

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BRANSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Branston, Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120714

Headteacher: Mr B W Douglas

Lead inspector: Mr H E G White

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th September 2003

Inspection number: 260797

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1100
College address:	Station Road Branston Lincoln Lincolnshire
Postcode:	LN4 1LH
Telephone number:	01522 880400
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Wilcox
Date of previous inspection:	16 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

The Branston Community College is an averaged sized, foundation comprehensive college for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It serves a wide rural area to the south of the city of Lincoln. It is a specialist Business and Enterprise College, has "Pathfinder School" status and has received Investors in People and School Achievement Awards. It provides a wide reaching Adult Education programme, on site nursery education, a public library incorporating a learn direct centre (run in conjunction with the Library Service and the University for Industry) and a Youth Wing which is open four evenings each week. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. There are 496 boys and 498 girls in the main college and 65 boys and 68 girls in the sixth form. The ability profile of entrants to Year 7 is slightly below average, and of entrants to the sixth form is average. Most pupils are of white British heritage; less than four per cent come from minority ethnic or mixed race backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational need and those with statements for physical, learning or behavioural needs are above the national average. There are no pupils with English as an additional language and who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The numbers of pupils leaving and joining the college during the college year is high reflecting the mobility of those students whose parents are stationed at the local RAF base.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2795	H E G White	Lead inspector	
9163	G Humphrey	Lay inspector	
17279	D Barry	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form)
8632	D E Beer	Team inspector	Geography
32330	A Behan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (11-16)
30749	H Boyle	Team inspector	History
1440	D W Bristow	Team inspector	Mathematics
30198	R A Chick	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (11-16) Provision for pupils with special educational needs
23436	J L Davies	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language
12356	R G Dickason	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Physics (sixth form)
4007	R C Duerden	Team inspector	Religious education (11-16)
11695	A Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology (sixth form)
31981	E Forster	Team inspector	Art and design
32348	R W Greenwood	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology (11-16)
18589	M King	Team inspector	Music (11-16)
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Business education (11-16) Health and social care (sixth form)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good college. The college has a very clear focus on the value that is added to each teaching group by each teacher. Teachers are committed to doing their best for their students; teaching is therefore consistently good and subject and pastoral teams are well led. Good leadership and management are provided by the senior management team. **The college gives good value for money.**

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers' high expectations of their students produce good learning, good achievement and very good behaviour; examples of high quality teaching need to be shared more effectively.
- The very good governing body brings a considerable range of professional skills and experience to the college.
- The headteacher's long term vision has produced a community college with outstanding community links and impressive on-site facilities.
- The college provides a strong, caring ethos where staff-student relationships are good and students enjoy coming to college.
- Some, but not all, heads of department are setting targets beyond current expectations and their teams are working well with students to help them attain higher levels of success.
- Heads of department are good managers but there is a need to define and enhance their role in order to empower them to provide higher levels of leadership and management.
- The curriculum is good, but some cross-curricular themes need further consolidation.
- The college has a good sixth form.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Students of all abilities, boys and girls and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, have consistently attained levels expected of them since the last inspection; often attainment has been significantly higher than expected, particularly in the sixth form. The provision for modern foreign languages – a key issue in the last report – is now satisfactory. Behaviour and attendance have improved, and many of the good features, including leadership and management and the quality of teaching and learning, have been maintained. Welfare and guidance are now very good. The college is now a business and enterprise college and this aspect of the colleges work is beginning to be introduced into the curriculum.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good from Year 7 to Year 13. Students are well taught and are achieving well as a result. Standards at the end of Year 9 are just above the national average and just above the national average at the end of Year 11. GCSE results are well above average for similar schools; this represents good achievement when compared to students' attainment in Year 9. The number of students gaining 5 passes at grades A*-C has risen three times faster than the national average since the last inspection and the top 25 per cent of students gained 10 or more passes at grades A*-C in 2002. The number of students gaining one pass at grades A* to G was well below the national average in 2002 though was in line when the special unit was excluded, and standards rose significantly in 2003. A new work related course has been introduced to support the lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11. Standards seen in the sixth form are above average. GCSE standards

in design and technology, physical education, religious education and science are high. Students' competence in English language, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is satisfactory; numeracy skills are good.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well nurtured throughout the college. Students respect the values and opinions of others and have a very good understanding of their own and other cultures. They are developing their own principles and challenge aggression, injustice and discrimination. They develop into mature individuals who are well prepared to exercise their rights and responsibilities in a modern society. Attendance is good; behaviour is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a good quality of education for its students. Good teaching is resulting in good learning and good achievement in all years. Some very good teaching is linking the ways in which students learn with the range and sequence of activities planned for each lesson. Teaching is consistently very good in design and technology and physical education throughout the college, and in science and GCSE religious education in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning in a very few lessons remains unsatisfactory.

Overall the college offers a well-balanced curriculum including a good range of courses for students aged 14 to 19, although no links have yet been established with further education providers. Extra-curricular provision, including participation in the arts and sport is very good. Partnership with parents is very good and the outstanding links with the community are at the heart of the business and enterprise college developments. The college cares very effectively for its students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall is good. Leadership by the head is good overall; his clarity of vision, sense of purpose and drive to promote excellence are outstanding. The very good governing body challenges the college critically, has high expectations regarding the performance of all staff and ensures that financial planning is very good. The monitoring of the value that each teacher adds to each of their classes is at the heart of the college's approach to self-evaluation. There are very good procedures for appointing and developing staff. Middle managers lead their teams well and many are seeking ways to raise standards above current expectations.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are very satisfied with the college. They recognise that their children make good progress because the teachers expect them to work hard. Students across the college recognise this as a good college which they enjoy attending.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

This is a good college with no significant weaknesses.

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

- To set targets with students that seek to ensure their achievement is consistently above expectations.
- To ensure that the very best practice in teaching is shared effectively across the college.
- To define and enhance the role of middle managers to empower them to provide higher levels of leadership and management.
- To consolidate the consistency of whole college approaches to provision for gifted and talented students, special educational needs and ICT across the curriculum.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE BRANSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The sixth form is of average size: the intake is comprehensive. A wide range of repeat GCSE, Intermediate GNVQ, and advanced level GCE and vocational courses is offered.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good sixth form. Students are well taught and they learn and achieve well. Examination results are in line with the national average. Standards seen during the inspection are above average. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good and students are very well supported as they prepare for higher education or work after they leave the college. **The sixth form is cost effective.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The proportion of students gaining grades A to C in Advanced level GCE/VCE has risen from 42 per cent to 68 per cent over the last 5 years.
- Achievement over the last 7 years has always been at least satisfactory, often it has been good.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved since the last inspection; attendance is good, punctuality is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and vocational areas; interesting lessons motivate students well.
- The sixth form curriculum provides good progression from the courses offered in Years 10 and 11.
- Good systems are in place to record the progress of students; these are very well used in discussions with students.
- Students' personal qualities are very well nurtured and they become mature adults.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and attainment is often significantly higher than expected from the students' previous GCSE results. The breadth of curriculum provision has been extended to include a range of vocational studies at GNVQ and AVCE levels. Each year the timetable is written to meet the needs of students.

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	Good in English. Teaching is good but students need more consistent advice on how to improve work. Modern foreign languages was sampled: teaching is good .
Mathematics	Good. Teaching of A level mathematics is good. Key skills was sampled; teaching of application of number to non A level mathematics students is unsatisfactory .
Science	Good in physics. Results improved greatly in 2003 but some unsatisfactory teaching remains. Biology and chemistry were sampled; teaching is very good .
Information and communication technology	ICT was sampled: teaching is good .

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Humanities	Good in geography, history and psychology. Field studies are very well planned in geography; insufficient use is made of ICT. History results are above the national average; opportunities to discuss, debate and learn independently are insufficient. Students achieve well in psychology; the present links with university and vocational sectors are limited. Sociology was sampled: teaching was satisfactory .
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in design and technology. Standards of project work are excellent. Food technology was sampled: teaching is good .
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in art and design. The quality of teaching is very good. Performing arts and music were sampled: Teaching is good .
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education was sampled: teaching is very good . Leisure and tourism was sampled: teaching is good .
Business	Good in business education. Case studies are used well to enhance learning.
Health and social care	Good in health and social care. A very good team approach uses expertise well; more use of ICT is needed.
General education	Good. Extensive use is made of the expertise of visiting speakers.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good support, advice and guidance. Their progress is well tracked and they are very well supported in their preparation for later stages of education or employment. **Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well nurtured** and students become mature adults.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Although recently appointed, the Head of sixth form is providing good leadership and management. He has a clear view for the way ahead. He is well supported by other senior managers. There are good links with the Connexions Service, Further and Higher Education, and local businesses to help students to identify the best routes forward.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy attending this college. They recognise that accessible and helpful teachers help them to study independently and research topics. The inspection team did not substantiate criticisms that worthwhile homework is not set regularly and that they are not well known to their teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good throughout the college. This reflects the good teaching and learning in lessons and the good management structures, particularly the way the performance of staff is managed by reviewing annually the value they have added to each of their teaching groups. Students with special educational needs, from minority ethnic backgrounds and the most able achieve well.

Standards of work seen are slightly above average in Years 7 to 9, at the national average in Years 10 and 11 and above average in the sixth form, with girls and boys doing as well as each other. Students' competence in English language, literacy and ICT skills is satisfactory; numeracy skills are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Value added data shows that for the last 7 years achievement at GCSE and A level GCE/AVCE has never been less than satisfactory; often it has been good.
- GCSE results are particularly good in science, design and technology and physical education in terms of the number of students gaining A*/A and A* to C grades.
- The improvement in the number of students gaining 5 grades at A*-C has improved three times faster than the national rate of improvement between 1998 and 2003.
- In 2002, the top 25 per cent of students at the college gained 10 or more GCSE subjects at grades A*-C.
- The proportion of students gaining grades A to C in A level GCE/AVCE has risen from 42 per cent to 68 per cent over the last 5 years.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in GCSE French and German have risen significantly since the last inspection.
- The systems for recording and monitoring students' progress are good; underachieving students are readily identified and supported.
- Some, but not all, departments are extending value-added predications to set more challenging targets that are discussed with students on a regular basis.
- The number of students gaining one pass at grades A* to G was well below the national average in 2002 though was in line when the special unit was excluded, and standards rose significantly in 2003.

Commentary

1. In the 2002 tests for 14-year-olds, results at the end of Year 9 were slightly above the national average compared to standards on entry to the college, which were slightly below the national average. This represents good achievement. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, standards were at the national average and well above average when compared to schools with students at similar levels of attainment in Year 9. This represents good achievement because the college is one of the higher performing colleges in the group of schools for which this comparison is made. Girls do better than boys in their examinations at 14 and 16. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more passes at grades A* to C fell from 62 per cent in 2000 to 49 per cent in 2002 and rose to 58 per cent in 2003.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	49.4 (57.3)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	82.7 (86.0)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	90.0 (92.0)	94.6 (94.5)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.9 (N/A)	34.6 (N/A)

There were 156 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

** the results in this table do not take account of the fact that in 2002, the college had a unit for students with moderate learning difficulties. This unit is no longer at the college. If allowance was made for the students from this unit, the college results for 2002 would show that 54 per cent of students gained 5 or more passes at grades A* to C, 90 per cent gained 5 or more passes at grades A* - G, 94 per cent gained 1 or more passes at grades A* to G and the average point score for the best 8 subjects was 42.1. When these allowances have been made, the number of students gaining 1 pass at grades A* to G is in line with schools nationally.*

2. The unadjusted college results for 2003 would show that 58 per cent of students gained 5 or more passes at grades A* to C, 96 per cent gained 1 or more passes at grades A* to G and the average point score for the best 8 subjects is 33.7.

Sixth form

3. In the 2002 A level GCE/VCE examinations standards were at the national average and the college data shows that this represented good achievement compared to the students' overall levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form. In 2002, boys did better than girls, the reverse of 2001.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.7 (N/A)	94.8 (N/A)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.5 (N/A)	39.4 (N/A)
Average point score per student	245 (237)	263 (N/A)

There were 65 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Achievement

4. Students achieve well as they progress from Year 7 to Year 11. This reflects the good teaching that has high expectations regarding the quality and quantity of work to be covered each lesson and the standards of work to be attained. The good systems for checking annually the value which each teacher adds to each of their classes ensures that all teachers are focussed on helping their students achieve well. The college has a good system for monitoring the ongoing achievement of individual students and support is put in place when any student is identified as underachieving. Students with special educational needs achieve well in many subjects, and students with statements of special educational need achieve well because of the very good support provided by a dedicated team of teaching assistants. College data shows that the most able 5 per cent of students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and boys and girls, achieve well in their GCSE examinations. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve very well in design and technology and physical education, well in English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and music, and satisfactorily in ICT, history, art and design and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well in science, well in mathematics, design and technology, ICT, history, art and design, physical education, religious education, business studies and health and social care and satisfactorily in English, geography, and music.

5. Standards seen during the inspection are slightly above average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. The good teaching capitalises on the significant examination marking experience of the staff. Good use is made of the knowledge of the GCSE examination requirements and assessment criteria in pitching the level of lessons and in ensuring that coursework is well managed. The use of value added data in the annual review of departments is a major driving force to raising standards. Some departments are now extending the value added predictions to set more challenging targets for their students. These targets are discussed regularly with students, and this good practice should be consolidated in the drive to raise standards further.

6. The number of students working at lower than expected levels in Year 9 is less than that found nationally; this reflects the effective support which students with special educational needs receive in Years 7 to 9. The number of students gaining one pass at grades A* to G was well below the national average in 2002 though was in line when the special unit was excluded, and standards rose significantly in 2003. Appropriate modifications have been made through the work related curriculum course to reduce the number of GCSEs that some students follow to six. The additional time is used to improve their basic skills, support the completion of their coursework assignments and raise their overall self-esteem.

Sixth form

7. Students achieve well in Years 12 and 13 on both GNVQ and advanced level courses. They enter the sixth form with a wide range of GCSE attainment – wider than is encouraged in some sixth forms and the value that is added is good. This reflects good teaching where teachers provide interesting lessons that motivate students. Historic value added data is used well by students to monitor their own progress in consultation with their teachers and tutors. Students have achieved well during the last 3 years in physical education, general studies and design and technology. There has been underachievement in French but this has now been rectified.

8. Standards seen during the inspection are above average. This reflects good teaching where teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and set high expectations of what students will attain. Retention is in line with national expectations.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is good and punctuality of students in the mornings and throughout the day is very good for both the main college and sixth form. Students' attitudes towards their learning, and interest and engagement in their work, are very good. Behaviour throughout the college is very good and students consider that exclusion is used fairly and fully justified when used. The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of students is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students demonstrate very good attitudes and values.
- Behaviour is very good and students are courteous and polite.
- The college has effective strategies for engaging students who find it difficult to meet the high expectations in learning promoted by the college.

