Commentary

73. In 2003, GCSE results in German were well above the national average. Higher attaining students showed good achievement. Results in French were well below the national average, but matched those students' other GCSE results. In both languages the performance of boys was a better match to national results than that of girls. By the end of Year 9 standards in both French and German are in line with national expectations. More able linguists, who begin German in Year 8, show good achievement. Good levels of literacy help them understand the grammar, but the late start results in some limitations in their vocabulary. In French, students of average and lower attainment reach national levels in speaking and listening, because teaching in French enhances these skills. Students with special educational needs benefit from supportive teaching and communicate effectively in simple language. By the end of Year 11, standards in French are in line with national expectations and standards in German are above. Achievement in French and German is good, because students have good attitudes to language learning
74. The teaching of both French and German is good for students of all ages. Teachers take every opportunity to praise their efforts, so students are confident enough to participate in class work. Learning is good, in response to the positive approaches of the teachers. For average and lower attaining students in French the emphasis on speaking creates frequent opportunities for success. Visual materials are used to support students' understanding. In German, where there are higher attaining students, the expectations of the teacher challenge the students to work at the higher levels. In both languages, the teachers' examination experience guides students firmly towards the skills required for the higher grades. Teachers do not, however,

regularly plan for students to work with computers. This misses a good opportunity to increase students' motivation and add variety to lessons. Teachers' use of the interactive whiteboard is very good and is having a positive impact on learning. Their presentation is professional, the board is a focus for students' attention and the pace of the lessons is increased because teachers do not have to write work up. Teachers assess students' work regularly and use the information gained to monitor their progress. At present National Curriculum levels are not used enough to inform students or to challenge them.

75. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department's personal example has created a team with a strong commitment to the success of all students. Management of the department is satisfactory. Monitoring lessons identifies areas for teachers' development, but the improvement is not rigorously checked. There has been some progress on areas designated for development. These have had insufficient strategic planning to ensure consistency in practice. The timetable arrangements for Year 8 have led to mixed ability groups. This adversely affects the standards of students of all levels of attainment. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement, in particular because standards in German have risen substantially.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning activities, especially in Years 7 to 9, are not sufficiently matched to the prior attainment and learning needs of students.
- Lower attaining students secure better results than expected, given their attainment on entry to the school.
- Teachers are qualified mathematicians with good knowledge of examination requirements so students are well prepared for external assessment.
- Teachers use only a limited range of strategies in the classroom.
- Monitoring of the department lacks rigour and is unsatisfactory.
- Students are well behaved and respond well to their teachers.

Commentary

76. Students have below average standards when they enter the school. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below the national average and in line with boys' and girls' results in similar schools. They improved from 2002, after a period of falling standards, and they have almost regained the level of success highlighted in the previous inspection report. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average and with results for similar schools, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Boys attained lower grades than girls, despite their higher results at the end of Year 9 in 2001. Relatively few students secured higher grades, such as level GCSE A or A*.
77. Current standards of work are below average in all years. In Year 9 about two thirds of students are working at the expected level, but less than one third are working above this level. Lower attaining students have problems with basic number skills, which adversely affect other aspects of mathematics. By the end of Year 11, about two fifths are working for higher-grade GCSEs. Most students have secure basic number skills and use these in familiar problems. While they learn techniques in lessons, many students cannot effectively transfer these techniques to solve unfamiliar problems. Standards in using and applying mathematics are lower than knowledge and understanding. Achievement is satisfactory across the school. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where students make up for less effective progress in Years 7 to 9. It is better for lower attaining students and for girls than for higher attaining students and boys.
78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are all qualified and have good knowledge of the subject and

syllabuses, so students are well prepared for tests and examinations. Most teachers give clear exposition and explanations and choose examples that enable students to learn techniques for solving problems. Classroom management is good, so students behave and respond well in lessons, even when the teaching is uninspiring. Assessment is thorough and used to decide predicted grades and to set students in Years 8 to 11. However, it is not used to tailor the teaching to the needs of different students. This is a particular problem in groups where there is a wide range of prior attainment, such as in Year 7 and upper sets in Year 9. Planning identifies topics to be taught, rather than learning activities relevant to students' different needs, so these lack variety. The teaching of lower sets is better, since work is more focused on students' needs and in some lessons teaching assistants provide valuable support. Teaching improves in Years 10 and 11, where the three tiers of the examination syllabus are used to provide a different plan for upper, middle and lower sets. Higher attaining students are not effectively challenged. This is a particular problem in Year 7, where students repeat work they have covered in primary schools. Some students, especially older boys, are passive and disengaged from learning and some teachers condone this. These students do not achieve well. Voluntary revision classes help to secure satisfactory achievement overall, but boys rarely attend.

79. Leadership is satisfactory. The department is staffed with qualified mathematicians who work well together as a team. The head of department is very experienced, is an effective teacher and has good knowledge of how to help students succeed in examinations. Management is unsatisfactory, however. Although examination results are analysed, there is little monitoring of students' progress against that expected. There is insufficient analysis of the achievement of different groups of students or action to address underachievement. The work of teachers is not systematically monitored. Consequently, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching, and a lack of accountability and co-ordination. While the National Key Stage 3 strategy has had an impact on lesson structure, it has not been used sufficiently to improve the quality of teaching. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The department went through a period of staff turbulence, but it has now had stable staffing for 18 months. Links with primary schools are still under-developed and this contributes to students' slow progress in Year 7. A numeracy policy has only just been agreed, and so has not been embedded or evaluated. There are still too few teaching assistants to support learning in mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Students' numeracy skills are used in most subjects. However, the demands on mathematical understanding vary considerably between subjects. Students' mathematical competence throughout the school is adequate for their studies. In several subjects, such as design technology and art and design, students show accuracy when drawing three-dimensional diagrams. Students' measuring and routine number skills are also accurate in science, for example. Particularly good competence is found in geography, ICT and history where the use and interpretation of graphs and tables of figures are commonplace.
81. Numeracy is understandably a focus area in the current school development plan because developments in this area have been slow. However, several good activities have recently been organised to raise the awareness and understanding of the use of numeracy outside the mathematics department. These include training for all teachers on the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for mathematics, a meeting for parents to promote ways for them to support their children's numeracy development, and whole school tasks that capture the imagination of students. The development of numeracy is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because very good leadership focuses the department on teaching and learning, standards are rising.
- Good use is made of practical work to underpin the learning of scientific principles.
- Very good working relationships give students confidence to enter into discussions.
- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is increasing the numbers of students achieving the highest GCSE grades but there is limited variety in learning methods in Years 7 to 9.
- Students have too few opportunities to use computers to enhance their learning or to improve the presentation of their work.