Commentary

9. The college has rigorous procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality and these have successfully improved since the last inspection. Inspectors did not consider the concerns expressed by some students regarding bullying and poor behaviour to be justified. College pastoral teams respond effectively to any reported incidents of bullying and incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are well managed.

10. Students are happy and enjoy college. There are very good relationships throughout the college. There is a high level of mutual respect between students and their teachers. A few students find it difficult to consistently respond to the high expectations promoted by the college with regard to behaviour and learning attitudes.

11. The implementation of the behaviour policy is consistent and successful. The number of temporary exclusions, when compared with secondary schools nationally, is average. In the current term the incidence of external exclusions has reduced and evidence suggests that the application of this sanction is proving effective. The college has effective strategies for engaging students who find it difficult to concentrate and meet the high expectations of behaviour and engagement in learning promoted by the college.

12. There are many opportunities for students to show initiative and take responsibility, for example as members of the school council, leadership in sports activities and through taking advantage of opportunities to conduct research and work independently both during and after the college day. Older students also play a major role in the staging of college theatrical and musical productions. Students develop an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of life.

13. Students are able to distinguish right from wrong and support each other. They demonstrate compassion and respect for the values and opinions of others and have an understanding of their own and other cultures. They are learning to act according to their own principles and challenge things that constrain the human spirit such as aggression, injustice and discrimination. They develop into mature individuals who are well prepared for their future lives, with a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a modern society.

Sixth form

14. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form have successfully improved since the last inspection. Attendance is good; punctuality is very good. Students want to do well in their examinations and they are highly motivated in lessons. They are very willing to take responsibility and offer themselves as mentors for the youngest students during their first year in the college. The sixth form committee organises and manages social and charity events. Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well nurtured and students become mature adults.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
College data:	7.2
National data:	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
College data :	1.0
National data:	1.2

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last college year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1058	52	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	14	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The Branston Community College provides its students with a good quality of education.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the college, from Year 7 to Year 13 and all students achieve well. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge ensure their students achieve well.
- There is a growing understanding amongst teachers about the different ways that students learn; this is well used in some lessons.
- Teachers make good use of examination criteria in helping students improve their work.
- Students with statements of special educational need are very well supported by teaching assistants.
- Good management systems support good teaching although the sharing of good practice within departments and across the college is insufficiently developed.
- Assessment in religious education is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and for students in Years 10 and 11 who are not taking a GCSE course.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not always link well to National Curriculum levels.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 175 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2.3%)	45 (26%)	79 (45%)	42 (24%)	5 (2.7%)	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.

15. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout from Year 7 to Year 11. Teaching is very good or outstanding in one fifth of lessons. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and how it should be taught. Lessons are well planned and teachers expect their students to work hard in lessons and achieve well. A wide range of teaching methods is used across the college; time and resources are also well used. Most teachers know their students well and lessons are well planned to match the needs of all abilities of students. Such good teaching ensures that students make good strides in developing their subject skills, knowledge and understanding. Students respond well to the many opportunities to work by themselves and with others, and most work at a good pace in lessons. Students with statements of special educational need are very well supported by teaching assistants.

16. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in 3 of the 139 lessons inspected. In these lessons too long was spent introducing the lesson, students were not clear what they were expected to do, the work was not well matched to the abilities of the students, behaviour management was weak and insufficient thought had been given to the deployment of teaching assistants.

17. Several lessons demonstrated a very good understanding by the teacher of the way that students learn. A Year 11 English lesson included a discussion of how presenting notes in the form of a chart would help students to learn the main facts involved. A Year 8 religious education lesson began with music playing to set the tone for the lesson, and the lesson then continued with some mental exercises to “get their brains working”. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, it was evident that the teacher was aware of the different ways different students learned, and the lesson was planned with this in mind. One of the modern foreign language teachers has a set of 8 icons to represent 8 different approaches to learning on his personal planning sheet. This is used effectively to check on the linkages between the lesson planning and the ways in which students learn. Conversations with some students revealed their involvement in a national project to help teachers review the way they match their teaching to students’ learning. Students had completed a computer-based survey about the activities they like in lessons, and this was then analysed to help their teacher better match teaching with learning. When looking at students’ work, some examples were recorded of the use of diagrams called mind maps to summarise the main concepts of a topic of work.

18. The use of assessment across the college is good. Questions are used perceptively in all years to check on, correct or extend students’ understanding of their work each lesson. Work is marked regularly, but the quality of written comments to help students improve their work often varies within and between subject areas. The assessment of students’ progress is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; better links with the National Curriculum levels are needed. Assessment and identification of the individual needs of some students is insufficiently refined so they do not always receive the support they need. Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good knowledge of the GCSE examination criteria and these are applied well to help students improve their work. In a Year 10 art and design lesson students were able to explain the self review system used by the department, identify the strengths and weaknesses in their own work and outline the programme agreed with their teacher to help them improve their work. Assessment in religious education is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and for students in Years 10 and 11 who are not taking a GCSE course.

19. The college gives high priority to establishing good teaching and learning opportunities for the students. All staff, irrespective of their level of seniority, are observed teaching regularly on joining the college. The senior management team makes regular visits to classrooms where improvements in teaching and learning are known to need improvement. The judicial, annual use of data showing how well each teacher has helped their classes to progress in years is at the heart of the quality assurance procedures to maintain high quality teaching at the college. The governing body reviews the work of teachers who do not maintain a positive track record, and tough personnel decisions are sometimes made on behalf of the students at Branston Community College. There is a growing trend of departmental peer review of teaching and learning, and of looking at students' work. The departmental self evaluation of teaching and learning is now a key feature in the annual departmental reviews carried out in the autumn term. Good practice is now often shared within subject or faculty teams, but the sharing of good practice across the college is as yet insufficiently developed. The criteria used for reviewing teaching are good but the linkages to learning, achievement and standards are less clear. There is departmental but no whole college guidance for reviewing students' work.

Sixth form

20. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 is good. It is very good or better in one quarter of lessons. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, and those teaching AVCE and GNVQ courses also have a very good knowledge of their vocational areas. Teachers provide interesting lessons that motivate students. Assessment is good. Homework and extended assignments are used well and there is very good use of value added data to track the progress of students on a regular basis.

21. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two of the 36 lessons inspected because of the low expectations of teachers regarding what the students could achieve.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is good. It is good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. The opportunities for enrichment are very good. The curriculum is well supported by the good accommodation, the good resources for learning and the well-qualified staff appointed to the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad curriculum is provided in Years 7 to 9, although the arrangements for the introduction of the second language need review.
- The work related curriculum is providing better support for lower attaining students in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision of GCSE/GNVQ and GCE/AVCE courses provides good progression routes for students aged 14 to 19.
- Opportunities for participation in sport and the arts are very good.
- There is a good programme for personal, social and health education.
- The curriculum provision for Business and Enterprise Status is very good.

Commentary

22. The curriculum provision overall is good. In Years 7 to 9 the college provides the full National Curriculum plus personal, social and health education, citizenship and business and enterprise education. The balance of time allocated to each subject is satisfactory.

23. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum offers a range of choices that permits students to be entered for a maximum of 10 subjects at GCSE. A number of vocational courses are also offered as well as some that have local accreditation so that the curriculum that each student follows can be tailored to meet their individual needs. Some students are now pursuing the GNVQ course in ICT and a large proportion follow business or vocational courses that have large ICT components. For the small proportion of students whose ICT education is received through cross-curricular provision,

the quality of teaching is variable. The work related learning that is currently offered provides an appropriately structured programme for lower attaining students; partnerships with external providers that lead to vocational accreditation are in the process of being developed to match the needs of individual students.

24. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. These students achieve well in many subjects, and students with statements of special educational need achieve well because of the very good support provided by a dedicated team of teaching assistants. Teachers also show a good level of awareness of individuals' needs and cater for them well. Students with visual impairment are well supported by adapted materials and help from teaching assistants. Some lower attaining students, however, are not covered by the support arrangements, and run the risk of not developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills well enough to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Also, some of the provision for some groups of students may not always be wholly appropriate. For example, bottom sets in Years 7 to 9 are following the Literacy Progress Units, which are pitched at too high a level for some students.

25. The provision for personal and social education is good. During the inspection the teaching was good. Management of the provision is good. Apart from the separate personal and social education lessons in Years 10 and 11, form tutors teach the subject from Year 7 to Year 11. Form tutors move with their class through the college and this adds continuity to this area of provision. Schemes of work meet the needs of students as they develop and mature. A wide range of outside speakers and agencies support and enhance the overall provision.

26. Careers education and guidance is taught as part of the tutorial programme. The college has strong links with the Connexions Service and these impartial experts from outside the college provide good additional support to the guidance offered by tutors. All students undertake one week's work experience with the option to take up a second week as a preliminary to returning for sixth form studies. A number of specific work placements are arranged for those students who follow vocational courses. The links between the college and the Universities of Lincoln and Cambridge play a significant role in raising students' aspirations.

27. Much good work has been undertaken in developing whole college, cross curricular strategies to tackle the needs of gifted and talented students, the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, special educational needs and ICT across the curriculum. There is now a need to develop more coherent approaches to these topics by setting clear roles for middle managers to ensure these policies are implemented and good practice is identified and shared across the college.

28. A very good programme of extra curricular activities substantially enhances students' opportunities for participation in the arts and sport. There is a considerable and popular programme in which a large majority of students participate. The college has representative teams in all the major sports and offers a wide range of lunch time club opportunities. Teams and clubs operate throughout the year and are available to all students. A significant number of students gain local and regional representative honours. A programme of intra-college activities further enhances participation in the arts and sport. Teachers give generously of their time to support participation in the arts and sport. The college undertakes theatre visits and field study trips in a number of subjects enables students to enrich their knowledge and understanding of these areas.

29. Overall, accommodation and learning resources are good and staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach. The college environment is attractive and well maintained with clear signs to guide visitors. The litter-free site is characterised by mature trees and shrubs that separate the subject blocks and other on-site facilities which serve the wider community. Students benefit from the well-designed paths, paved areas and seating that have a positive effect on the behaviour and learning environment. The students are protected by a CCTV system. Some measures are in place to provide disabled access but there is more to be done. A solution to the lack of dining facilities mentioned in the last inspection report has not been found and the use of classrooms for this purpose is still unsatisfactory.

30. The curriculum provision for Business and Enterprise Status is very good. The curriculum proposals as set out in the submissions are novel and exciting and have been introduced into the curriculum from the start of the current term. The core aim is to promote contact with people who are inventors and innovators to show students what imagination and initiative can achieve in the individual and the economy. The Assistant Principal has made very good progress in a short period of time translating the bold ideas into practical curriculum projects to impact upon students' learning. Working with the local Young Enterprise co-ordinator, there are proposals for a curriculum link with local primary schools and for progression to be built into this with the Year 7 schemes of work, just beginning to be implemented. There are proposals for a Project Business course with Year 10 students composed of a number of modules, built around business and enterprise skills, which set out to show that self-employment is in itself an exciting career option. This complements the college's wider plans for increasing flexibility for 14 to 19 year old students.

31. The business curriculum in Year 7 began this term. Its main purpose is to show how human enterprise and endeavour has a capacity to enrich and transform people's lives. This is coupled with knowledge and understanding of key business concepts – profitability, the rate of return on capital, etc – so that business analysis tools are developed alongside. The Personal Effectiveness Programme Initiative is intended to develop key skills across the curriculum and particularly in teamwork and self-organisation. In these lessons, teaching, learning and achievement are good. Lessons are well planned, contain interesting and thought provoking scenarios for students to consider; students readily concentrate on their work and work at a good pace to complete the tasks they are set. The students' study planners contain pages dedicated to logging progress on this. Resources for the project are being used to create curriculum resources, such as DVDs or videos, which will contain life stories of entrepreneurs, the successes they have had, and also the barriers they have met and how these have been overcome. Plans to assess the impact of these initiatives on learning are being developed in conjunction with the University of Lincoln's Enterprise Research Development Unit.

Sixth form

32. The sixth form curriculum is very good. As well as a wide range of A level subjects, the college offers several vocational courses through GNVQ and AVCE accreditation. The timetable is constructed to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of individual students. Great efforts are made to provide appropriate progression routes for students from the ages of 14 to 19. Governors have used their available finances wisely to protect the breadth of curriculum provision when the numbers of students in the year groups moving through the college was low. Students can progress from foundation level work in Years 10 and 11, to intermediate work in Year 12 and then move to advanced level work at the ages of 18 and 19. The general studies programme includes the statutory religious education provision and provides a range of activities including talks by guest speakers. The personal and social education programme is good and the counselling relating to careers and higher education courses is very good. Enrichment opportunities are very good and provide opportunities such as Community Sports Leaders' Award, inventor in residence, business dynamics day, World Challenge outward bound, and educational links with Sweden.

33. Particularly good arrangements are made for students following courses in intermediate leisure and tourism and advanced travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. Units with similar themes are skilfully taught to mixed classes of Year 12 and 13 students. These arrangements greatly broaden the choices available to students.

Care, guidance and support

Students are very well supported. The college has very good health and safety and child protection procedures. The advice, guidance and support given to students is good in the main college and very good for students in the sixth form. Students' views are valued and there are good opportunities for them to participate in the work of the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of care and welfare are high.
- Relationships throughout the college are very good.
- The support and guidance that is provided is very good.
- There are good induction arrangements for students entering Year 7.
- The guidance on careers and further educational opportunities is good.
- The college values the views of students.

Commentary

34. The pastoral teams support their students very well, value their views and create a caring ethos that encourages students to do their best. The quality of the relationships throughout the college is a significant strength. The support and guidance provided is good for all students. Form tutors know their tutees very well and play a major role in monitoring their progress throughout the school. They teach the personal and social education programme to their tutor group and so make a significant contribution to their personal development. The focus on health and safety is rigorous and the procedures for dealing with child protection issues are effective.

35. There are good and well-established procedures for the induction of new students when they transfer from the feeder primary schools. As well as good support from their tutors they have nominated sixth form students as mentors to help them adjust quickly to their new environment. All students have access to good quality support and guidance as they progress through the college and this contributes significantly to the raising of students' aspirations.

36. There are good opportunities for students to gain a knowledge and understanding of business and industry through a wide range of business related subjects, whole college enterprise activities, work experience in Years 10 and 12, visiting speakers, careers conventions and links with both the wider business community and international organisations.

Sixth form

37. The support and guidance provided is very good. They receive high quality counselling regarding their sixth form education from both their teachers at the college and the Connexions Service in Years 10 and 11. Student progress is well tracked and they are very well supported in their preparation for later stages of education or employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between the college and parents is very good but the relationship and involvement with the wider community is excellent and a major strength. The college has put itself at the heart of its community and provides an extensive range of leisure, educational and social activities. The outreach to other schools and colleges is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college makes an outstanding contribution to the local community.
- The extended educational opportunities arising from its special status as a business and enterprise college are very good.

Commentary

38. Branston College is a true community college with outstanding community links and facilities. The college has placed itself at the heart of its community by providing an extensive range of adult education courses, family learning programmes, public sporting and leisure facilities, an active youth centre, a crèche for staff and members of the public, a public library with Internet access and incorporating a 'Learn Direct Centre'. The college facilitates distance-learning projects and, with the support of its sixth form students, provides a free home delivery library service to the elderly and disabled members of the community. The community work of the college is a model of excellent practice. The achievement of specialist status as a 'Business and Enterprise College' is perceived by the college as an opportunity to even further develop its involvement in the wider community.

39. The extended educational opportunities arising from its special status as a business and enterprise college are very good. The college philosophy is that an "educated person is an enterprising person". The college has well established links with local companies who support the college well through activities such as a two-day industry conference and work experience. Adults from three local companies have worked with a pilot group of students to develop their basic skills in Year 7 and this is now extending into Years 7 and 8. Expertise from the local Education Business Partnership and Young Enterprise is being purchased by the college to develop the enterprise culture with feeder primary school children to provide curriculum continuity when they join the college. All staff have benefited from a one day teacher placement as a result of which their experiences have been translated into curriculum materials for their subject area. The school is working closely with the Professor of Enterprise and Innovation from a local University to develop the curriculum links with local companies further and links are well developed at an international level through inter-school working and visits to a school in Sweden and through European work experience opportunities.

40. The partnership between the college and its parent body is very good. There are good lines of communication between the college and parents that keep them informed about their children's progress and provide guidance on the curriculum. The college consults with parents over major issues, for example changes to the college uniform and the application to become a college with specialist status. However, in recent years the college has not routinely sought the views of parents and this is clearly reflected in the response in the parents pre-inspection questionnaires.

41. The links between the college and other primary and secondary schools and colleges are very good and well established. There is close liaison and support provided to seven local primary schools for mathematics and technology. Branston College is the 'Pathfinder' leader school and therefore manages the financial allocation for business and enterprise activities in eight other secondary schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the college is good, with much that is either very good or excellent. Governance of the college overall is very good and outstanding in the way that it helps to shape the vision and direction of the college. The leadership of the head teacher is good overall but outstanding in his clarity of vision for the college, sense of purpose and drive to promote excellence. The leadership of other key staff is good overall and very good in promoting high aspirations for the students. The management of the college is good and particularly effective in securing high standards of staff performance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good governing body brings a considerable range of professional skills and experience to the college.
- The drive, energy and breadth of perspective of the principal, particularly in leading the college's bid to become recognised as a Business and Enterprise College and to gain Enterprise Pathfinder status.
- The effectiveness of the procedures for well-focused strategic planning and evaluation.
- There are very good procedures for appointing and developing staff.
- The day-to-day management of special educational needs is good.
- The sixth form is well led and managed.
- Some, but not all, heads of department are setting targets beyond current expectations and their teams are working well with students to help them attain higher levels of success.
- Heads of department are good managers but there is a need to define and enhance their role in order to empower them to provide higher levels of leadership and management.
- The need for more coherent whole college approaches to provision for: gifted and talented students; implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy; special educational needs; ICT across the curriculum; sharing good practice

Commentary

42. Major factors in the successful development and progress of the college in recent years have been the drive, energy and breadth of perspective of the principal, a highly supportive college management team and a thoroughly committed and effective governing body. Embedded in the college's practice is a deep commitment to the 'genuine all-round comprehensive that meets local community education needs, a passion for quality control and an objective use of performance management to secure the best possible standards of teaching'. The college has obtained considerable recognition for its leading edge practice in monitoring and managing performance.

43. The governors are an impressive group who bring a considerable range of professional skills and experience to the college. They are highly effective in holding the head teacher and his colleagues to account and fulfil their statutory duties and other responsibilities very well. They ensure that all major budget decisions are closely linked to educational priorities. Because of their long-term strategy for budget management they have been able to smooth out budget variations and maintain provision through difficult times. They had to dig deeply into the reserves to ensure the quality of sixth form provision and to balance the income deficits of the current year and the current carry forward will be needed for this purpose over next two years.

44. The Principal provides drive, energy and breadth of perspective to the developments at the college. The principal "unashamedly does not teach, believing that his role is to be analytical, creative and determined at the level of strategy, overall control and future gazing". An impressive range of onsite facilities and community links have been developed over many years to provide an enriched curriculum for the students and enhanced facilities for the local community, such as a nursery, library and a wide range of adult education programmes. His clear vision, grounded in a set of exciting and practically based ideas, has led to the college gaining Business and Enterprise Status. He has gained the confidence of the chief executives of "blue-chip" companies who provide sponsorship, the enthusiasm of the senior leadership team and the heads of the lead subjects and the commitment from all staff to embed the business and enterprise culture throughout the curriculum.

45. The college's vision and aims, based on local needs, are reflected in high quality and well focused strategic development planning. The current three-year plan provides an effective framework for linking together the key initiatives associated with the business and enterprise status, the enterprise pathfinder project and community education developments. There are good links to performance management, college review, departmental developments and the local education authority's and Local Learning and Skills Council's wider plans. More explicit links between planning,

the strengths and weaknesses of the college and raising the attainment and aspirations of the students will improve procedures further. Self-evaluation is very well embedded in the culture of the college and a regular 'Moderated college self-review' process is undertaken in collaboration with the local education authority. The college's approach to self-evaluation is used as a model by the local education authority for supporting good practice elsewhere. The college is particularly effective in reviewing the performance of teachers.

46. The college is clear that the real 'driver of achievement' is the quality of the day-to-day interaction between teachers and students and the college has striven to secure a good match of well-qualified teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. Provision for the induction of new staff, teaching and non-teaching, and for the continuing professional development of all staff, is very good. Staff development is well funded and focuses are identified from performance management and from the college's development plan. All staff have professional development portfolios. Newly qualified teachers' training needs are well met. All staff have participated in placements in industry as part of the college's commitment to enterprise. The college has taken courageous steps to ensure the successful recruitment and deployment of staff. Performance management is used very effectively for bringing about improvements. There is a clear determination by the managerial team to carry through the challenges of personnel management that this sometimes presents. The college's bottom line is that, ultimately, students' needs outweigh staff needs.

47. Departments and subject areas are mostly well led, with especially good leadership evident in English, design and technology, physical education and science. Appointment criteria include the ability to innovate and lead; the success of this is evident in much of the work of the college. The senior management team plays an effective role in leading, motivating, supporting, challenging and developing staff and this has resulted in the creation of effective subject and pastoral teams. Sound steps are being taken towards the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy into the college. The English department has been identified by the local education authority as a lead department for national strategy developments. However, there is a need more actively to empower subject and department leaders to draw on and share their expertise and exercise their leadership skills in:

- providing higher levels of leadership and management.
- further developing the consistency of the college's approaches to provision for gifted and talented students, special educational needs, ICT across the curriculum and the sharing of good practice.
- implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy approaches to teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- translating data analysed by the senior team into curriculum action points and ensuring that sufficiently challenging targets are consistently set for students.

48. The day-to-day management of special educational needs is good. Teachers' records clearly identify the needs of individual students. The requirements of the new Code of Practice are clearly well understood. The statutory requirements for provision for these students are met and resources for their education are used effectively. There are examples of very good support for these students from teaching assistants. Pastoral support throughout the college is very good. The college works closely with the Connexions Service to provide high quality alternative work-related learning opportunities for the small minority of students for whom the normal range of provision is inappropriate. Since the phased closure of the Centre, there has been insufficient strategic support to all subject areas to develop further the curriculum provision for students with special educational needs.

Sixth form

49. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The head of sixth form is relatively new in post but is already providing effective leadership for taking this area of the college's work forward. He has a clear view for the way ahead and is actively developing informal links with other heads of sixth form. He is well supported by other senior managers. There are good links with the Connexions Service, Further and Higher Education, and local businesses to help students to identify the best routes forward. A strong feature is the extent to which the college seeks to make flexible provision around the needs of the students, despite the staffing and timetabling challenges that this

presents. There is good provision of A and AS courses and a steadily increasing range of intermediate vocational courses, linked to the college's business and enterprise development. There is a good focus on the progress of individual students, with prior performance, chances graphs and current achievement in class being used to assess progress and set targets each half term. Overall costs for the sixth form, allowing for a £52,000 clawback by the Local Learning and Skills Council, reflect a slightly lower proportion of the whole college budget than is warranted by overall student numbers and teaching periods. This indicates good value for money. For the time being, the college's budget surplus is being used to sustain sixth form costs due to the presence of a lower than normal-sized cohort of students passing through. The college is aware that effective post-16 provision is vital to its future success and has been carefully managing available resources in order to be in a position to secure future developments.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2 826 430*	Balance from previous year	722 447
Total expenditure	2 912 928*	Balance carried forward to the next	635 949
Expenditure per student	2 648		

Example of outstanding practice

The Principal is outstanding in his clarity of vision for the college, sense of purpose and drive to promote excellence.

The Principal states that his role is to be "analytical, creative and determined at the level of strategy, overall control and future gazing". His leadership of teaching and the curriculum is good and he has played a highly successful part in developing the college's Business and Enterprise provision. He has effectively ensured that quality teachers are recruited and retained and that there is an over-riding focus on student achievement throughout the college. A valuable and impressive range of onsite facilities and community links have been developed with the dual intentions of providing an enriched curriculum for the students and enhanced facilities for the local community, especially in the area of life long learning. The college provides an extensive range of adult education courses, family learning programmes, public sporting and leisure facilities, an active youth centre, a nursery for children of staff and members of the public, a public library with Internet access and incorporating a 'Learn Direct Centre'. The college successfully facilitates distance-learning projects and, with the support of its sixth form students, provides a free home delivery library service to the elderly and disabled members of the community.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The levels of attainment achieved in Years 7 to 9 are high.
- The effective leadership and management of the department have produced a corporate approach from a large department.
- The quality of the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 is good.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The management of classrooms and behaviour is very good.
- The use of the end of lesson review in the majority of lessons needs to be developed so that students have more opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt.
- Target setting and tracking of students' progress need to be more explicit and more consistent across the department so that students have a better understanding of how to improve.
- The use of ICT in the English curriculum is underdeveloped.

50. Overall standards of attainment in English are in line with national averages. In 2002, Year 9 test results in English were above the national averages and well above the averages for similar schools based on prior attainment. The percentage of students gaining Level 6 was high compared with similar schools. Year 9 results have increased sharply since the last inspection. In 2002, in GCSE English, results were broadly in line with national averages. The performance of girls is slightly better than the performance of girls nationally while boys perform less well than boys do nationally. The percentage of students achieving the higher grades A* and A is significantly lower than that found nationally. In English Literature, A*-C grades were in line with national averages for all students.

51. Work seen during the inspection reflects the overall picture provided by test and examination results. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Good teaching and effective leadership and management are helping to raise standards.

52. Students of all abilities achieve well. In speaking and listening, by Year 9, the highest attaining students participate confidently in discussions and ask questions to develop their ideas. Lower attaining students are less adept at refining their ideas. In reading, by Year 9, the highest attaining students are able to identify the main themes in texts they are reading and are able to discuss character and motivation with relevant references to the text. Lower attaining students tend to comment on plot and main events. In writing, by Year 9, the highest attaining students write in a wide range of forms and adopt the style of texts they have studied. Lower attaining students are far less able to make significant changes to their writing.

53. In speaking and listening by Year 11, most students are keen to participate in discussions and build on each other's contributions. Only a small number of students are reticent and make little contribution to discussions. In reading, by Year 11, the highest attaining students are able to read for meaning beneath the surface in order to ascertain characters' feelings. Year 11 students who had been reading 'An Inspector Calls' were thus able to succinctly summarise Mr Birling's relationship with the other characters and to identify his motivations with close reference to the text. Lower attaining students have far more difficulty identifying authors' intentions. In writing by Year 11 the

most successful students are able to vary register and style for an increasingly varied range of purposes. Lower attaining students experience difficulty with the organisation of their writing.

54. The quality of teaching is good overall. The vast majority of lessons were satisfactory or better and over half of lessons were good or very good. Although there is no significant difference in the teaching of different year groups, teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is most successful there is very good planning, high expectations and a clear lesson structure which allows for step-by-step development of the lesson. Most lessons include a good range of activities that ensure that students are engaged and interested. In the best lessons, what students are to learn is made explicit to the students and returned to both during and at the end of the lesson and students are given opportunities to collaborate with others during the main part of the lesson. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the class divided into two groups to plan a dramatic representation of the feud between the Capulet and Montague families in 'Romeo and Juliet'. As a result, students were well able to discuss in detail the impact of language, tone and gesture in the opening scenes of the play. Close attention is paid to the development of speaking and listening skills. There are very good relationships between teachers and students.

55. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of clarity in the setting of tasks so that students are unsure what is expected of them. On occasions the end of lesson review session is rushed and insufficient time is given to reflection and reinforcement of the learning that has taken place. Although many of the lessons seen were characterised by the setting of time limits for individual tasks occasionally the pace became slow in the latter part of the lessons.

56. Marking and the quality of day-to-day assessment are inconsistent. Whilst there is some very good practice whereby work is marked rigorously against assessment criteria and helpful targets for improvement are set, the extent and quality is variable across the department.

57. The response of students to the teaching they receive is very good. They work very well in pairs and small groups but are also able to concentrate very well when working on their own. Behaviour is very good. There is an evident enjoyment of the subject which is demonstrated by students' willingness to participate in all activities, even those that they find particularly challenging.

58. The provision for social and moral development of students is good with many opportunities for discussion of important issues. The use of ICT in the English curriculum is underdeveloped. The department has a policy for ICT but the implementation of the policy is restricted by difficulties over access to facilities. Drama is taught satisfactorily as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11 and as part of the English curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

59. Leadership of the department is very good and management is effective. A good illustration of the effectiveness of the Head of Department is the way in which the significant issues in the last English report, the lack of curriculum planning and the lack of shared resources, have been eradicated in the short time that she has been in post. Following a period of instability in the department appropriate priorities have been set, all of which are clearly focused on raising attainment. There is very good morale in this well-informed, hardworking and committed department and a common approach to the teaching of the subject. English is taught in a range of classrooms across the site, it is a major achievement therefore that a corporate ethos has been established. The English strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been successfully implemented and the good practice in the department has been recognised in the local education authority as a model for others.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Standards of literacy are sufficient to support learning across the curriculum. Speaking and listening skills are well developed and allow discussions to take place at a level that extends subject understanding. Reading skills are good and accordingly enable students to read a variety of types of text and locate and use information from different sources. The technical competency in writing

demonstrated by the majority of students is such that they are able to cope with the writing demands of assignments in different curriculum areas.