Commentary

82. Results at the end of Year 9 have been rising slowly over the past few years and in 2003 results were at the national average and better than in similar schools. Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2003 were in line with the national average. The improvement in standards is mainly due to the very good leadership of the head of department, who has sharply focused the department on high quality teaching and learning.
83. Current standards in Year 9 are similar to expectations. All students in Years 7 to 9, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Observations in class and the analysis of students' work show that current standards are rising rapidly and are above expectations in Years 10 and 11. Results of modular examinations show that many students are attaining the highest GCSE grades. This is good improvement from the previous report. Achievement is very good for all students in Years 10 and 11.
84. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, an improvement since the previous report. Teaching in Years 7 to 9, although good, lacks the sparkle and imagination seen in Years 10 and 11 where the teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. In the high quality lessons students become thoroughly involved in a variety of learning activities and are regularly tested to show that they understand the work and are learning rapidly. Teachers use electronic whiteboards and practical investigations very effectively to provide interest and to give the insights into difficult concepts that make learning easier for all students across the school. In the lessons of lesser quality there is little excitement and students are more passive in their learning. Nevertheless, the good planning and pace to the lessons ensure that learning is satisfactory. Lessons and support are very well planned to ensure that all students are involved in interesting and demanding science. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and students enjoy science and achieve very well. Very good working relationships give students the confidence to ask or answer questions without fear of failure. This confidence was noted when two Year 11 girls, accompanied by a Year 11 boy playing the saxophone, sang a lively and scientifically correct song about hormones. Learning was clearly very good and enjoyable for these students. Students make effective use of their numeracy skills to illustrate and interpret their investigative work. There has been a large improvement in the use of computers for teaching and learning, but a lack of equipment means that students do not get individual access to computers. Oral skills are well developed through discussions and where students report their experimental results to the class, but extended and creative writing are not widely used to deepen understanding.
85. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides dynamic leadership and vision to take the department forward. There is a very good spirit of teamwork and a collective desire to improve standards. Assessment and analysis of results are used very effectively to influence curriculum planning and to set motivating targets for students. An innovative course in applied science has been introduced into Years 10 and 11 and allows students to undertake work related to their ability and interest. Students have responded very

well to this course and are achieving good standards. New departmental ICT facilities will be completed this year. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communications technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pace in lessons is good and the curriculum is well planned.
- Teaching is interesting and frequently innovative.
- The school provides a good range of worthwhile learning opportunities, meeting the interests and aptitudes of all students.
- Clear assessment guidelines are used to set high levels of expectation amongst students.

Commentary

86. Current standards of work are broadly average and students' achievement is good. In 2003, the results of teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 showed the school maintaining levels in line with national averages. Nearly two thirds of students achieved the above average Level 5 or better, with girls performing better than boys. Results in GCSE and key skill ICT were in line with the national average.
87. Teaching is good. Teachers have established strong working relationships with students, resulting in a rapid pace of learning, which builds up students' confidence. Teachers' knowledge and their use of anecdotes encourage students to produce good work, particularly in database designs. Teachers are enthusiastic and expect high standards. Consequently, students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they pay full attention in lessons. Teaching is innovative, developing students' skills and identifying different work schemes for various ability groups. Students' progress is monitored using well-designed computer programs giving them instant feedback on how well they are doing. Teachers then use the programs to identify common sources of errors and focus on these during lessons. Good learning takes place in lessons due to the fast pace and high targets set by the teachers. Students aim confidently for high standards because they are aware of their progress and the level they are working at. Many of them learn independently and therefore gain skills beyond expectations. Students in Years 10 and 11 are skilled in programming.
88. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been revised to contain recent good teaching practice including literacy and numeracy opportunities. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 suits the needs of individuals, providing GCSE full course or short course as well as key skills for all. The present management system is disjointed and relies on an efficient teaching team to structure and organise the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 as well as in Years 10 and 11. The head of department is based away from the rest of the department. Although he monitors teaching and learning standards adequately, he is not in the best position to appreciate the full impact of decisions made in the ICT department. The network manager liaises with the head of department on day-to-day matters but goes through the headteacher for major financial decisions. This leads to a potentially fragmented management system.
89. Resources are good. There is a reliable network of modern computers in well-equipped ICT rooms. The range of software is good and meets the needs of the students. The ratio of computers to students is better than those found nationally. The technicians are competent and respond rapidly in repairing and maintaining equipment.
90. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The cross-curricular delivery of ICT has improved and is good in many areas. Very effective use of interactive whiteboards has enhanced teaching in those classes that have access to them. Teaching has improved and, as a result, ICT GCSE results have improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. Good facilities are available throughout the college to provide good ICT teaching resources and in some areas they are quite outstanding, particularly physical education. Other areas of good practice include English, science, geography, history, design technology, special educational needs and religious education. All teachers are well trained to use interactive whiteboards and are using them to very good effect. ICT rooms are available at lunch times, before and after school for students to attend supervised homework and help sessions.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and effective teamwork are improving standards.
- Teaching is very good and provides a strong challenge to students.
- Very good assessment shows students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- In Years 10 and 11 girls do not perform as well as boys.

Commentary

92. Standards have improved since the previous inspection. Teacher assessments show students' standards at the level expected nationally for students in Year 9. In 2003 at the end of Year 11, over half of the students gained the higher grades A*-C. These results are at the national average. Boys achieve higher standards in history than boys in other schools but girls' results are lower than those of girls nationally.
93. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many students, including those with special educational needs in relation to their low standards on starting at the school in Year 7. By Year 9 students have a developing knowledge and understanding about topics such as the Second World War. They use and evaluate sources well. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement. Students plan their work effectively, producing well-structured assignments that show very good use and application of historical skills and techniques. There is now a greater focus on examination techniques and writing, which is helping to improve standards.
94. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and committed and use a range of effective approaches in the classroom. Lessons are well structured and there is always a clear focus for learning. Starter activities are used effectively, often to support the use of key words. Closing sessions in lessons are good and effectively used to assess students' learning. In many lessons students make very good or excellent progress because of the very high level of challenge presented by teachers. Such lessons are delivered with pace and have a wide range of activities that enthral the students. Teachers' use of assessment is very good. Students' work is well marked and they have clear guidance on how to improve. Relationships in the classroom are good and students display positive attitudes to their work.
95. The leadership of history is good and strong teamwork is helping to improve standards. The development plan has accurately identified as priorities the improvement of teaching, learning and students' literacy skills. Teaching staff are very well qualified. Accommodation and learning resources are good and meet the needs of the curriculum well. The curriculum is enhanced through local study and a good range of visits. Very good use is made of performance data to set targets and to plan teaching and there are effective procedures for monitoring the work of the department.
96. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and very good management are raising the standards of all students.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good features.
- Positive relationships create a good working atmosphere.
- Assessment and target setting for students are very effective.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The range of fieldwork opportunities is underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

97. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with expectations. Students' achievement was good because students start school with attainment below that expected for their age. GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are currently in line with expectations. Students achieve well because of the high standard of teaching, good systems of assessment and a strong focus on improving examination techniques. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, those who speak English as an additional language or those with special educational needs.
98. Good teaching and learning are key factors in raising standards. Teachers plan very carefully, have a good knowledge of their subject and make effective use of a wide variety of teaching resources. Sensitive questioning allows students of all abilities to play a full part in lessons, and work is closely matched to individual needs. High quality extension assignments are provided to stretch and challenge the more able students. Good classroom relationships encourage students to play an active role in their own learning and most respond positively to new challenges. A strong emphasis is placed on the improvement of literacy, so important vocabulary is learnt when new themes are taught. This, together with the use of structured frameworks, gives students of all abilities the confidence and expertise to write more extended pieces of work. Students are fully aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Students' progress is very closely monitored to ensure that individuals achieve well.
99. The subject is well led and very well managed. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities for geography and is committed to the further improvement of standards. Review of progress, through close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' achievement, is a strength. The assessment systems in Years 7 to 9 are very effective. Very good liaison with the librarian, together with good access to computer research facilities, enables most students to undertake their own independent learning enquiries. There are too few opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 and this places limitations on students' achievement. The department is addressing this issue and there are already plans to resolve this problem. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and well managed.
- Lessons are well structured and are taught with good pace and with a high level of expectation.
- Relationships are very good and students respond well to the subject.
- Students develop a very good understanding of equality issues.

Commentary

100. In 2003, most students entered for a GCSE short course in religious studies. Virtually all students secured a pass grade and over half of students gained a higher grade A*- C. These results are close to the national average. Students achieved well and most did better than expected. Girls achieved higher standards than boys.
101. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for students in relation to when they started at the school. By Year 9 students of all abilities have developed a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the origins, beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other principal religions of the world. Standards achieved by students currently following the short course GCSE in the current Years 10 and 11 are average. All students study the subject and their achievement is good. The standard of work of the small number of students following the full course GCSE is good. Their achievement is very good. In Years 10 and 11 students form their own ideas on a wide range of ethical and religious issues and apply their understanding to topical situations.
102. Teaching and learning are good overall. It is best in Years 10 and 11 where lessons are either very good or excellent. Most teaching is by subject specialists who are very enthusiastic and highly committed. Lessons are well structured with good starter activities that engage students in their learning. Relationships are very good and students respond well to the subject. Subject matter is well organised and presented in imaginative ways that stimulates discussion and involves the students well. In the very best lessons there are high levels of challenge and a very good pace of learning. In such lessons excellent use is made of the interactive whiteboard to support students' learning. In a few lessons there was too much direction by the teacher and students did not function sufficiently as independent learners. Assessment procedures are good. The marking of students' work is good, so they have clear guidance on how to improve. Across Years 7 to 11 students' learning in religious education makes a very good contribution to their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development.
103. The leadership of religious education is very good. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching is inspirational and teamwork is a very good feature of the department. In the classroom the head of department is an excellent role model for other staff and students. Management of the department is good. The head of department has implemented good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of her colleagues. Teaching staff are very well qualified, learning resources are of very good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. Students' understanding of life in a multi-faith society is developed well through visits to local churches and an annual visit to religious centres in London.
104. Overall there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership shows clear vision for improvement.
- There is good use of modelling and computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture.
- Good relationships contribute to good achievement in most areas.
- There are insufficient opportunities for younger students to develop design skills.

Commentary

105. The 2003 GCSE results were below average overall and follow the trend in the school over recent years. Boys performed better than girls. Individual specialisms had varied success with resistant materials and food technology showing improvement from 2002.

106. Current standards in Year 9 are equal to expectations and match recent teacher assessments. Attainment on entry is lower than expectations so students therefore make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9. This shows good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs. Very good sketching, use of colour and annotation in the puppet project in textiles and very good use of ICT, including computer-aided design in the school design project in Year 9, are examples of the best work. There is insufficient opportunity for students to engage in developing design skills in the first two years of school. Girls usually produce work of a higher standard than boys. Current standards in Year 11 are below average overall, but show improvement on the 2003 GCSE results. There is good work in graphics, textiles and manufacturing and improving standards in product design and child development. Standards in food technology are below average, because many students do not complete coursework folders to the required standard and miss practical assignments. Practical work in all areas is usually good. Higher attainers produce good work. Lower attainers in particular can find generating ideas and developing them in any depth difficult. ICT is not used to improve presentation often enough, especially by the weaker students. Students with special educational needs do well, especially in their practical work. Literacy support is good, so technical language is used correctly by students. Numeracy is satisfactory and good use is usually made of ICT, including computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing resources.
107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, learning develops well because effective teaching strategies are used. Good subject expertise combined with good use of resources and time, interests and engages students throughout the lesson. Good student management is a feature of these lessons. In a minority of lessons the pace is slow, work is limited in challenge and lesson planning lacks detail. Relationships in class are generally good, students are attentive and respond positively to the work. In Year 9 students are involved in a national competition redesigning a part of the school to benefit both the school and the community. Standards in this work are very good, including the modelling of ideas using computer-aided design.
108. Leadership and management are good. A new head of department has been appointed since the last inspection and there is a clear vision and determination to improve. Colleagues work well together and there is a common sense of purpose. Schemes of work have been reviewed, new assessment procedures introduced to include National Curriculum levels on students' work in Years 7 to 9 and alternative courses introduced in Years 10 and 11. The head of department has high expectations of staff and students. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently systematic. It is, however, supportive and evaluative. Marking is usually helpful and supportive but often lacks specific detail about improvements to be made. Staff give of their time generously for the benefit of students at lunchtimes and after school.
109. Accommodation is good but some rooms are cramped when full classes are present. Access to the ICT suites is difficult, at times. Resources are good and used well in all areas. Display of work is of a good standard. Technician support is invaluable to the department.
110. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Issues have been addressed wholly or in part and new policies and procedures introduced to influence improving standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design, drama and music were inspected. Dance was sampled. Standards reached by students following the GCSE dance course are above average and they achieve very well. Both boys and girls show good knowledge of the compulsory set piece and perform with increasing confidence over time. Their own choreography shows flair, imagination and good interpretation of themes and music. The programme of study is supported by an exceptional enrichment programme provided by clubs, visiting theatre groups, workshops and artists in residence. Links with the local and county performing arts groups give the students a wealth of experiences. Leadership is dynamic and

innovative. A high level of independence is extended to the students who enjoy their individual roles. This adds very positively to their personal development.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- The achievement of students and their attitudes are very good.
- Procedures for and the use of assessment are very good.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Subject managers have an excellent clarity of vision for developing the subject.
- There are not enough full-time staff to support the increasing numbers of students.