61. The teaching of literacy in different subjects is satisfactory overall. Good opportunities are provided for speaking and listening in many areas of the curriculum with particularly good discussion work occurring in design and technology, physical education and business education. Good structured paired conversations in modern foreign languages ensure that students quickly become confident users of the language they have learnt and close attention is paid to grammatical terminology. In GNVQ Leisure and Tourism, Year 10 students produced good quality presentations as a result of skilful questioning by their teacher. In Year 8 religious education students studying the Ten Commandments were asked to consider the modern equivalents of the Old English terms. Key words and subject specific vocabulary are displayed and regularly referred to in many classrooms. There is growing use of structured approaches to writing. The setting of extended writing tasks is less well developed although good examples occur in design and technology and history. The structure and pace of many lessons across the curriculum supports the development of good listening skills.

62. The provision for developing literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Although the college does not have a literacy co-ordinator, it has produced a whole college literacy policy and departments have produced subject specific policy statements some of which are very detailed and thorough.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Good teaching is promoting good learning and starting to impact on results.
- Leadership and management are good
- Teachers should share good practice more across the department.
- Marking is regular and thorough, but marking criteria could be shared more explicitly with students, related more closely to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grade criteria, and applied more consistently across the department.

Commentary

63. In 2002 the percentage of students in Year 9 gaining expected levels in a modern foreign language in the National Curriculum was below average. However, it has steadily improved over the last three years. Indications are that this improvement has been sustained in 2003.

64. Standards reached by students in Year 11 in French in 2002 were well below national averages. There is improvement over previous years which has been sustained into 2003. In German, although standards were below national averages in 2002, there was a more significant improvement compared to previous years. The number of students entered for the examination was small. This improvement has also been sustained into 2003 with a comparably small entry. Latest results obtained by students in Year 10 in their module examinations indicate that this improvement has been maintained in both languages, with students on track to perform close to national averages in 2004. The gap between boys' and girls' performance has been considerably reduced. The standards of work seen in Years 9 and 11 are now in line with national averages.

65. In Years 7 to 9 students' overall achievement is good. Higher attaining students achieve well by the end of Year 9, while for lower attaining students achievement is satisfactory. Higher attaining students can produce extended writing, referring to present, past and future events, and use more complex sentences. They have a broad base of vocabulary and can express personal opinions. For

students with special educational needs achievement is also satisfactory because staff try to ensure that they are working to capacity, and support them well.

66. In Years 10 and 11 achievement overall is good for those students who continue to learn a modern foreign language. It is better in German than in French, because students learning German are mostly higher attaining. The modular examination results show that standards are now higher, reflecting the much improved staffing situation.

67. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise. In the good lessons, what the students are to learn is clear and shared with students; teachers use the foreign language extensively to give students a good model; there is a variety of activity and grouping which keeps students interested and engaged; material is well matched to students' needs; the lesson is taught at pace; teachers know about the different ways in which students learn. There were examples of involving students actively in their learning, such as sticking cards on the board or using songs, chorus work or gesture to reinforce vocabulary learning, and some use of activities to improve the way students think. As a result, learning is better. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. Teachers cater well for students' particular needs, for example visual or hearing impairment, with specially adapted materials and very good support from teaching assistants. Consequently they achieve as well as other students in their class. Teachers should now share this good practice more across the department.

68. The leadership and management shown by the subject head are good. He is a good classroom practitioner who has developed a shared vision for the subject. The combination of stable staffing and clearer direction has resulted in a more cohesive team, and this is bearing fruit. Results are improving because they monitor teaching and track students' progress. Teachers' understanding of National Curriculum levels and examination requirements is better, so their assessment of students is more accurate. Thus they are better able to focus their teaching. Marking is regular and thorough, but could be linked more closely to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grade criteria so that students have a better idea of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. Also, the setting of individual student targets for improvement could be more consistent across all staff. Documentation is better organised. Schemes of work are appropriately pitched and sequenced, but should make reference to the use of ICT.

69. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching, systems for monitoring teaching are in place, if not fully developed, and the issue of boys' motivation has been tackled through work on learning styles and the use of a modular examination. Although these developments have yet to feed through into significantly improved results, underlying trends are positive and the overall provision is now good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and work, and have good relationships with students.
- Some teaching has very good features within lessons which should be shared with other colleagues.
- There are parts of some lessons where teaching does not make fully effective use of time.
- In some classes students are not often challenged to think hard about and discuss mathematics concepts and the relationships between them.

Commentary

70. Overall, students' performance in Year 9 national tests in 2002 was slightly above national averages. Despite a dip in 2000, the trend since the last inspection has been broadly in line with national trends. Compared to their mathematics attainment on entry, which is slightly below the national average, these results represent good progress and good achievement for Years 7 to 9.

71. In GCSE mathematics, overall results are generally in line with national averages. However, though it fell in 2003, in previous years the percentage of students who gained a grade A* to C has been considerably higher than the national average. Compared to their performance in Year 9 tests, but particularly compared to their standards on entry to the college, this represents good achievement. The lowest attaining students are now being entered for an entry level qualification, which has improved their motivation and is leading to higher attainment for this group.

72. The standards of work seen reflect the Year 9 test and GCSE examination results.

73. The quality of teaching and learning from Year 7 to Year 11 is good. There are examples of whole lessons where teaching and learning are very good throughout, but it is more common for teaching and learning to include some very good features. For example, some lessons include starter activities where time is used very effectively to reinforce skills, some ensure students very clearly understand the real situation being described by the mathematics, and others run smoothly because of firm but unobtrusive behaviour management techniques which keep low attaining students engaged in learning. In some the students are challenged to give longer and more thoughtful answers to questions rather than just words or short phrases, while in others the teacher works hard to ensure all students are engaged in thinking about the questions being asked. Most lessons have very clear learning objectives. Teachers know their subject well. They insist on high standards of behaviour and work, and have good relationships with students.

74. It is rare that learning is unsatisfactory even in a particular phase of a lesson. When this does occur, the reason is usually because of an ineffective use of time.

75. Teachers are working hard to implement the recommendations of the Key Stage 3 national strategy, and most lessons have a three-part lesson structure. Main activities are generally good, but teachers create too few opportunities to make students think hard, explore concepts and the links between them, and to expose and challenge misconceptions. This is because the use of challenging questions and brief opportunities for students to check their ideas with others is insufficient. "Plenary" sessions are sometimes used to explore, consolidate and extend learning at the end of a lesson, as well as check answers and give homework, but this is relatively rare.

76. Overall, assessment is good, taking place at an appropriate range of time scales. Teachers do not often write extended comments in students' books, because their preferred technique is to take into account any errors and misconceptions in their planning for the next lesson. Over the medium term, progress is maintained and assessed by the sensible use of end-of-module tests.

77. The leadership and management of the department are both good. The inspection comes at a time when the leadership has just changed and the new head of mathematics is still learning about the department. However the support she is receiving from senior management is good, and so the good leadership and management of the department is being maintained. The department makes good use of the internal college data that is available to monitor its performance and takes action to remedy any shortcomings identified. It also uses a good process for setting individual targets for students in Key Stage 4. The college has planned good mathematics links with partner primary schools.

78. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been few changes of staff, standards have risen broadly in line with national trends, and students' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained. There are now good schemes of work in Key Stage 4.

Mathematics across the curriculum

79. Students show good standards of mathematics in other subjects across the curriculum, for example in business education and design and technology. They show particular strengths in geography and science, for example when in Year 11 they draw very careful and accurate graphs of resistance and wire length.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good, students learn and achieve very well.
- The management of the department is strongly focussed on raising achievement.
- Relationships in lessons are very good so that students are interested in science and behave well.
- Assessment systems are very thorough and are used particularly well to support students who are underachieving.
- In some lessons opportunities for students to work independently are missed.
- More equipment is needed to increase the use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

80. In 2002 results in tests at the end of Year 9 were at the national average but below average when compared with the students' prior attainment. In 2003 results improved substantially so that the overall trend is now one of improvement. Targets for Year 9 were exceeded in 2003 and show that students' performance was above average. In the GCSE examination in 2002 results were above the national average and well above average when compared with students' prior attainment. Results improved considerably in 2003, they are consistently well above average and are improving well. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, do equally well. The standards of work seen are in line with the Year 9 test and GCSE examination results.

81. During lessons and in tests and examinations students' achievements are good between Years 7 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Investigative skills develop very well and students gain high levels or grades. Students develop a clear understanding of difficult concepts about energy transformation in Year 7, chemical changes and predator-prey relationships. Practical skills improve and students learn to work carefully and safely in laboratories. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are good; they listen carefully and write accurately. Graphs and calculations about speed or the products of chemical reactions in Year 11 are done well. ICT is used in a variety of ways including data-logging to measure sound levels and a simulation programme about speed and slopes. The small number of modern computers in the department limits its use.

82. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good and clearly shows the effect of the work done to introduce the Key Stage 3 Strategy; during Years 10 and 11 it is very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. In all lessons in Years 7 to 9 relationships are very good so that students work hard and enjoy their lessons. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good. Their instructions are clear and as a result students know what to do and succeed with the tasks they are given. In a demanding Year 8 lesson students separated metals from non-metals identifying the patterns in a large amount of data. They made very good progress in their learning about scientific methods as well as about the materials they examined. In this lesson the teacher's expectations of students' behaviour and rate of work were high.

83. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 challenges pupils' thinking through well-planned question and answer sessions that require careful explanations of difficult ideas, for example, about energy release when atoms lose electrons. Very high expectations and excellent planning for a group of

Year 11 low ability students in a lesson about chemical reactions led to excellent progress in their understanding of the reactions of metals. Very good subject knowledge with skilful use of questions that needed explanations ensured that learning about movement of nutrients in the phloem was good. A strong feature of all lessons is the support and encouragement provided for students which leads to their obvious enjoyment of science.

84. In some lessons teaching lacked variety, opportunities for independent work were missed and more could have been learned in a lesson about hormones if a variety of sources were available for students to use for research.

85. Leadership and management of the science department are very good. The department's development plan accurately identifies priorities for improvement, there is a strong emphasis on raising standards and this has been done very successfully particularly during Years 7 to 9. Assessment systems for collecting marks and test results are very good and they are used very well to identify and provide support so that the work of underachieving students improves. Good teamwork improves teaching but systematic monitoring of teaching is limited. The curriculum is well organised with a strong emphasis on investigative work so that students are well prepared for their GCSE coursework and do it well. During Years 7 to 9 well prepared homework and other course books with a new curriculum have ensured that students are well taught and prepared for tests; as a result standards rose in 2003. These improvements, the rising standards in tests and examinations and the very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 reflect the good improvement since the last inspection.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 11 lesson about elements and compounds, excellent planning ensured students worked very hard and enjoyed doing so.

They learned how to co-operate with each other as well as learning the practical skills and scientific knowledge needed to carry out reactions with copper and magnesium. This happened because the teacher's explanations of the students' tasks were very clear so that the students tackled them confidently. They assembled equipment quickly and responsibly. Questions about the structure of atoms were demanding but very sympathetically matched to their needs and congratulations raised students' morale and kept their interest so that all behaved well and completed their work. They learned in detail about the structure of atoms and about the reactions of metals and their achievements were very good. Excellent planning included a variety of activities, some of which recognised the students' needs to learn to spell and write accurately. Throughout the lesson the teacher's strong insistence on careful listening and excellent behaviour made the classroom a place in which all students worked hard and enjoyed doing so. To replicate this lesson a teacher's planning needs to be excellent.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of separate ICT lessons for Years 7 to 9 provides better opportunities for students to develop their skills and knowledge and has raised the profile of ICT.
- The introduction of GNVQ ICT as an option for Years 10 and 11 gives students the opportunity to study a vocational course and they achieve well.
- The new head of department has provided clear leadership and management in a short time.
- There is very good technical support for GNVQ teachers and students: this contributes to the good teaching, learning and achievement.
- Opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in ICT for students in Years 10 and 11 who do not study ICT GNVQ are limited.
- Provision of ICT is inconsistent across some subjects.

Commentary

86. Standards, as judged by teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, are above the national averages. However, the standards of work seen in lessons, and in the scrutiny of work for students in Years 7 to 9, indicate that by the end of Year 9, students' ICT skills and knowledge are average. This represents satisfactory achievement, given that students enter the college with average attainment in ICT.

87. By the end of Year 9 students use word processing creatively to display work, use the Internet well for researching topics, and have developed skills in the use of computer aided design and manufacture. Higher attaining students have clear understanding of presenting material for a wide range of audiences, particularly in relation to business applications. Lower attaining students display good technical skills but do not always complete their work thoroughly.

88. In 2003, of those students entered for GNVQ ICT, 83 per cent gained a pass or better, with 22 per cent gaining merits, and 6 per cent gaining distinctions. These results compare favourably with all other subjects in the college. Girls did better than boys.

89. By the end of Year 11, overall achievement is satisfactory. Those students who study GNVQ ICT, have well developed practical skills and show confidence using a wide range of software packages. They have a good understanding of the uses of computers. The achievement of these students is good. Those students who study other vocational courses with high ICT content make good use of word processing and animated packages to present their work, use the Internet effectively for research, and some students use spreadsheets to present numerical data and to produce graphs. The achievement of these students is satisfactory. There is a small number of students who make limited use of ICT, other than researching topics on the Internet and word processing coursework, whose achievement is unsatisfactory.

90. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, with some good and very good examples. When teaching is good or better, teachers structure lessons well and capture students' interest, using a wide range of activities. In some lessons, where teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory, there is a lack of variety and pace so that some students become restless and concentration is lost. Most students have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. However, in a minority of lessons, some Year 9 boys present challenging behaviour which disrupts the learning of others in the class. Teachers work hard to hold students' concentration.

91. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning for students studying GNVQ ICT are good, with some very good examples. Students are engaged in a variety of activities because the course is well planned and resourced. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive. The pace of learning is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Marking and assessment for this course are good. Students are aware of the level at which they are learning, and they are clear about what they need to do to improve. For those students who do not study GNVQ ICT the teaching and learning of ICT is through other subjects and teaching and learning are satisfactory. In these cases, marking and assessment of work, and feedback to students, are generally based on content relating to the subject being studied, and do not always indicate to students how they can improve or extend their ICT skills.