Commentary

111. Students enter the college with below average standards. Supported by excellent teaching, students in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well and current standards in both Years 9 and 11 are above national expectations. In the 2003 GCSE examination standards were broadly average. Across the college students respond in a very good manner to the wide range of two and three-dimensional materials and experiences available to them. In all lessons the excellent learning partnership between teachers and students promotes very good achievement.
112. Teaching and learning and, in particular, the planning and preparation of work are excellent. Teachers show an excellent level of subject expertise. The ongoing assessment of the students' work is very good; targets are shared with them and they are told how to improve their work verbally, and with written comments. Very good attention is given to the development of the students' literacy skills and good attention is paid to the development of numeracy skills. Many regular references are made in lessons to the work of significant artists and spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues associated with their work. These strongly promote students' awareness of how to develop their own style. Their sketchbooks, evaluating the work of the very wide range of artists studied and how their own work is being developed, are of the highest order. Teachers make very good effective use of the ICT interactive white boards to explain how artists develop their styles. Students make good use of ICT to develop and modify their images.
113. The management and leadership of the subject are very good. It is very effectively shared between two teachers. There is an excellent teamwork amongst staff. A very good range of enrichment activities, community links with practising artists, visits and visitors impact very well on students' knowledge and understanding and their very high levels of enthusiasm. Across the day and into the evening the department operates a staffed open door policy. Here students who have free time, during the day, at lunch times and after school, attend in very high numbers to further their studies, displaying high levels of motivation and understanding.
114. The present accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some classrooms are too small and there is inadequate storage and display space. Due to the popularity of the subject, numbers are increasing and the present staffing of two full-time and two part-time teachers is unsatisfactory. There is no technician allocated to the department. Since the last inspection there has been a very good improvement in the quality of teaching and standards achieved.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management are raising standards.
- Teaching is very good, especially the promotion of high expectations.

- The range and quality of curricular and extra-curricular activities are good.
- The subject supports achievement for all students very well.

Commentary

115. In Year 9, students' standards are above expectations. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In 2003 in the GCSE examination all students gained at least a grade E in drama. Results exceeded the national average. Current standards of work in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 are good. Boys and girls achieve well throughout the school, acquiring a range of key skills. They develop positive attitudes to collaboration in group work. Overall, achievement is good for students with special educational needs.
116. Teaching is very good. Students are set clear learning objectives at the outset of every lesson and are given challenging goals for individual and group practice and performance. Lessons typically conclude with a helpful recapitulation of what has been learnt and this, together with well thought out and skilfully introduced support materials, ensures that students learn well. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident: management of behaviour is low key and effective, helped by a clear articulation of high expectations and the engagement of all. Students like drama, recognise the good range of opportunities offered to them and respond very well.
117. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department, who took up her post in September 2003, has already made a significant impact through her manifest commitment to high standards and has inspired her team of teachers to provide more challenging work for students. Thoroughly revised schemes of work are complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Implementation of the young people's arts award pilot has very successfully stimulated a large number of students to invest greater commitment in drama and is having a significant effect on raising standards.
118. There has been a marked improvement in quality and standards since the last inspection, not least in assessment. Systems are in place to ensure students of all ages have a clear sense of how they are progressing in their learning.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in performance.
- The numbers of students learning instruments and choosing GCSE music are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Extra-curricular music is very good with outstanding features.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have too few opportunities to develop skills in music technology.

Commentary

119. Current Year 9 students attain standards in line with national expectations and a significant minority attain standards above these levels. Students perform and compose on a variety of instruments and in various western and world music styles. Standards are higher in performance than in composition. Prior to Year 7 many students have had only a limited experience of practical music-making so their achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is good. In the GCSE course, after a significant fall in numbers and standards two years ago, option groups are now larger than the national average and standards are improving. Standards are now broadly in line with the national average. The achievement of most students in the option groups is satisfactory. However, not all in the Year 11 group attend regularly, which adversely affects their progress with their coursework. Approximately 200 students learn instruments. Standards for these students are above average overall and some exceptional performances were heard in school.

120. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, students work in a lively, encouraging atmosphere and they enjoy their lessons. Most lessons are well planned with good supporting work sheets. Students understand their tasks and so learning moves at a good pace. The department aims to provide tasks for students of all levels of ability and teachers support students well as they pursue their tasks individually or in groups. Not all work includes extension tasks for students of higher ability. Questioning is well used to check and extend students' knowledge and they in turn respond with enthusiasm. More time is needed to consolidate new knowledge at the end of a few lessons. Teaching in the instrumental lessons is very good.
121. The subject leader has sustained a good vision for the subject development. With the exception of some limitations in music technology, the curriculum is thorough and focuses on developing practical skills. Assessment has improved since the last inspection, although some areas are graded too highly in Year 9. Teachers' reports concentrate on students' efforts rather more than their subject skills. Work in extra-curricular activities is very good with outstanding features and it is much appreciated by the parents. Teachers work hard and give freely of their time to rehearse a variety of groups that achieve high standards. During the inspection a rock band, choir, wind band, the nationally acclaimed jazz band and a variety of small ensembles and soloists were rehearsing for the spring term concert. The many concerts and musical events make a very good contribution to the ethos of the school.
122. Accommodation and resources are very good. The department is upgrading and increasing its resources for music technology. Currently there are insufficient workstations for classes in Years 7 to 9. These students do not have regular access to music technology to support and improve their skills in composing.
123. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of very good teaching.
- Standards in lessons and in the extra-curricular programme have improved significantly.
- Excellent use is made of ICT.
- There are excellent links with the community and other institutions that increase the students' range of experiences.
- Monitoring of teaching and the use of assessment for examination courses are not sufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

124. Current standards in Year 9 are above expectations and in line with teacher assessments. Students achieve very well. Their knowledge of how to develop skills and their ability to use evaluations make a positive contribution to the improvement of their work. Current standards in Year 11 are above expectations. Students' positive attitudes lead to good achievement in most lessons. In all years, students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers. Students with special educational needs also achieve as well as other students because tasks are designed to meet their educational needs. Gifted and talented students achieve very well as a result of the innovative programme designed for them.
125. In 2003, GCSE results were above the national average. Students who currently follow the GCSE course reach above average standards and achieve very well. They have a good depth of knowledge, particularly in fitness testing, and apply theories accurately with good cross-reference to other aspects. There is good use of ICT in coursework. Their practical work is above average.

126. Teaching and its impact on learning are very good. Teachers create an effective learning environment through a high level of challenge, high expectations of work rate and by demanding high standards of work relative to the attainment of the students. Question and answer sessions promote very good knowledge of skills but not of technical vocabulary. The use of number is well developed. The teachers make excellent use of ICT, using laptops and video for immediate visual feedback, which helps learning. Assessment is used effectively to highlight areas of development for individual students. However, the different systems of recording and marking used by teachers are not consistent. Teachers have very good knowledge of the activities they teach and use demonstration effectively to highlight good performance. The excellent extra-curricular programme provides students with a range of activities in addition to traditional games. Individuals and teams enjoy success at local, county and national levels and also in inter-tutor matches at school. Visiting dance groups enable students to study dances from different cultures.
127. Very good leadership and management of the department have a positive impact on the raising of standards, leading to substantial improvement since the last inspection. Very clear vision and direction are provided and there is a good team spirit. Departmental planning ensures that all initiatives are closely linked to the ongoing improvement of the curriculum and to teaching, which in turn leads to improving standards. Very good involvement in the school sports co-ordinator programme has resulted in excellent links with many local primary schools. Excellent links with the local community, national development schemes and universities ensure that students have access to the latest developments in sport.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good attitudes to learning underpin improving standards.
- Coursework provides good opportunities to develop ICT skills.
- Assessment is satisfactory but individual targets for improvement are not always clear.
- The narrow range of teaching and learning strategies does not develop independent learning skills.
- Learning objectives are not reinforced so students' understanding is insecure.

Commentary

128. Achievement in Year 11 is satisfactory because students take up the subject with no prior knowledge in Year 10 and reach standards that are below the national average within a year. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well below national expectations with only a quarter of those entering securing an A* to C grade. However, taking into account the starting point of the students, this represents satisfactory achievement. The department has steadily improved its results over the last three years and has introduced a new modular syllabus to give students further opportunities to gain high grades.
129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a wide range of ability in each of the three Year 11 classes and the narrow range of teaching and learning strategies do not offer sufficient opportunities for all students to develop individual and independent learning skills. Many of the lessons are directed too much by the teacher with only a limited amount of collaborative work by students. In these lessons, although the learning objectives are discussed at the start of the lesson, there is too often not enough time to test students' understanding at the end. As a result, some students' learning is insecure. Where students have the opportunity to work together, they co-operate well and make good progress in their learning. Students have good attitudes towards their learning. There is good quality coursework, word-processed, with a good range of statistical analysis. ICT skills are well developed; however, there is too limited access

to computers in the business studies room with only 13 machines for a full class. This can have an adverse impact on the main activity of lessons as fewer than half of the students may be able to use computers.

130. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. The development plan reflects the school improvement plan in that further links with business are planned. These are designed to enable students to develop both practical and theoretical business experiences. Regular assessments take place, but they are not focused strongly enough on individual students so a minority of them are unclear about how to improve their grades.
131. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection because standards, achievement and teaching and learning have declined. However, over the last three years there has been a slow improvement in the standards achieved, although they are not yet at the level of the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme for citizenship has been well planned.
- There is good practical application of the subject in the students' school council.
- Timetable and grouping arrangements inhibit the best use of the programme.

Commentary

132. Leadership of the subject is very good. There is a clear vision that the content of the course should help students to develop and express their own opinions. These skills are further enhanced by personal development skills, which are encouraged within the school's personal, social and health education programme. An audit has shown that many aspects of citizenship are addressed in other subjects. Departments are not consistent in identifying their contribution in their schemes of work, or in guaranteeing this coverage. Management of the subject is good. A good programme has been prepared for those teaching the subject. It includes the use of outside speakers, which adds relevance and further insights into the topics covered.
133. The subject has identified a good range of practical citizenship in the everyday life of the school. The students' school council meets regularly to discuss students' concerns. This is leading to action which complements their discussions. There is a good system of assessment, which is well suited to the nature of the subject. In line with the teaching approaches used, students assess themselves on the topics covered.
134. The effectiveness of the subject is inhibited by the current timetable arrangements and the lack of time allocated to the whole personal, social health and citizenship programme. Under the present arrangements, citizenship groups are timetabled according to their setting for English or mathematics. This too often limits the quality of students' discussion and their participation in lessons. At this early stage in the development of the subject, the hard work of the subject co-ordinators has enabled them to meet the aims of the college's improvement plan.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten 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.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	72.7	80.1	36.4	23.7	30	29.9
Biology	22	72.7	65.2	13.6	11.1	24.5	20.6
Business studies	6	50	76.4	0	16.3	15	26.2
Chemistry	11	81.8	72.7	9	13.9	25.5	24.1
Computing	10	70	86.4	20	23.8	23	32
Dance	3	66.6	86.9	0	35.0	16.7	34.5
English language	34	100	82.9	8.8	17.5	30	28.7
English literature	7	100	82.9	28.6	19.1	40	30.2
French	2	50	78.2	0	18.9	20	27.6
General studies	17	64.7	73.9	0	17.8	20	25.7
Geography	18	72.2	74.3	16.7	19.8	25.6	26.5
German	1	100	81.5	100	19.3	50	28.9
History	15	93.3	80.7	46.7	19.5	40.7	28.6
Mathematics	10	70	61.9	50	17.1	35	22.1
Media studies	18	100	89.0	33.3	n/a	39.4	33.3
Music	4	100	86.5	25	21.4	35	30.7
Physical education	9	88.9	73.2	11.1	11.4	30	23.1
Physics	8	75	68.6	37.5	14.4	32.5	22.7
Product design	13	76.9	74.9	15.4	15.1	26.9	25.3
Product design (textiles)	9	100	74.9	11.1	15.1	34.4	25.3
Psychology	32	81.3	69.7	3.1	16.7	24.1	24.1
Religious studies	12	91.7	80.2	8.3	22.6	33.3	29.8
Sociology	7	85.7	71.8	0	18.4	27.1	25.4
Theatre studies	8	75	86.5	0	19.6	20	30.6

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	9	100	98.6	44.4	50.2	86.7	87.5
Biology	28	96.4	96.4	46.4	39.2	80.7	76.7
Business studies	7	85.8	98.7	28.6	36.8	65.7	80.1
Chemistry	14	100	97.6	42.9	49	88.6	84.9
Computing	6	83.3	99.4	66.6	37.8	83.3	82.1
Dance	3	100	98.5	0	44.9	60	83.9
English language	19	100	99.4	42.1	36.3	76.8	80.9
English literature	13	92.3	99.5	38.5	46.5	81.5	86.5
French	1	100	98.8	100	51.5	100	87.6
Geography	12	100	98.7	25	44.5	61.7	84
German	2	100	98.4	100	47.9	110	84.8
History	8	100	99	50	44.6	85	84.6
Mathematics	23	87	96.7	47.8	55.6	75.6	88.8
Media studies	12	100	99.4	41.7	37.3	90	81.7
Music	8	100	98.8	0	38.9	57.5	81.1
Physical education	13	100	75.2	46.2	30.9	80	75.2
Physics	22	86.4	96.7	22.7	44.6	62.7	81.7
Product design	9	100	97.8	22.2	35.0	62.7	77.9
Psychology	16	100	97.4	25	42.7	73.7	81.8
Religious studies	10	100	98.8	30	46.7	70	85.6
Sociology	5	80	98.2	20	44.3	64	83.6
Theatre studies	6	83.3	99.5	0	40.1	43.3	83.6
Art and design AVCE	8	100	92.8	50	37.5	80	80.7
Business AVCE	2	50	89.5	0	25.9	60	66.5
Health and social care AVCE	8	100	92.8	37.5	26	85	69.3
Manufacturing AVCE	1	0	73.9	0	26.1	0	57.4
Travel and tourism AVCE	8	87.5	89.6	0	21.6	47.5	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

English language and English literature are taught in Years 12 and 13 as separate subjects. The focus of the inspection was A-level English literature and A-level English language.