92. Leadership and management are overall satisfactory. The new head of department has set out a clear vision and direction. He has put in place, in a very short time, a number of policies and schemes of work which are designed to improve teaching and learning. He has implemented a new system of assessment for students in Years 7 to 9. This supplements the existing college system, so that students are aware of the national curriculum levels at which they are working, and they are given good advice about what needs to be done to improve their ICT knowledge and skills.

93. The support and advice given to teachers and students by technical staff are very good. This contributes to the good teaching, learning and achievement. Accommodation is good, although the ventilation in some of the older computer rooms is inadequate and does not allow students to work in

comfort. Some subject leaders have identified access to computer rooms as limiting the use of ICT to support learning in their areas. Students are encouraged to use computer facilities at lunchtime and after college.

94. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Accommodation has been extended, separate lessons in ICT for students in Years 7 to 9 provide better opportunities for students to develop their skills and knowledge, and the introduction of GNVQ ICT as an option for Years 10 and 11 gives students the opportunity to study a vocational course. Links with local primary schools have been extended. Students and teachers from these schools use the college facilities for ICT lessons.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

95. The planned programme for using ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is inconsistently applied. Some subjects provide a good range of experiences for students in all years. Effective use is made of computers in business studies, health and social care, design and technology, physical education and geography. Computers are used for word processing coursework, and the Internet is used effectively to research topics, in several subject areas. However, although the resources have improved since the last inspection and number of computers are in line with national averages, they are insufficient to ensure all subjects have easy access to facilities. English, science and music do not make enough use of ICT to support learning in their areas. Use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. Students are given advice on how to improve ICT skills and knowledge in ICT lessons, but it is rarely provided when other subjects are using ICT to support learning in their areas.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and management of the department provide a clear and consistent strategic direction.
- The wide range of field work activities that are offered in all years enable students to enrich their understanding of geographical concepts.
- The quality of display in classrooms celebrates the success of students, adds to understanding and successfully raises aspirations.
- The contribution that the department makes to the teaching of vocational courses in allied subjects enriches curricular opportunities in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of assessment and target setting processes ensure that the students have ownership of the process needs to be implemented consistently by all staff.
- The very good practice that exists in the department should be shared more so that it is consistently applied across all classes.

Commentary

96. The standards reached by students at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2002. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that these standards have been maintained.

97. GCSE results were well below national averages both in terms of those students achieving grades A* - C and A or A* grades. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls were in line with national patterns. Staffing difficulties including long term absence and the lack of a specialist teacher had a deleterious effect on results. Preliminary analysis of the GCSE results for 2003 combined with

observation of students' work during the inspection suggests that standards are now at least in line with national expectations.

98. Achievement is good overall. The achievement of the majority of students is in line with expectations in terms of their ability and their prior learning. Progress is good in Years 7 to 9 and there are a number of examples of students achieving above expectations. Year 7 students gaining an understanding of scale; Year 9 students discovering the relationships between indicators of development and Year 8 students extending their understanding of earthquakes through imaginative writing were examples of good achievement.

99. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons begin promptly and clear learning outcomes are set. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, they convey their enthusiasm to their classes and they use a range of teaching methods to stimulate the students. Expectations of students are high both in terms of the amount and quality of work that should be completed and in terms of attitudes and behaviour. Teaching was good, very good or excellent in most of the lessons that were observed. A Year 11 class working on methods of displaying and interpreting correlations demanded and obtained high standards from all students through careful setting of objectives, strict monitoring of learning across the full ability range and good choice and timing of activities. In unsatisfactory lessons tasks were insufficiently adapted to engage all students, expectations were too low and student attention and behaviour deteriorated. Learning that built by stages upon work done previously was most secure and led to good achievement by students. The attitude and behaviour of students was good in almost all lessons.

100. The department has a clear policy on marking and assessment. When this policy was implemented fully, students were clear about the standard that they had reached and what they needed to do to improve further. In a small number of lessons, the implementation of the policy was inconsistent. The sharing of the very good practice that is evident within the department so that it is universal will raise the overall achievement through encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.

101. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is a very good role model and the members of the department contribute fully to the team effort. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed but not so prescriptive that they constrain teachers who are encouraged to bring their own experiences and enthusiasms to their teaching. Students make satisfactory progress in developing their skills of literacy, citizenship and ICT; progress in numeracy skills is good. Opportunities to develop these skills are clearly defined in schemes of work. The departmental resources are good and well cared for. Finance is allocated by formula and through a bid process for developments. Both meet the needs of the department. The quality of display in classrooms celebrates the success of students, adds to understanding and successfully raises aspirations. The wide range of fieldwork activities that are arranged is a notable feature of the department; this enables students to enrich their understanding of geographical concepts. The contribution that is made to vocational courses in years ten and eleven and in the sixth form is a very good feature of the department's enrichment of the whole school curriculum. The very good practice that exists in the department should be shared more so that it is consistently applied across all classes.

102. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The effects of examination changes that were noted in the last inspection report have now been addressed and the more recent staffing difficulties have been overcome.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding knowledge of the demands of the GCSE requirements was built into the planning of this lesson for students with a very wide range of ability.

An outstanding Year 11 geography lesson included students with a wide range of ability, all of whom made outstanding achievement in the lesson. They were extremely well catered for by a teacher who has an excellent knowledge and understanding of what is required to attain an A* grade GCSE pass on higher level papers and a grade C pass on foundation level papers. Very skilful questioning to elicit prior knowledge and further develop knowledge and understanding of this theory early in the lesson developed the knowledge base for the lesson on employment structures theory very well. Tasks were very well matched to the needs of the students and the demands of the different levels of examination. High quality explanation by the teacher enabled students to explore various ways of displaying data and drawing conclusions and students' understanding was thoroughly checked throughout this part of the lesson. As a consequence the most able students coped well with the demanding concepts involved cumulative frequency graphs, triangular graphs and three variable-correlation typical of the highest GCSE grades whilst the least able in the group demonstrated levels of work typical of GCSE grade D. To replicate this lesson, a teacher must have an outstanding knowledge of the demands of the GCSE requirements and use them as the basis for planning a lesson for students with a very wide range of ability.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of history is good overall. It is well planned and reflects teachers' strengths in subject knowledge and expertise.
- History is well managed.
- Examination success is a result of firm discipline and successfully applied study skills and examination techniques.
- Teachers and students have good working relationships that produce a secure learning environment for students to make progress.
- The teaching of basic skills are not sufficiently well developed to support and extend the lower attaining student.

Commentary

103. In the 2002 GCSE examinations standards were in line with the national average. Results have seen an upward trend recently with some fluctuation since the previous inspection. The proportion of students achieving A* and A grades was well below the national average and represents a downward trend. Future projections, however, indicate a significant rise in standards, particularly A* and A grades and A* to C grades. These improvements are a result of consistent application to raising standards through teaching appropriate examination techniques and the introduction of new examination courses that suit the needs and abilities of students. Standards seen are above average. Students have a good understanding of history. They use documentary and pictorial sources very well, evaluating their suitability and reliability to show good understanding of different views of the same event, e.g. Nazi propaganda cartoons.

104. Standards seen in Year 7 to 9 are average. Inspection evidence points to consistent but steady improvement in standards since the previous inspection with the majority of students working at their expected level based on prior attainment. Students' knowledge and understanding of history are generally good and their ability to analyse historical sources well developed. Although higher attaining students make good progress overall there is some evidence of a significant minority working below their ability level.

105. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. A creative, well-balanced curriculum and good discipline encourage students to concentrate and sustain interest. Within Years 10 and 11 teachers' high academic expectations encourage students of all abilities to think for themselves and offer practical help to support effective learning. Students build steadily on prior experience, successfully extending their knowledge of history and showing independence in following lines of enquiry. Excellent preparation for examinations and the strong emphasis on study skills for GCSE examinations is a major contribution to achievement and success.

106. The attitudes and behaviour of students are very good overall and are a strength of the department. The majority of students take responsibility for their own learning and they behave well in lessons, forming constructive relationships with both teachers and peers. Students' listening and concentration skills are particularly good in Years 10 and 11 and they show self-discipline and respect for themselves and each other.

107. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Successful teaching is due to skilful management of students through high expectations regarding standards of behaviour and academic success. This works well to support learning and progress in all lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' high level of knowledge and subject expertise is particularly effective and successfully transmitted to students where it promotes confidence and progress at all levels. In the best lessons high levels of concentration and interest are fostered by brisk pace, high productivity and a variety of teaching and learning styles that allow for student participation. Less successful lessons are characterised by low productivity as a result of too much teacher intervention in the form of lengthy exposition and over narrow teaching approaches. Within some teaching groups students do not always share their teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and there is some evidence of underachievement within lower and higher attaining groups when tasks remain unchallenging and unsuited to the needs and abilities of students. The teaching of basic skills are not sufficiently well developed to support and extend the lower attaining student.

108. The department is well led and managed by a committed and conscientious faculty head who remains focused on raising standards through accurate target setting and successful curriculum planning. Standards have been maintained and improved in many areas, most notably in the review of schemes of work and new examination courses. It now remains for the department to share existing good practice and extend its range of teaching styles to suit the needs of all abilities and monitor the effectiveness of their current teaching and assessment procedures for lower and higher attaining students. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and students with special educational needs are well supported.
- The attitudes and response of students are good.
- The contribution made towards students' personal development is very good.
- The standards achieved by students on the short GCSE are high.
- The use of marking and on-going assessment to help students to make progress is unsatisfactory.
- The range of artefact resources is too limited.
- Strategies are needed to help students to learn 'from' religion as well as 'about' religion.
- Updating the current provision in Years 10 and 11 to match the new requirements of the recently produced Locally Agreed Syllabus should be completed as a matter of urgency.

Commentary

109. After a period of staffing instability, religious education is becoming a strength of the school, adding considerably to its achievements, ethos and values.

110. Standards in religious education are above average overall. On entry and in Years 7 to 9 they are at least in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In religious studies in Years 10 and 11 they are well above average - a marked improvement on the previous inspection. Occasional pieces of work, such as a Year 11 very well argued essay on personal perspectives on worship, are outstanding. There is limited evidence in students' books of ways in which they have learned to apply what they have learned from their studies of religion to their own lives or to other areas of the curriculum. At the time of the inspection it was not possible to review standards in the statutory religious education provision in Years 10 and 11 which is taught within the overall arrangements for personal and social education.

111. Some 40 per cent of each year cohort follows the religious studies short GCSE course; 64 per cent gaining A*-C in 2002 and 70 per cent in 2003. This is well above school and national averages - as is the proportion of boys and their level of success. Attitudes and the quality of discussion in lessons are very good, as in Year 10 debates on the merits of marriage versus cohabitation and on relationships and moral responsibilities.

112. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Students in Years 7 to 9 respond well in class. In a Year 7 lesson on the Ten Commandments, very thoughtful debate showed students had a good grasp of the need for moral codes in society. Evidence from these lessons shows emerging good achievement, very good in some classes. Students with special educational needs make better than expected progress. When available, they are very well supported by teaching assistants and by materials that are well matched to their needs. Gifted and talented students make sound progress.

113. Because of the very strong focus on values, and the very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, students' personal development and relationships are of high quality. Good provision is made for students to develop other skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT, and to develop their understanding of citizenship and business & enterprise. There is a strong emphasis given to helping students understand those from other faiths and cultures.

114. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good. This teaching has not yet had sufficient time to impact on achievement over the longer term. Teaching was good or better in four fifths of lessons seen - an improvement when compared with the low challenge and pace recorded for lessons with older age groups in the last inspection. No teaching was less than satisfactory and much was very good. Strengths include: lively, dynamic, well-structured and well-paced lessons; approaches that help less able students to develop their ideas without undue emphasis on the need to write everything down and good provision to match tasks to students' abilities. An outstanding feature is the way in which staff listen to students, respect their views and encourage them to share their own beliefs and experiences. Good use is made of homework. Assessment of students' progress in the skills and concepts of religious education is less satisfactory. More attention could be given to ways in which on-going assessment can be used to help students progress.

115. Since the last inspection there has been considerable change in the staffing of religious education. Recruitment difficulties left the subject without a teacher in charge for some time but this situation has now been resolved. Textbook resources are very good but the lack of artefact resources is a concern. Overall the religious education provision is good.

116. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in the GCSE classes. There is very little off-task behaviour. This, together with the good teaching, leads to good learning in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, especially for those with learning difficulties.

117. Good provision is planned to meet the statutory religious education requirements, based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Religious education in the sixth form is part of general studies. In Years 10 and 11, it is timetabled as part of religious, personal and social education. Due to recent revision of the Agreed Syllabus, provision does not fully match the new requirements but the school has this in hand.

118. The new team leader has a clear vision for taking the department forward. She has already begun a thorough analysis of provision and is taking steps to achieve improvements. The provision of specialist staff is good. The school is strongly committed to the success of religious education.

119. Although the recommendation to review assessment and match this more closely to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus needs to be completed, overall improvement since the last inspection has been good and provision is now good.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 10 GCSE religious education unit on relationships enabled students to express and develop their own ideas exceptionally well.

Census data on marriage and divorce was provided. Pairs of students had 10 minutes to prepare the case for marriage and for cohabitation. Lively and well-focused debates ensued. The teacher concluded this deftly and invited a full class debate on the pros and cons. Her preparedness to be open and willing to share from her own experiences as a young person - but within appropriate limits – enabled students to express and develop their own ideas exceptionally well. By dint of facial expression, pause and careful use of questioning she drew out a remarkable series of responses from the students. Her ability to accept and respect the views being expressed, without criticism or reaction, was a key factor in enabling the students to share very deeply held views, listen to one another and begin to develop a much deeper understanding of their own and each others' personal beliefs. As the lively debate moved forwards, the teacher noted key points in a 'mind map' on the board. Two students very effectively summarised the case for each viewpoint. This was an outstanding 'cameo debate' way beyond expectations for Year 10. To replicate this lesson a teacher needs to have an excellent level of interpersonal skills.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and standards are high.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and behave very well.
- Students achieve very highly in most materials areas.
- Standards in systems and control are lower than in other areas.