Provision in English language is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The positive attitudes of students lead to lively debate and high standards of written work.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning to develop and share good practice is not rigorous enough.
- Students are well motivated and have very good relationships with teachers.
- Lessons are well planned using relevant resources.
- Students depend on teachers to guide them in all aspects of their work

Commentary

135. Results in the A-level examinations in 2003 were above average. They have been consistently high, but were slightly lower in 2001. Most students achieve or exceed their personal targets set by the school, and achievement is good.

136. Standards of work seen during the inspection, both in Year 12 and Year 13, were above average, with some students, male and female, achieving the highest grades. Students display good levels of critical analysis, both in class and small-group discussion, showing interest in and perception of the way language works. A joint project with business studies resulted in a professional quality newspaper being produced that included well-written articles. Original writing is accurate and thought provoking, with carefully thought out self-analysis. Visiting German students were actively engaged in a collaborative project on fairy tales that produced a good standard of writing. Standards of literacy are good.

137. Teaching is good overall and at times it is very good. Where teaching is very good, teachers have a good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain and explore difficult concepts clearly. Because monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice is limited there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Marking of work provides the students with good ideas on how to develop their thinking. Students understand the level that they are working at and are given guidance on how to improve. Lessons are conducted in a generally lively and interactive manner and work best when students take the initiative, such as posing questions for the teacher, for example, to clarify the meaning of terms used or leading discussions. However, students can be reluctant to express their views and can lack independence.

138. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Areas of responsibility in the delivery of various components are clear and all staff are clear about their responsibilities. The curriculum is well planned and schemes of work are detailed.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide challenging work to extend students' knowledge.
- Students show a detailed knowledge of their set works and their cultural and historical context.
- The organisation of classrooms does too little to encourage continuous involvement of students in their own learning.

Commentary

139. Results in examinations are above average and students achieve well. Students maintain standards achieved at GCSE. The teaching engages students well.
140. Teaching and learning are good. Some lessons are very good, especially when teachers give students the major responsibility for leading discussions. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain difficult concepts clearly and communicate their love of literature to their students. They are adept at linking language and literature together, so that students understand how language works. Useful handouts provide supporting information, for example on how to structure analysis of passages, and students carry out some research on the Internet. Marking is very detailed and helpful because it makes students think for themselves how to follow up ideas and improve their work. The organisation of some classrooms shows a lack of careful planning and does not encourage students to engage in eye contact during discussions. Assessment is thorough and students are shown how to improve. There is good reference to specific assessment criteria and its use as part of self and peer evaluation. Often students are challenged and stretched to improve and extend written pieces until the teacher is sure it is their best work.
141. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Planning of the curriculum is thorough, areas of responsibility in the delivery of various components are clear, and schemes of work are detailed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

142. Standards of literacy are good. Students use specialist vocabulary accurately in a wide range of subjects because teachers introduce it carefully. Students synthesise information from a wide variety of sources, which ensures good development of their literacy skills. Writing, reading and discussion are of a good standard.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, starting from below average standards to secure results in line with national standards.
- Experienced teachers have very good subject knowledge and blend exposition with practice to enable students to grow in confidence in answering questions.
- Students are not sufficiently involved in explaining their thinking and working.
- Students' work is well marked and they receive feedback so that they know how well they are doing and how they might improve.
- Teaching and learning activities lack variety and ICT is underused.

Commentary

143. The school offers AS and A-level mathematics, which was the focus of this inspection. A course to resit GCSE is also offered and this was sampled. Results have been above average. One lesson was observed where standards were above average and teaching was good. Individual guidance and support were offered to students to complete their coursework and revisit topics they found difficult. Learning was good.
144. Results in both AS and A-level examinations in 2003 were in line with national expectations and represented good achievement from below average standards at the start of the course. Results were better than in previous years and were equally good for males and females.
145. Standards of work seen were also average. About two fifths of students were working towards higher grades A and B and all students were working for a pass grade. For example, in Year 13, higher attaining students confidently calculate centres of mass using trigonometry and

mechanics equations. Students make good progress from below average standards at GCSE. Females and their more numerous male peers make equally good progress.

146. Achievement is good as a result of good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make good use of this in well-structured exposition. This is blended judiciously with individual work, supported by good help and guidance. Students take increasing responsibility for their own learning. They have a textbook that provides examples, practice questions and answers, which they use very well to evaluate and correct their own work. Marking and feedback are both constructive, giving students good guidance on how to improve further. As a result, students learn well. Most lessons are dominated by teachers' exposition and by practice questions. Students are rarely involved in explaining their answers and there is little variety in learning activities. Students do not use ICT to enhance their understanding of mathematics. They successfully answer examination questions but do not always see the relevance and excitement of mathematics beyond the course.
147. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department is a good role model through his own teaching and has established a team of experienced A-level teachers. He monitors results in internal tests to ensure students are making the expected progress. The three teachers cover the curriculum well. However, the curriculum lacks choice and able mathematicians are not offered further mathematics or provided with other enrichment. There is little monitoring of the quality of teaching other than through module results. Standards have improved over the last few years after a dip following the last inspection. Improvement is therefore satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

148. In advanced level subjects, students have the grasp of mathematics required for the study of their subjects. For example, in chemistry and physics the students' use of mathematics is very good and, as expected, improves throughout the course. In geography, their use of numeracy is also very good and helps to secure effective learning through the use of statistics and graphs. However, in intermediate courses, students' standards in handling large numbers is unsatisfactory, and they therefore need more attention to their numeracy skills in order to improve their achievement.

SCIENCE

The focus was on physics, chemistry and biology, but environmental science and human biology were also sampled. The sampled courses are being taught for the first time to Year 12 students. In environmental studies, students were observed working on the conservation of energy. Teaching was good and students made good progress. The human biology course is mainly undertaken by students who have obtained C or D grades in GCSE. Teaching was satisfactory with most students consolidating their understanding of organs and making satisfactory progress.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Electronic whiteboards, demonstrations and practical investigations are used very effectively to underpin learning of complex scientific principles.
- Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge to ask the probing questions that assist students' learning.
- Students are being well prepared as independent learners.
- Year 12 students make slow progress due to lack of mathematical skills.