Commentary

120. Standards are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11 and in GCSE results. This is a consequence of very good teaching and of students' interest and willingness to learn which help create a positive climate for learning. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, taking into account the results of tests and examination results and how well students are doing currently. Years 7 and 8 students follow the design process rigorously and

use a wide range of materials, tools and processes. Practical work is very well linked to understanding of the materials students use. For example, students learn about the function of ingredients and the underlying scientific principles associated with the food they prepare so they understand the work better. This helps them to make informed decisions when planning their work. In Year 9, students show very good understanding of the work they have covered in previous years when they complete projects that test the full range of skills and knowledge for designing and making products. This prepares students effectively for examination courses in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve very well in most materials areas because teachers plan work to match the different needs of students and support their learning very well in lessons. Students do not do as well in the systems and control course in Years 10 and 11. In these lessons, the work is not sufficiently well matched to the different needs of students so that many struggle to understand the concepts.

121. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and have kept up to date with developments in the subject. A good example of this is their use of professional development days spent in business and industry, following which they use what they have learned to enhance the quality of students' learning in lessons. Teachers have very good class control and have formed very good relationships with students. They treat students with respect and are very good role models. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and provide opportunities which inspire students to work creatively. Students show willingness to learn and behave very well in lessons so that they are able to achieve highly. Students learn effectively because new work is clearly explained and teachers frequently check that students have good understanding. Lessons begin promptly and proceed efficiently at a good pace. Teachers often use time targets so that no time is wasted. Students respond positively by working hard and maintaining good levels of concentration. In the very small number of less successful lessons, students have insufficient challenge which limits their achievement or the work is not pitched at a suitable level for all students. Teachers usually plan homework tasks that are a worthwhile extension of lessons or preparation for them. In the best lessons, homework tasks are very clearly linked to the different learning needs of groups within classes. These tasks are sensitively allocated so that all students feel they are properly challenged. Teachers mark students' work regularly and thoroughly. They identify what students have done well and make helpful comments about what might have been done better so that students understand how to improve. Assessment is good. Subject related vocabulary is introduced relevant to new work. Students then use it to communicate their ideas and plan work effectively. Teachers encourage students to be analytical about their work and they present results clearly using charts and graphs. Teachers' insistence on accurate weighing and measuring helps students to produce high quality products.

122. Leadership and management are very good and contribute significantly to the very good achievement of students. The head of department provides clear direction for the work of the department and has a good awareness of the strengths and areas in need of further development. Appropriate priorities have been identified. Teachers work together as a team, sharing good practice and their knowledge of students. Day to day organisation is very good and staff frequently review procedures for monitoring and evaluating work to identify what is working well, where inconsistencies lie and what needs to be improved.

123. Students have good access to ICT and use it effectively to present information or to design and manufacture elements of their projects where appropriate

124. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. High standards have been maintained, with more students now achieving higher grades in tests and examinations. The potentially hazardous car lift has been removed. Courses and schemes of work have kept pace with developments in the subject and match students' interests and needs.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are provided with a good curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- Students are fully involved in the assessment process.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 to 11.
- Photography is taught particularly well.
- Students express personal opinion and judgement when looking at art and design.
- Students do not speak confidently about art and design in their group work.

Commentary

125. In Years 10 and 11 students are provided with a range of courses to meet individual interests and abilities. Students reach good standards in art and design, graphic design and photography, with sketchbook and workbook processes well applied. Achievement is good. Standards in photography are notably better than average in both traditional and digital work and there are indications that standards in graphic design will be better than average with students in Year 10 already outperforming Year 11 in page layout skills. Students are as familiar with the works of designers, illustrators and photographers as they are with artists.

126. Students arrive with average drawing skills and a very varied range of experiences in art and design. They are exposed to a good curriculum, which enables them to reach average standards by the end of Year 9 in a wide range of two and three-dimensional craft experiences. Achievement is satisfactory. All students explore basic photography, which is rare. Sketchbook work is well established and students use a range of influences from art of other cultures to enrich their own work. All students visit art galleries. Appropriate art vocabulary is in use, aided by the emphasis that teachers place on new words and their correct usage. Students know how to use computers to research and create art. A strength of how students use research is that very few copy or paraphrase texts but write about what they see and think when looking at art and design.

127. Students are now fully involved in the assessment process. They regularly evaluate their own achievements, agree targets with their teacher and this results in their knowing what they have to do to improve.

128. Students with visual impairment are provided with essential large print support material and this enables them to understand and participate. Effective use is made of a wide range of performance data to analyse students' performance and this enables teachers to move standards forward. This close monitoring of individual needs results in the teachers being able to assist all students with learning difficulties in making the best possible progress. There is a small number of students from minority ethnic groups and these students achieve standards comparable with their year groups.

129. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The level of expectation and challenge is greater in Years 10 and 11 than Years 7 to 9. Lessons are well managed with objectives shared with the students. A strength of teaching is the regular practical demonstration of craft skill. Time is managed well and the practice of timed activity creates a sense of urgency to which students respond positively. The result is busy, purposeful lessons which students find interesting and in which a lot is achieved.

130. In one photographic lesson students spoke knowledgeably about the work of professional photographers. They were able to explain shutter speeds and from written analysis of professional

work they were developing a finer aesthetic awareness. Management of the lesson was so well focused on establishing independent learning that the result was that some students demonstrated very good camera and darkroom skills, some were using digital cameras, some were using computers to find out about new photographers, others creatively using computer typography to present their work; all were totally and productively engrossed in their work with not a moment wasted.

131. Fluent when speaking on a one-to-one basis, students continue to lack confidence when speaking to the group about their work and the department has not yet devised effective strategies to remedy this long standing aspect.

132. Art and design has been very well managed during a difficult period of staffing changes, when examination results were less successful, and results are now at the national average at the higher grades, with boys performing better than boys nationally.

133. The expressive arts course makes a significant contribution to students' personal and cultural development. Students blossom in confidence in a programme that regularly leads to community performances. Students talk enthusiastically about the professional standard of the musical productions that the head of art and design regularly organises. Group work is strong here, with students demonstrating very good progress and very good standards in creative dance, drama, music and art and design.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 11 art and design students produce high calibre photographic work using high quality facilities and supported by teachers very skilled in photography.

In an outstanding Year 11 art and design lesson, all students in this wide-ranging ability class demonstrated outstanding achievement in their work on photography. Students worked at a fast pace, applying their prior knowledge of the work of influential photographers, their well developed analytical and evaluative skills and their high levels of camera and dark room skills to their portfolio work. They applied their ICT skills well for Internet research, recording their own opinions and the presentation of their study sheets. The high levels of teacher expectation, very well planned activities that were well negotiated with students, particularly those with special educational needs, and the excellent relationships in the class, led to an exceptional calibre of photographic work. One student was a finalist in a local community colour photographic competition. To replicate this lesson students need access to high quality facilities and teachers very skilled in photography.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students in Years 7 to 9 to achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour.
- There is good leadership and management of departmental planning.
- There are expanding extra-curricular opportunities for students.
- Additional provision of computers with music input keyboards is needed.

Commentary

134. The standard on entry to the college varies over a wide range but is average overall. At the end of Year 9 standards are above average; all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. This is due to the good quality of teaching which demands high expectations of work and behaviour. They learn how to compose pieces within a given structure, like the 12 bar blues, or to create a Samba Band performance. One class sat on the floor in a circle each with an upturned plastic chair in front of them. With a variety of beaters they 'played' their chairs as instruments in a whole class performance of a Samba which was rhythmic and perfectly in time.

Another class of 14 year olds sang African songs with great enthusiasm in more than one part with good accuracy and an appropriate style.

135. The number of students taking music at GCSE level tends to be small and varies from year to year. This is not unusual. There were no candidates in 2002 but increasing numbers are now taking the course. The department encourages all students who have an interest in music to follow the GCSE course and this is a good policy. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average but vary widely between students. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Good examples of listening, performing and composing were observed. One talented 16 year old led a saxophone group with infectious enthusiasm and authority. The group of six made very good progress on a number of pieces due to inspired leadership.

136. Good use of music technology, in the form of electronic keyboards, was seen. The shortage of computers with music input keyboards is limiting the raising of standards in the composing aspect of examination work. Talented students are encouraged to achieve their potential through additional instrumental tuition and extension tasks.

137. Keyboard playing is used effectively and would be enhanced by a more systematic approach to the teaching of good technique and the continued use of notation in years 7 to 9. The use of computers to meet the National Curriculum requirement would greatly support this and other aspects of music making.

138. The behaviour and attitude of students in Years 7 to 9 is very good. As a result of teachers' expectations, they are polite, attentive and co-operative. Students enjoy working together in practical activities.

139. The quality of teaching and learning in the music department is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where methods used to teach the wide range of abilities are being developed. There is an emphasis on practical work that is taught enthusiastically. Planning is good and the leadership and management of the department are also good. Teachers have a caring and firm approach which the students respect.

140. Teachers are developing ways of telling students what they should do to improve. The new process should be carefully reviewed to ensure that it gives students the information they need to enable progress to be made.

141. There is a range of extra-curricular activities and the number participating is growing. This is also true of the numbers having instrumental lessons which now stands at nearly 10 per cent of the college. This will allow the variety of musical groups to increase making larger ensembles possible.

142. The college production is a very good opportunity for students to show their talent and to share it with the community. This is also true of the music concerts held during the year.

143. Accommodation is good and classrooms are well equipped with instruments and other resources. Displays are attractive and are linked to current topics. Musical vocabulary, taught effectively in lessons, also forms an important part of displayed work.

144. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection report. In addition to the growing numbers now involved in music making, new schemes of work ensure that lessons are more interesting and the curriculum is broader. This has contributed to the raising of standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning and very good achievement for students in Years 7 to 9.
- There is very good leadership and management.
- Teachers have a strong commitment to students achieving high standards.
- The curriculum time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 and for students who study an additional foreign language in Years 8 and 9 is low.
- Teacher and student self-assessment are not linked to National Curriculum levels.

Commentary

145. Teacher assessment of Year 9 students in 2002 indicates that students were working in line with national expectations. Girls and boys attained similar standards. Evidence from the inspection supports teacher assessments. During Years 7 to 9, students begin to apply skills accurately with precision and control. This was apparent in dance, gymnastics, rugby and swimming. In Year 7, students begin to perform movements and skills with technical accuracy. By the end of Year 9, students are comparing and contrasting sequenced movements in dance with advanced aesthetic qualities. Advanced rugby skills are performed with vigour and advanced technical awareness. Students develop into capable swimmers. The accurate application of skills and creative awareness is transferred into Years 10 and 11 where standards in statutory physical education lessons are in line with national expectations, and well above in GCSE classes. In 2002, 64 per cent of students entered gained an A*-C grade in their physical education GCSE course. Grades for 2003, prior to adjustment show a further substantial rise. Predicted grades for 2004 based on sound evidence suggests results will stay well above the national average. Higher attaining students go onto achieve similar success on the 'A' level sports studies course.

146. The good curriculum provided for students gives them full opportunities to develop expected knowledge and understanding in a wide variety of activities. Students' achievement in relation to very variable standards on entry is very good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. The department puts importance on developing students' literacy skills. Staff emphasise key words. The department uses teaching and learning styles appropriate to students' level of attainment.

147. The department has established a very good climate for learning. The very good quality of teaching promotes students' very good progress and success. Detailed planning, very high expectations and very good subject knowledge underpin all teaching. In a very high proportion of lessons, teaching was very good and some excellent teaching was observed. Students are encouraged through appropriately challenging tasks to reach high levels of attainment. Teachers' management and quality of relationships with students are very good. This produces lessons of very high productivity, levels of participation and enjoyment. All students display very good attitudes and behaviour in physical education.

148. Assessment procedures are sound. However, teacher and student self-assessment are not linked to National Curriculum levels or used for setting individual learning goals.

149. Although time allocated to core physical education in Years 10 and 11 and for a significant number of students in Years 8 and 9 is low, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of all students. There is very good planning for the use of ICT in schemes of work.

150. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. They ensure clear educational direction. The head of department has formed a very strong and committed team of teachers who are very good role models.

151. The department has improved on a previous good inspection report and its capacity to maintain high standards is very good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching underpins the good achievement students are making in lessons.
- Students have good attitudes to learning.
- Good use is made of word processing in coursework.
- There are inconsistencies in the amount of detail in the marking of work and comments to help students to make improvements.

Commentary

152. In 2002 GCSE results were at national average, with a similar situation in 2003. The results for 2001 were above the national average. Standards seen in lessons are average.

153. Students' achievement in Year 11 in the GCSE courses is good. Their coursework demonstrates sound knowledge, some independent learning and a good understanding of business concepts. Appropriate business terminology is well used. Higher attaining students demonstrate great confidence and insight when pressed on the advantages and disadvantages of running their own business. Reading, writing and listening levels are good. Word processing is well used to present coursework.

154. Students show ready interest in their Business Study lessons at Years 10 and 11. Their behaviour is good and they are often very supportive of each other, giving informative help to others in the group. Occasionally, special needs students lose concentration, working very slowly when completing spreadsheet tasks.

155. Teaching and learning are good. Very good subject knowledge combined with good lesson planning enable all students to learn. They develop their knowledge and skills through practice. For example, by working with well chosen case studies Year 10 learned about entrepreneurship and changing patterns of employment. A high level of student involvement meant they understood how teamwork is used in business situations. In the very good lessons, highly skilled questioning encourages students to respond and extend their answers. For example, Year 11 explain investigations and market research about their chosen business ideas for their GCSE Business Project. Good use was made of whiteboards and other visual resources. Students are well supported in most classes with feedback, although work in files has insufficient detailed comments and marks to aid improvement.

156. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear direction for work in the department and strong teamwork. Business Studies was not reported on at the last inspection. Courses are now well established and popular with students. A recent development has been the introduction of a newly created Business and Enterprise course in Year 7.

Health and social care

157. The results in the GCSE examination in health and social care 2002 were very good. The teaching and learning seen during the inspection was very good, with clear lesson objectives and systematic teaching which developed very well students' understanding of negative feelings and how to deal with them. One lesson of this course was observed, with sampling of students' work. Health and social care is popular subject. Overall, achievement in health and social care at Years 10 and 11 is good.

Leisure and tourism

158. Two lessons in leisure and tourism were seen. In one lesson, students produced work that was appropriate to their ability and increased their knowledge of the leisure and tourism industry. When teaching is unsatisfactory, students' understanding of the subject is not satisfactorily developed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship has been well planned and implemented.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- A wide variety of opportunities exist for active citizenship.
- Students are not always aware that they are studying citizenship.
- There is a good programme for personal, social and health education.

Commentary

159. The college has adopted a cross-curricular approach for the teaching of citizenship. The core units are taught through the active tutorial curriculum in Years 7 to 11 with additional, separate lessons of personal and social education in Years 10 and 11 and religious education. The delivery of citizenship will be further enhanced as the business and enterprise curriculum unfolds.