Commentary

149. A-level results have been improving over recent years but were still below average in 2003. However, the evidence from inspection is that the current standards are above average. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. A high proportion of the current Year 13 students are successfully working towards the higher A-level grades. Their achievement is very good. This rapid improvement is due to consistently very good teaching, where lessons are carefully planned to challenge students and often take them beyond the normal curriculum. Students in Year 12 are making slower but steady progress. Progress is slower because of the low starting point of a few students, particularly in their mathematical abilities. Most students complete the two-year course. However, a small number of students, usually those with a low GCSE grade, find the current course very difficult. This causes them to lose motivation, underachieve and leave the course at the end of Year 12.
150. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are carefully structured to involve students in practical investigations and demonstrations that develop their independence and understanding. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ask probing questions that give the sort of insights into complex topics that make learning easier and progress more rapid. Students' mathematical skills have developed to good levels in Year 13 and assist their learning in physics. Students write most of their own notes, which greatly extends their understanding and allows teachers to check that their learning is good. However, students do not derive maximum benefit from learning and revision since they make too few explanatory notes alongside the many calculations they have recorded. Students respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations and in consequence their learning is rapid and understanding secure. Ongoing assessment is good and students benefit from the guidance given on how to find further information and improve.
151. Students form very good working relationships with their teachers and are confident when putting forward their own ideas. This was particularly evident in the students who had taken part in the Moscow 'physics olympics'. The students are willing workers and show maturity in their attitude to their studies. They have been well prepared for the next step in their education.
152. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Assessment is accurate and is used effectively to set demanding and motivating targets for students. The work of the department is well co-ordinated and ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are covered.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to high standards.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Students are very good at working independently.
- Very good working relationships promote in-depth discussions and understanding.
- Some teaching is too directive, so students are not fully engaged in their learning.

Commentary

153. All students passed the A-level exam in 2003 and a high proportion of them gained A and B grades. Standards are above average and improving. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Most students attain grades higher than expected when their grades are compared to their GCSE results in Year 11. The evidence from inspection confirms these higher than average standards and good achievement. These standards are a result of consistently good teaching and the fact that students find the course to be relevant. Consequently, they work with interest and enthusiasm.
154. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching has improved since the previous report. The pace of lessons is good, teachers explain complex theory very well and consequently the rate of

students' learning is also good. Very good working relationships give students the confidence to express their views. Electronic whiteboards together with PowerPoint presentations are used very effectively to make lessons interesting and learning easier. On the rare occasions where teaching is less effective, it is where the work is too firmly directed by the teacher and the students are allowed to become more passive in their learning. This leads to learning only being satisfactory. Very good emphasis on practical investigations helps students to understand underlying scientific principles. Students demonstrate a good knowledge of chemistry and their confidence is evident when answering teachers' questions. A noticeable strength is the ability of students to work independently, particularly in their homework and in competing textbook exercises.

155. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department provides the necessary leadership and vision to take the department forward. He has instituted a good programme for reviewing and assessing students' progress and uses this effectively to set demanding learning targets. Students respond positively to these targets and are motivated to achieve. Students are being well prepared for the next steps in their education. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers make very good use of resources to provide a variety of activities and enrichments which interest and engage students.
- Students receive very good advice and guidance on how to improve.
- Dynamic leadership secures innovation in provision and improvement in results.
- Much practical work lacks challenge and is not always fully integrated with theory.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent ranging from satisfactory to very good.

Commentary

156. Results in the A-level examinations in 2003 were above the national average and were a significant improvement on 2002 results. Analyses undertaken by the school show that 2003 results represented good achievement given students' average standards on entry and again this improved from 2002.

157. Standards of work seen were above average in both Years 12 and 13. More than one third of students were working towards higher grades. Practical skills and knowledge of theory are of comparable standard. Students have literacy and numeracy skills that are more than adequate for their biology work. They write at length to justify and explain their findings. They use and interpret tables and graphs with confidence. Achievement is good for males and their more numerous female peers.

158. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are never less than satisfactory and about one third very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use to good effect for illustrating topics. They broaden the range of students' thinking, so that they see the relevance of their studies. Relationships are excellent. Students find their teachers approachable and willing to help them. Teachers make very good use of resources to provide a variety of activities that engage and interest students, so that they are productive and learn well. In the best lessons, practical work and theory are very well integrated and time is well used. For example, in a very good Year 13 lesson on genetic engineering, students carried out an experiment to genetically modify bacteria. While waiting for phases of the experiment, background theory was explored and students were introduced to websites where they could find out more. They learned very well, in consequence. Sometimes theory and practical work are less well integrated or activities are allowed to go on too long so the pace slows so students learn less well. Students receive detailed feedback on their investigations and on their

answers to questions. Teachers know exactly how marks are awarded in examinations and so students are very well advised and guided.

159. The head of biology is dynamic and innovative and is a very good role model through his own teaching. Leadership is very good. The three teachers work well together to secure improvements in standards. Management is good. Strengths and weaknesses are known and acted upon. There is some variation in the quality of teaching, which is being addressed. Fieldwork and visiting speakers enrich the provision and these all help students' enjoyment and motivation. Sixth form biology was not inspected in the previous report but standards are rising.

HUMANITIES

Geography was a focus subject in this area and work was sampled in history, psychology, philosophy and sociology. Results in A-level history in 2003 were as expected, considering students' GCSE results. All students gained a pass grade, and half of them gained the highest grades A and B. In the one lesson seen, Year 13 students were achieving well. This was due to good teaching that used a range of effective approaches and the students' very good attitudes to learning. Results in A-level sociology in 2003 were as expected considering students' previous GCSE results. In the one lesson seen, teaching was good and students achieved well. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and students show very good attitudes to learning. In psychology, A-level results were as expected from their GCSE results. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade, and a quarter of them gained the higher grades A and B. In the one lesson seen in Year 13, students' achievement was good, due to good teaching and the involvement of students in their own learning.

Results in A-level philosophy were as expected. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade, and three gained the highest grades A and B. Two lessons were seen. In both lessons students were achieving well. Teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge, relationships were very good and the students were highly motivated and engaged in their learning.

The school has failed to provide a course of religious education for all students post-16. This has been identified as an issue in the two previous inspections of the school.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent examination results have been below average but standards are now improving.
- Teachers are very well qualified and work well as a team.
- Fieldwork is very good and supports students well in their learning.
- Assessment procedures are very good and help students to improve.

Commentary

160. A-level results were below average in 2002 and 2003. The results for many students were below those expected, given their GCSE results. The numbers of students opting for geography is small and there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Retention rates are good. In 2003 most students completed their AS and A-level courses.

161. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are average but they are improving. The current achievement of students on AS and A-level courses is satisfactory. Students show good knowledge and understanding of physical geography but work in human geography is only satisfactory. Many experience difficulty with applying this knowledge to their studies of urban and settlement geography. The department has recognised this and is revising the schemes of work. This is having a positive impact and the most recent modular examinations show that standards are rising. In their coursework assignments, students apply a wide range of

geographical techniques successfully in the collection, analysis and presentation of data. Many students demonstrate good use of ICT in their work.

162. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well organised with a good range of strategies and resources that promote good learning. Teachers give clear explanations and provide challenging questions to extend the students' understanding of the subject matter. Very good use is made of fieldwork to support learning. Students are encouraged to work independently so there is good development of their research skills, both through fieldwork and through the use of ICT. Assessment procedures are very good and students get very good guidance on how to improve. For example, in a Year 12 lesson the teacher led a review on the strengths and weaknesses of their written work, and then successfully guided them through the writing of a model answer. This was very successful in helping students to improve the standards of their written work. Relationships in lessons are good and students demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They are attentive and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively.
163. Work in geography is led and managed well. Teamwork is a very good feature in planning and delivering the AS and A-level courses. The curriculum is very good and is enhanced by residential fieldwork for students in Year 12, as well as a bi-annual visit to North America. Teachers' expertise is very well matched to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is a very good stock of reference materials held in the department and students are able to access the Internet in the school library and computer rooms.
164. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects in this area were inspected in full. Product design (graphics) and product design (textiles) were sampled. In product design (graphics), the 2003 A-level results were below average for A and B grades but all students were successful in gaining A to E grades. A number of students under-performed in relation to earlier predictions. In the lessons seen standards were below average, although improving. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. The project looking at mobile phone charging units indicates a good standard of research and graphical presentation. Product design (textiles) is being examined for the first time at A2 level in 2004. The AS results in 2003 showed that over one third of students gained A or B grades. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were good and standards average. Students were working independently, designing and making a range of clothing to be worn at a forthcoming event. Practical skills were of a good standard.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The separate courses in A-level and GNVQ art and design were inspected in full. Media studies and dance were sampled. Standards in media studies are above average and achievement in lessons is good. The 2003 A-level results were better than expected from the students' prior attainment. Teaching is good and teachers are very committed and enthusiastic. Assessment is good and provides good advice and guidance. However, marking pays insufficient attention to the use of media terminology. Dance standards are above average and students achieve very well. Both boys and girls perform with increasing confidence over time. The programme of study is supported by an exceptional enrichment programme provided by clubs, visiting theatre groups, workshops and artists in residence. Leadership is dynamic and innovative. A high level of independence is extended to the students, who enjoy their individual roles. This adds very positively to their personal development.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In vocational GNVQ and AVCE courses standards are well above average.
- In GCE AS and A2 courses standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are excellent. Students achieve very well.
- There is insufficient storage space for students' work.
- The range of examination courses and the opportunities offered by the curriculum are excellent.
- There are not enough full-time teachers to support the wide range of courses offered.

Commentary

165. In the two vocational courses taught, the intermediate GNVQ and the AVCE courses, standards are well above average. This year all the students studying the AVCE course obtained places in higher education institutions to study their chosen area at degree level. In the GCSE AS and A2 courses standards are above average. The trend over time is that standards are above or well above average.
166. Currently, students produce original and high quality work. They achieve very well when working in both two and three dimensions. They show very good attitudes, striving to produce their best work. They produce very detailed, very well designed and composed sketchbooks with highly detailed written justifications and evaluations. These illustrate a very good interpretation of the wide range of artists they study and how they influence their own style. Students carefully draw and paint their own pictures showing a very good control, design and composition of their chosen media across a wide range.
167. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers expertly apply their subject knowledge as they very thoroughly evaluate the work of each student. They analyse students' work with great skill, suggesting further developments and how standards can be improved. Expectation and challenge are very high and the students respond accordingly.
168. The clarity and sense of purpose shown by the teachers and leadership and management of the courses are excellent. To maintain the wide range of course, some years and courses have to be taught together. With growing numbers, the present policy of staffing the subject with two full-time and two part-time teachers and no technician is unsatisfactory. For example, Years 12 and 13 students studying the GNVQ and AVCE courses are taught together. The present accommodation is cramped and there is no facility for sixth form students to have their own room to work in. As they attend very frequently across the day to further their work, this arrangement is unsatisfactory. There is no dedicated room for the use of ICT. High standards of display around the college celebrate the students' very good achievements. The use of these displays and the students' developing work shared with younger students has a positive influence on standards across the school. There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was the only subject inspected in this area.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are above average and students generally attain higher grades than in their other subjects.

- Good teaching challenges students effectively.
- There is no programme of recreational sport.
- The subject is very well led.
- Lower attaining students are sometimes not given a sufficiently varied range of tasks to undertake.

Commentary

169. A-level results in 2003 were above average and students did better than in many of their other subjects.
170. Standards currently reached by the majority of students in Year 13 are below average, but they are achieving well relative to their ability. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. Particular strengths are in the units of work dealing with psychology and skill acquisition. Most students are less confident in anatomy and physiology. Note-taking and written work varies in quality and in the depth of independent research. The students use ICT effectively when presenting their work. Numeracy skills are used to record and analyse data and are well backed up by visits to university physiology laboratories where they are able to draw effective links between practical experiments and theory. Current standards attained by students in Year 12 are above average. There is a wider range of ability within the group but the majority are achieving very well relative to their original predicted grades. They have a good depth of knowledge and are quick to grasp new concepts.
171. Standards reached in extra-curricular activities are above average. A number of students reach high standards in activities such as rugby, football and horse riding. There is currently no programme of recreational activities for all students to follow.
172. Teaching and its impact on learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students intellectually and physically, to good effect. They use their subject expertise to plan well. They set a range of challenging tasks to develop skills such as presentation techniques, teaching fellow students and note taking. However, lower attaining students are occasionally not given a sufficiently varied range of tasks to stimulate their learning. As a result, their consolidation of knowledge is slower than expected. The quality of homework assignments, marking and assessment varies between teachers and is not always sharply focused on raising standards. Nevertheless, students enjoy the challenge of their courses. They regularly organise clubs and events for younger students and use their well-developed skills to improve standards.
173. Leadership of the department is very good and has led to substantial improvements since the last inspection. There is a very good range of examination courses on offer. A strong mutual respect exists between teachers and students. It also inspires students to pursue careers associated with sport. Links with a number of clubs and universities are well established. The latter connection enables students to have first hand experience of working in a physiology laboratory, as well as giving them good insight into university life.

BUSINESS

In this area business studies was sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students have good attitudes towards their work and work well together in all the groups. Year 12 students are working at national expectations. Year 13 students are currently working at A-level above the national expectation and their achievement is good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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