160. In lessons where personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught, standards of work produced by students and achievement are good. However, students are not always aware that they are studying citizenship because the work is so well integrated with other subject matter. This limits the students' understanding and knowledge of the programme of study for citizenship.

161. Students demonstrate skills of enquiry and the ability to express personal points of view. Many students have opportunities to develop active citizenship skills through the college council, out of college community involvement at home and abroad and participation in sport. Involvement in active citizenship is recorded in the active tutorial workbook.

162. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some very good teaching in personal and social education and religious education. Lessons are generally well planned with clearly defined aims. Good class management leads to sensible discussion. Teaching is monitored on a regular basis. High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved. A programme of visiting speakers supports teaching well. Assessment procedures for citizenship at present are satisfactory. However, further development of assessment is required to meet National Curriculum requirements.

163. Leadership and management of personal, social and health education and citizenship are good. The co-ordinators for citizenship are enthusiastic, hard working and committed to high standards. They are well supported by the senior management team. The subject has been incorporated well into the curriculum. Schemes of work for each year and term broadly ensure coverage of National Curriculum requirements. Students need to be aware when they are studying citizenship within the broader lesson context. Personal, social and health education is also well led and managed. Form tutors move through the school with their tutor group. Tutors know their tutees very well and they are very much involved in their students' personal and academic development. This is a valuable strength within the overall provision for personal, social and health education.

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 college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	6	100.0	74.2	16.7	34.3	33.3	31.3
Other Social Studies	7	85.7	83.2	14.3	32.5	24.3	33.6
General Studies	14	85.7	78.6	14.3	25.7	27.9	30.0

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Art and Design	7	100	96.1	71.4	48.7	94.3	85.1
Biology	13	92.3	91.6	7.7	36.3	58.5	74.1
Chemistry	8	100.0	94.0	37.5	45.9	72.5	81.1
Communication Studies	5	100.0	98.5	17.6	43.7	75.3	84.3
English Literature	17	100.0	98.5	17.6	43.7	75.3	84.3
Design and Technology	11	100.0	95.3	63.6	35.5	94.5	76.5
General Studies	47	100.0	90.1	23.4	29.1	72.3	69.3
Geography	5	100.0	97.1	20.0	40.5	76.0	80.9
History	13	100.0	97.1	15.4	41.0	75.4	81.2
Information Technology	6	83.3	89.1	16.7	22.4	50.0	64.1
Mathematics	5	100.0	93.3	60.0	52.2	96.0	84.7
Physics	8	87.5	92.8	12.5	42.8	60.0	78.6
Sociology	9	100.0	95.4	66.7	39.6	91.1	79.1
Sports/PE Studies	5	100.0	95.4	60.0	29.5	88.0	73.2
Business VCE	12	91.7	87.1	4.2	16.5	53.3	60.1
Health and Social Care VCE	10	80.0	90.1	40.0	16.3	74.0	62.5

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

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- The quality of teaching is good and students achieve well. The teachers have a good subject knowledge.
- Students learn well; they collaborate successfully and apply themselves well in lessons.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of all students.
- There is good provision for transition from GCSE courses to AS level English Literature.
- Students achieve well during the English Literature course, particularly lower attaining students.
- There are inconsistencies in the guidance given to students by individual teachers on what to improve and how to improve.

Commentary

164. The provision in English caters for 20 students. GCSE AS and A2 courses are offered in English Literature.

165. Standards of attainment in English Literature were broadly in line with the national averages in 2002. Numbers of students are too small for valid comparisons with national results regarding attainment by gender or trends over time. Work seen during the inspection confirmed that in both Years 12 and 13, attainment was broadly average. The retention of students into Year 13 has been low but there is no indication that this pattern will be repeated in future years. Students achieve well considering their standards on entry.

166. In English Literature, students produce extended critical writing using the terminology and register of literary criticism. They are able to develop views of their own and justify these with apt quotations and textual references.

167. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this, together with enthusiasm for the subject, clearly inspires the students. Teachers are skilled at giving students scope and space to discuss and refine their views. In a Year 12 lesson on 'The Canterbury Tales' students worked well together to refine their understanding of the way in which Chaucer manipulates the reader's view of the Summoner before comparing this with Chaucer's presentation of the Pardoner.

168. Teachers have good knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses and effectively support Year 12 students in the transition from GCSE to A level course. For example, in one Year 12 lesson, students were given a task based on literary terms. The students were then asked to apply the terms to their reading of 'Journey's End'. As a result, students revised and consolidated their understanding of the terms and the teacher was able to assess their knowledge quickly and accurately.

169. Marking of students' work is generally very focussed with good guidance on ways to improve but there is some inconsistency in some instances where, although achievement is recognised, there is less written guidance on areas for future attention.

170. In all lessons, students are encouraged to take chances even if they are unsure of their views or answers. A culture of using language to learn permeates much of the teaching. Background material and supplementary notes provided by teachers are usually very informative and add to the students' knowledge and understanding of the course.

171. Students respond very well to the teaching described above. They enjoy English in the sixth form and take pleasure in forming and expressing opinions on the texts studied.

172. In the most successful lessons students are given responsibility for their own learning. For example, in one Year 12 lesson, students delivered an analysis of a poem of their own choice to a partner, justifying their choice of poem. The partner was required to listen carefully as he/she then had to present the poem to a different partner. In another Year 12 lesson on 'King Lear', students worked together to construct representations of the family relationships in the play. These tasks, whilst challenging students to work independently of their teachers, were also well supported by the teachers' careful structuring of the tasks.

173. English in the sixth form is well managed. Teachers are familiar with all aspects of the courses and have detailed knowledge of the assessment criteria. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of the subject that encourages students to use language to develop their views and opinions. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; improvement during the last year under the new head of department is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

174. Standards of language and literacy in the sixth form for AS, A2 and vocational students are sufficient for learning at the levels concerned. Some business studies AVCE students experience difficulty with spelling but overall students demonstrate enough control over their language to achieve well. Teachers give appropriate time for discussion and group oral work and texts provided are generally at the required level of difficulty. Although weaker students sometimes do not distinguish between formal and informal registers most students are able to use a range of different styles of writing for different purposes.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well, and communicate it clearly to students.
- The AS and A level courses include a number of elements that motivate students.
- Teaching of application of number to non A level mathematics students is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

175. The numbers of sixth form students taking mathematics A level declined consistently from 25 in 1998 to five in 2002. Results for the larger groups were below national averages, while the results for the small group in 2002 were well above national averages. The groups now studying AS mathematics in Year 12 and A level in Year 13 are into double figures. There have been no systematic differences between the performance of girls and boys. The retention of students into Year 13 is good.

176. The standard of work seen during the inspection is average. In previous years, students' progress and achievement in relation to their GCSE performance have generally been good. Observations in lessons reflect this picture of good progress and achievement and the good teaching they receive. Year 12 students can explain how to find the statistical median by linear interpolation and can readily find the equations of straight lines using a range of methods. Year 13 students can develop complex mathematical models to explain situations such as a boat crossing a river.

177. The quality of teaching on AS and A level courses is good, creating a good quality of learning. This is based largely on the knowledge that teachers have of the subject, and the clear explanations that they give. In the best of these, the explanations are crisply focused, ensuring that students grasp

the salient points and do not get bogged down in the mathematical detail. The AS and A level courses motivate students through a range of assignments. Staff organise visits and visitors, and discuss business and other contexts wherever they can see opportunities to bring the subject alive and make its relevance obvious. For example, in a mechanics lesson about mathematical modelling, the teacher maintained a clear focus on the real situation being described by the mathematics, making comments like "5 kilometres per hour – that's a slow old boat – good job it's not going upstream". In some lessons, learning is enhanced when students have a brief opportunity to exchange ideas before answering challenging questions.

178. The college provides appropriate opportunities for sixth form students to retake GCSE mathematics. Most do improve on their previous performance, but only around half achieve the prime objective of grade C or above.

179. Key Skills application of number is offered at level 2 and level 3. A level mathematics students complete their assessments as an extension of their A level course, and the provision for other students includes an appropriate combination of teacher-led lessons and the completion of individual portfolios based on assignments carried out in support of their other subjects. Policy and provision have been developing rapidly, but so far few students have gained accreditation. The quality of teaching in key skills for students not taking A level mathematics is currently unsatisfactory.

180. Overall, leadership and management are good. There has been an effective diagnosis of the reasons for the decline in A level entry in the past, and appropriate action has been taken to choose and implement a more appropriate and motivating course. This has now been effective in increasing the numbers of students taking the subject. Management of Key Skills application of number, for which the mathematics department does not have sole responsibility, has not ensured satisfactory provision for students who are not taking A level mathematics.

181. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

182. Students use mathematics well in their other subjects, especially in AS and A level subjects such as physics and geography in which the ability to use relatively advanced mathematics is crucial for success.

SCIENCE

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in A level examinations improved greatly in 2003.
- Relationships in lessons are very good, students work hard and want to understand their work.
- In the best lessons, expectations of students are high and their achievements are very good.
- Procedures for improving results are effective and achievements in examinations and the classroom have improved.
- Some unsatisfactory teaching remains.
- More use of ICT is needed in lessons.

Commentary

183. Results in the A level physics examination in 2002 were below the national average and students' grades were significantly worse than in their other subjects. A significant number failed the A level examination and until 2002 the trend shown by the results was downwards. In 2003 results

improved greatly, most students did better than was predicted using their GCSE performance and a good proportion gained A or B grades. These standards are reflected in the work seen during the inspection; standards are above average. Most AS students continue to the A level course, very few drop out in either year and the number choosing to study physics has increased this year.

184. The quality of teaching and learning is good; students' achievement both in lessons and examinations is also good. In some cases they are very good because demanding teaching ensures that all students including those who should gain the highest grades make the gains in their understanding of physics that they need. Good questioning techniques ensure that students learn well, for example, in an AS level lesson about moments students understood the calculations used to work out forces in balance and how to use vector forces. Relationships in lessons are very good and students are very willing to answer difficult questions and to ask when they are uncertain; there is a high degree of interest in learning and success. Numerical skills are good because teachers' explanations are clear, and graphs of sound frequency and intensity and calculations of decibels are done carefully and accurately. In this lesson the teacher's command of their subject was very good.

185. Questions from past papers are used well to check on students' progress; in an A level revision lesson about ultrasound students solved different problems and presented their answers to the class, the teacher provided good support and was able to identify misunderstanding for individual students; as a result of skilful teaching they achieved well. In one AS level lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. The lesson did not build well on the GCSE course and students, many of whom should get high grades, did not achieve well enough. The teacher predominantly led the lesson and opportunities for students to present their own ideas were missed.

186. The leadership of the department is good. Successful strategies for improving examination results have been introduced; staffing changes have been made and teaching methods improved. Results in 2003 were much better. Attendance and punctuality are monitored more effectively and have improved and the timing of coursework altered so that it is done at a more suitable time. Support for students is very good, thorough reviews of performance are carried out and students are well informed about their progress. Systems for identifying underachievement are used to provide advice and an open door policy allows students to get help easily. Students feel well supported and because relationships with their teachers are so good they work hard and want to succeed. Students are very positive about their course and appreciate good access to the library and computers. There are records and examples of the use of ICT during lessons but there is insufficient provision of ICT in science lessons. Overall improvement is good.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Expectations of students are high.
- Fieldwork opportunities offer a rich and varied range of activities that enhances understanding.
- The attitudes of students are very good, strengthening their acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Students need to make more extensive use of ICT.

Commentary

187. The numbers of students studying A level geography declined dramatically after 2000. Curricular changes in Years 10 and 11 combined with a period of staffing difficulties meant that no students were recruited to the A level course in 2001. Results at A2 in 2002 were slightly below national expectations but were above expectations when judged against the prior attainment of the

students. Strenuous efforts by the head of department have now brought numbers of students back to former levels. The standard of work of students seen during the inspection was above average. The retention of students into Year 13 is good.

188. Students' work shows they achieve well over the length of the AS and A2 courses. Year 12 students displayed a very good capacity to work both individually and collaboratively when analyzing photographs of urban land use and they were able to discuss their ideas in a confident and articulate manner. The pace of work in lessons was good and time was used effectively.

189. Assessment and guidance practices are used effectively so that students are clearly aware of the steps that they need to take to improve. Teachers are careful to set goals that are appropriate to students' abilities and also present real challenge. There are supportive structures in place to guide students through the course, especially in the completion of field work related assignments.

190. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject and promote a high level of participation. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and are well supported with appropriate resources. Year 12 students were able to produce perceptive hypotheses when studying flood hydrographs. Building upon understanding gained during the GCSE course, they considered the interaction of variables such as rainfall intensity, rock type and drainage basin size and made thoughtful contributions to class discussion. Stimulating teaching produced good understanding from students of all abilities.

191. The newly acquired Business and Enterprise status of the college combined with the establishment of a local area network in the humanities block will allow greater use to be made of ICT in A level lessons. Insufficient laptop computers that can access the Internet in lessons prevent extensive use of simulations and research techniques.

192. The good quality of teaching and learning stems from very good leadership and management of the department. Procedures and documentation are good and the sharing of the teaching at A level enriches the learning experience by enabling students to benefit from the different styles and passions of teachers. Fieldwork activities in Boston and on the East Anglian coast are very well planned. Introducing Year 12 students to fieldwork very early in the year engages students and raises their aspirations.

193. The teachers within the department make large contributions to the teaching of vocational courses in the sixth form such as travel and tourism, leisure and recreation and leisure and tourism. Not only does this broaden the range of courses that are available but also it raises the profile of the subject in the college and links it to future employment opportunities. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The most recent results in A level history were above the national average with most students showing good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- The teaching of history is good overall; teachers' high level of knowledge and subject expertise promotes students' confidence and progress.
- The subject is well managed.
- Students' skills in whole class discussion and debate are not as well developed as in other aspects of their work.
- Students have too few opportunities in some lessons to develop independent learning and are less confident in the utilisation of Key Skills.

Commentary

194. Students' performance in A level examinations show results to be above the national standard with regard to A-E grades. However, the proportion of students' achieving A/B grades was well below the national average. The performance of the current Year 13 group is above average and the future projected target grades represent a much higher standard than those of previous years. The retention of students into Year 13 is good.

195. Lesson observations and review of students' work confirm that standards are above average in sixth form and achievement is generally good. Attainment is above what might be expected at this early stage in Year 12 GCE AS course. The performance of the current Year 13 A level group is above average and represents a higher standard than previous years. Present students are benefiting from new course planning which has resulted in improved teaching that is fully committed to examination success.

196. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively to produce well-balanced and convincing arguments. Their written work is well organised and supports lucid and coherent conclusions. They have good listening and concentration skills, a mature approach to learning and are skilled at note taking. Not all students however, are able to articulate their views with confidence or engage in group discussion and whole class debate. Students' encouraging level of achievement is a result of good teaching and well-organised examination preparation. Students are also given every opportunity to receive practical support and guidance through regular review sessions.

197. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers' confident use of subject expertise allows them to choose well-structured learning tasks and provide students with accurate guidance notes that increase knowledge and understanding and improve their written work. The relationship between students and teachers is a strength of the department and reflects the commitment to examination success. Evaluation of students' work is thorough and effective use is made of student marks and student feedback. Less successful sixth form lessons convey too few opportunities for enrichment and student involvement. Alternative ways of learning are at the expense of too much teacher intervention in the form of lengthy exposition or over narrow teaching approaches. This can sometimes result in students' passiveness or inactivity.

198. Good achievement and good teaching can be attributed to a conscientious and committed faculty head. He has developed schemes of work of high quality and introduced a new history syllabus that suits the needs of students and builds on prior attainment. It now remains for the department to extend its range of teaching and learning approaches and give further attention to Key Skills development and enrichment experiences to enable all students to progress further. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching by a dedicated and knowledgeable pair of teachers.
- Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive.
- Further subject specific links are needed with higher education and appropriate vocational sectors where psychology is practised.
- The management responsibilities should be reviewed in response to the growing number of students choosing Psychology.

Commentary

199. Standards seen in the current Year 13 are above average. In 2002, four students took A2 level and were successful. As more female students chose Psychology - three females to one male in 2002 - a fair comparison of gender achievement cannot be made. This applies to AS results in 2003 where 11 females sat the examination compared with three males.

200. In 2003 A2 level, nine students were successful in achieving pass grades with the majority attaining C grade. The retention of students into Year 13 is good. At AS level, eleven students achieved pass grades with an even split between higher and lower grades. A larger number of students (20) are taking AS level this year and the steady improvement in standards should be continued as evidence gathered during inspection indicates a rise in standards to match national average. Students' files are well organised and contain complete records of work undertaken. Students achieve well.

201. In class students present themselves as confident and knowledgeable. For example, students reviewing different psychological theories were able to analyse effectively the merits and weaknesses of each theory. Their powers of evaluation are well developed and enable them to make critical judgements on the value of different theories.

202. A large number of students (26) have chosen AS Psychology in Year 12. The standard of work seen compares closely to the national average and achievement is good. At this early stage of their studies, students have a good understanding of the behaviourist perspective and can distinguish between classical and operant conditioning and its effect on animal and human behaviour.

203. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The subject benefits from being taught by energetic and enthusiastic non-specialist teachers but their strength lies in the complementary teaching styles they bring to the subject.

204. A strong commitment to students' learning and achievement are features of the teaching. Lessons have clear appropriate objectives. They are well structured with a varied range of teaching approaches used to challenge students' knowledge and understanding. There is regular use of ICT, particularly the Internet for research topics.

205. Relationships are very good both between students and teachers and amongst the students. Subject leadership and management are good, although this is a shared responsibility between two experienced teachers who have demanding management duties elsewhere in the college. The issue of management of the subject and singular responsibility is likely to occur if the subject continues to expand at its current rate. The management responsibilities should be reviewed in response to the growth of students choosing Psychology. Planning in the subject is thorough, making good use of detailed value-added performance data. Funding for resources is spent sensibly and accommodation for teaching is satisfactory.

206. The subject is now an established part of the college's Post-16 provision and there is good potential for further improvement as demonstrated by the rise in student numbers and improving standards. The subject was not inspected at the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are well above the national average.
- Teachers have a good subject knowledge and are committed to helping their students achieve well.
- Attitudes and behaviour of students are excellent.
- More flexible responses are needed to tackle the changing needs of the learner.

Commentary

207. In 2002 overall results were well above national average. The proportion of all students achieving A and B grades in design and technology was significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of all students achieving A to E grades was higher than the national average. Their achievement is very good. Despite an increase in student numbers these results represent the continuation of an upward trend established over a number of years.

208. Standards of project work in Year 13 are excellent. The folders of highest attaining students are outstanding. Design work is both logically structured and presented imaginatively. Great care has been taken to address the needs of the reader. Sophisticated computer generated graphics and hand drawn annotated sketches are extensively used to trace the development of a series of ideas into a chosen design solution. Colour is applied throughout, and in the case of a project related to a point of sale dispenser for youth drinks, unique hand made wallets containing design templates have been included. Even in the least successful folders colour is widely utilised and drawings done by hand are well executed.

209. There is no marked difference in the performance of boys and girls and rates of retention for both have remained very good.

210. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers generally displayed an excellent grasp of their subject. They are well versed in delivering the post 16 design and technology curriculum. Consequently lessons are thoughtfully planned and appropriate resources gathered to reinforce learning. In a Year 13 mixed technology lesson objects as diverse as a Philippe Starck grapefruit squeezer and VIP pass holder were introduced to enrich the learning experience. In a Year 12 food technology lesson a wide array of products had been purchased by the teacher to help to illustrate the basic tenets of merchandise development. Reference is made in the majority of lessons on how to improve the quality of work and subsequently examination grades. However, when students occasionally display a reluctance to engage in dialogue with the teacher little variation in approach is tried to animate the group. These uneven passages are minor in significance at the moment but with a different cohort of students might be of more importance. Particular attention is paid to managing the transition from the Year 11 to Year 12. Students are reintroduced to some of the basic designing and making skills in the earlier part of their college career. This inculcates a sense of discipline and rigour during the initial phase of their advanced studies.

211. The quality of learning is very good. Students undertaking design and technology have an extremely positive attitude towards their work. They remain highly attentive and involved, despite the complexity of some of the theoretical aspects underpinning this subject. By the end of a Year 13 lesson on the economic factors affecting mass production, students were able to make very good progress. They could freely talk about the difficult concept of the costing of quality and demonstrate that they understood what a failure to take this into account could mean in an industrial context. In a Year 12 lesson on developing new food items, students made good progress. By the end of the

lesson they were able to identify how manufacturers set out to manipulate their target audience when creating new products. They were fully aware of how subtle elements of product design have to be to capture new markets. Their overall commitment and resolve to succeed is impressive. They take great care in the presentation of their work and are unfailingly courteous.

212. Leadership and management of the A level programme is very good. The deployment of staff has been very well thought out. All members of the faculty are expected to teach appropriate elements of the Year 12 curriculum to the students. This has the dual effect of enriching the students' experience and promoting a shared responsibility for achievement across the team. The number of teachers involved in teaching Year 13 has been intentionally restricted. This is to best match expertise to the needs of the students and to make the management of key project work easier. In addition members of the team are deliberately encouraged to play an active role in the work of the external examination boards. This policy has had obvious benefits in relationship to examination results.

213. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning are very good.
- Students' creative skills in art and photography are very good.
- Understanding and awareness of a wide range of artists' work is very good.
- The broad curriculum enables students to develop in many craft areas.
- Students regularly visit art galleries.
- Students do not currently work with artists-in-residence.

Commentary

214. The quality of provision results in recent examination results being above the national average with many students producing work at a level associated with a higher stage and some students being accepted directly on degree courses, which is exceptional. Standards of work seen are well above average and they achieve very well. The retention of students into Year 13 is good.

215. Students are developing very well as independent artists and they are beginning to express themselves with lots of individual flair. In their sketchbook work they show a strong creative approach, not settling for the first solution but exploring and experimenting with new ideas and media. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the broad curriculum expertise available to develop their ideas such as when initial orthodox observational drawing is developed into imaginative textile, sculpture or new digital artforms. Annotation of sketchbook work is a strength of how they present their ideas. Painting is bold and expressive and those students who investigate the works of Georgia O'Keeffe show a good appreciation of the subtleties of colour. Photography, and particularly raised-relief photographic collage, are undertaken very effectively.

216. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students are regularly exposed to the best, be it visits to national art galleries or the Museum of Photography. They regularly research the best artists or photographers' work, some even make personal study visits to artists' studios, and it is this awareness that sets the high standards that they consistently strive for. Proposals for artists-in-residence have yet to be realised and this is restricting students' knowledge of how a contemporary artist works. Teachers have very high personal craft skills and the good practice of teachers showing and discussing their own paintings enables students to have a better grasp of how an artist works.

Lessons are very well planned. They frequently begin by revisiting previous lessons to monitor understanding and all lessons contain effective tutorial guidance and end of lesson review. Frequent practical demonstration of craft skills to individual students is instrumental in establishing the very good skills evident in students' art and design.

217. Regular self-review of achievements, a practice firmly established at previous stages, is resulting in students having a good knowledge of their personal strengths and weaknesses. Agreed target setting arrived at in frequent tutorials is leading to very good progress for both male and female students with male students performing notably better in art and design than in their other subjects. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The following example of outstanding practice was noted when A level GCE physical education lesson was sampled.

A Year 12 physical education lesson is transformed by the use of a well chosen video sequence to support the enthusiasm and excellent knowledge of the teacher.

In this outstanding Year 12 physical education theory lesson the teacher had an excellent knowledge of the factors affecting group performance. This was very well developed through the skilful use of a video recording based on the success of the British Lions. The teacher's own passion for rugby was evident throughout the lesson; a very stimulating atmosphere was created and students were engrossed in their learning that developed at a very good, challenging pace. The teacher-student relationships were very good and this gave the students high levels of confidence in listening to the teacher, responding to perceptive questioning and engaging in discussion. The teacher continuously monitored students' individual and group understanding throughout the lesson and well as at the end. The overall lesson was underpinned by the teacher's excellent understanding of the A level GCE requirements and the achievement of students was outstanding. To replicate this lesson, a high quality video, which shows the application of the skills at national level is essential to support the enthusiasm and knowledge of the teacher.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge.
- Results are consistently well above average at A level.
- Effective use is made of case studies to enhance learning at A level.
- More opportunities are needed to share and discuss best practice in teaching and learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities to engage learners in a structured dialogue about their achievement so that they know what and how to improve.

Commentary

218. The Advanced General Certificate of Education Business Studies is the staple course offered by the department. An Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education is now being offered to cater for a wider spectrum of learners seeking business certification.

219. Results for A level GCE Business Studies for the last four years are well above average. Standards seen in lessons in this early stage of the course are above average.

220. The results for advanced vocational courses show a mixed picture. Standards seen in lessons are above average in the Year 13 Business Studies GCE and below average in the Year 12 AVCE course. This AVCE course attracts learners from a wide range of prior attainment and

experience. There are particular challenges with this course to ensure that the needs of all learners are met.

221. In all courses offered, given the prior attainment of learners, achievement is good. There are no significant differences between the standards of attainment or achievement of male and female learners. Retention rates are in line with expectations.

222. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. This they can adapt well to enable the learner to take control. In a good AVCE lesson, a PowerPoint presentation was used to fire-up learners' imaginations about marketing and was followed by Internet research and a questionnaire which linked key marketing concepts and definitions with real business practice. In a good Year 13 lesson, judicious use of a case study sparked an animated discussion about the practical applications of key marketing concepts to the formation of overall business strategy. The rapport between teachers and learners is good. It underpins learning. High attainers are well supported by classroom resources. Textbooks and case studies are carefully linked to assessment and examination questions. The AVCE course uses Internet resources effectively. The key skills of numeracy, literacy, and ICT are built into assignments to support learners' achievement. Higher attaining learners make good use of technical vocabulary to frame their answers and are able to analyse, sift and evaluate evidence to a very good standard. Lower attainers find mastering definitions and applying basic concepts to business situations a challenge. There is insufficient attention paid to ensuring the tasks are pitched at the right level to support those learners with lower prior attainment and experience. Oral questioning techniques to test learners' understanding could be used more effectively.

223. Overall the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department gives firm, competent and committed leadership. There is a common focus upon standards. There is a keen awareness that targets set for the department must be met. Value added data is used to check that the results meet targets. However, assessment information is not used to plan the business curriculum to meet the needs of all the current students. There are few systematic opportunities for sharing and implementing new and best practice. Learners' progress is monitored effectively. However, value-added data is not used systematically to help learners understand how to improve their performance. Homework is set and marked regularly. The feedback given in class is highly valued by learners. However, there are variations between teachers, in the scale and scope of written feedback and marking and the relationship between marks given for pieces of work and final examination grades.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Good teaching by well qualified, experienced teachers leads to good learning.
- There is a very good team approach to teaching the subject.
- Work is well matched to students' needs.
- Students demonstrate very good attitudes to the subject.
- ICT should be more fully used as a tool for learning.

Commentary

224. The results in 2001 and 2002 were above the national average. Results in 2003 show students' success. Comparison of students' coursework with their GCSE grades show that they are achieving well. Standards are currently above average in Year 13. Students' knowledge and

understanding of topics currently being studied are secure. Students in Year 12, while only in the first few weeks of their course, apply themselves well to study. Listening skills are good. Whilst some Year 12 students are beginning to express themselves clearly when answering questions, Year 13 students demonstrate higher level speaking skills. Higher attaining students' work in particular shows good critical ability, for example, making realistic recommendations for improvements in communications in a care setting. Year 13 students understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care. Students use computers for word processing and Internet research, but there is scope to deliver further the use of ICT as a learning tool and resource.

225. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons have clear aims. Teachers have high expectations of the students, and encourage them to tackle higher level work, whatever their prior attainment. Very secure subject knowledge is shown by teachers with experience of tackling some of the sensitive issues outlined in the course. This encourages students to respond well to tasks set for them. Students in Year 12 were involved in role-play and lively discussion as they analysed the wide implications of blindness. Learning was enhanced by the opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and share ideas. Teachers make particularly good use of questioning as the lesson proceeds to ensure that students fully understand what they have been taught so far. There are examples of very good teaching. In a lesson on nutrients, by careful questioning, students increased their knowledge of alternative protein sources and sugars in food. Assessment is supportive and clearly indicates what students have to do to improve their standards. The pace in class is usually good, but there is some tediousness during the last fifteen minutes of a few lessons. While some lessons contain a number of different teaching strategies, others do not. Teaching promotes good working relationships. Students value the good teaching they receive and the opportunities offered to carry out work placements in the community.

226. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are well qualified and work well as a team sharing a common purpose. Recruitment of students is increasing. There is some drop out of students, but retention is satisfactory. Health and social care was not reported on at the previous inspection. A good range of courses is now offered and sixth formers see the value of the qualification to their future career choices.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>College grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the college	3	3
How inclusive the college is		3
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the college	3	3
Overall standards achieved		4
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the college		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the college seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the college's links with parents		2
The quality of the college's links with the community	1	1
The college's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the college		3
The governance of the college	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		3
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).