

INSPECTION REPORT

LATIMER COMMUNITY ARTS COLLEGE

Barton Seagrave, Kettering

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122066

Headteacher: Mr C Grimshaw

Lead inspector: Mr H E G White

Dates of inspection: 19th – 23rd January 2004

Inspection number: 260798

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1146
College address:	Castle Way Barton Seagrave Kettering Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN15 6SW
Telephone number:	01536 720300
Fax number:	01536 720303
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs V Pinnell
Date of previous inspection:	16 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

Latimer Community Arts College is a popular, oversubscribed, bigger than average sized, comprehensive college for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It is situated in Barton Seagrave about two miles to the south east of Kettering town centre and serves a mixed urban and rural community. It is a specialist Arts College, and has received Artsmark gold, Careers Mark, Investors in People, Princess Diana Award (for peer counselling), School Achievement and Sportmark Awards. It is involved in Young Enterprise and Combined Cadet Force initiatives. It provides an extensive Adult Education programme. There is extensive use of the Community Performing Arts centre, established summer schools in arts, sport and mathematics and community outreach in the areas of dance, English and drama. The proportion of students claiming free school meals is below the national average. There are 579 boys and 420 girls in the main college and 80 boys and 67 girls in the sixth form. Collaborative arrangements exist for the teaching of sixth form courses with four other secondary schools. Students' ability is average when they enter the college at age 11 and average when they join the sixth form at age 16. Most students are of white British heritage; less than five percent come from minority ethnic or mixed race backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational need is above the national and those with statements for physical, learning or behavioural needs are broadly in line with the national average. The college makes special provision for 8 students with hearing impairment. There are no students with English as an additional language and who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The numbers of students leaving and joining the college during the college year is low compared to schools nationally.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM [- NOTE F3]

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2795	H White	Lead inspector	Chemistry (sixth form)
15181	M E Hackney	Lay inspector	
10316	N Bertram	Team inspector	Geography (11-16) History (11-16)
1440	D W Bristow	Team inspector	Mathematics
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology
11695	A Edwards	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (sixth form)
11969	J Hardy	Team inspector	Business education
1769	M Holohan	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs
21785	V Kerr	Team inspector	Science (11-16) Biology (sixth form)
32970	M Marr	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (11-16) Citizenship
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Drama
22685	N Moss	Team inspector	English Provision for students with English as an additional language
3793	J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15154	I P Spode	Team inspector	Physical education
30128	S Stanley	Team inspector	Music (11-16) Religious education (11-16)

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections
51 High Street
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 3XE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Latimer Community Arts College provides a sound education for its students. The quality of teaching and learning, achievement and leadership and management are all satisfactory. **The college gives satisfactory value for money.**

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Over two-thirds of the teaching is good or better and the college is working to improve teaching further; there is insufficient regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching to check that this is happening.
- The quality of pastoral care is good but tutors do not have high quality assessment information to help them track the progress of their students in all subjects on a regular basis.
- The teaching of mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 9 to 11, sixth form chemistry and the provision of citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- Links with parents are very good; further improvements in college reports are needed.
- Links with other schools are very good; community links are outstanding.
- Careers education in Years 7 to 13 and work based learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Opportunities for enrichment are good.
- Students have very good and constructive relationships with staff but are insufficiently independent in their work.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form have risen. More students stay on from Year 11 into the sixth form and very good arrangements are now in place for students in Years 10 and 11 to learn at the local college of further education and through work based training. All of the key issues in the last report have been tackled but insufficient progress has been made in developing students as independent learners, improving the standards of speaking and ensuring that reports detail progress and achievement clearly. Assessment does not inform the next stages of learning. The statutory requirement for religious education is still not met fully in the sixth form. The college does not provide a daily act of worship. A high quality performing arts centre has been built since the last inspection. Significant improvements in accommodation have been made for English and mathematics, together with a display gallery for design and technology.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	C	C
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 satisfactory from Year 7 to Year 13. Students of all abilities, boys and girls, the hearing impaired, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make satisfactory progress. Achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics, ICT in Years 9 to 11, geography and history in Years 10 and 11, business studies in Years 10 and 11, citizenship and sixth form chemistry. Standards at the end of Year 9, Year 11 and in the sixth form are at the national average. GCSE results are average for similar schools. The number of students gaining 5 passes at grades A*-C has risen from 32 per cent in 1998 to 51 per cent in 2003. The number of students gaining 1 pass at grades A* to G was well above the national average in 2003. The work related course is helping students who might have stopped attending college make satisfactory progress in their chosen vocational area.

Students' competence in English language, literacy and ICT skills is satisfactory; numeracy skills are good.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well nurtured throughout the college. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and most enjoy and take part in the wide range of activities offered at the college. Students' cultural, moral and social development is good; spiritual awareness is only satisfactory due to insufficient planned opportunities to develop this. Attendance, attitudes, behaviour and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a sound education for its students. Satisfactory teaching and learning are resulting in satisfactory achievement in all years. Teaching is good in over half of lessons but a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching remains, especially in mathematics, citizenship, ICT in Years 9 to 11 and sixth form chemistry. Teaching is consistently very good in drama and music and good in English, science, art and design, biology, dance, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and religious education.

Overall the college offers a satisfactory curriculum including a wide range of courses for students aged 14 to 19. Extra-curricular provision is good. Participation in the arts and sport are good. Partnership with parents is very good and the outstanding links with the community are central to the college's mission to be at the heart of the community. The college cares effectively for its students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Leadership by the head teacher and the leadership team is satisfactory overall; the head has clarity of vision, sense of purpose and drive to improve the quality of education at the college. The governing body challenges the college critically and ensures that financial planning is very good. Governance is unsatisfactory because some statutory requirements highlighted in the last report have not been fully tackled. Citizenship in Years 7 to 11 does not meet the statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are very satisfied with the college and the progress their children make. They appreciate the care shown to their children and the arrangements that are made to help children settle into the college. Students enjoy attending the college, where they are expected to work hard and do their best.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the teaching of mathematics, ICT in Years 9 to 11 and chemistry in the sixth form is at least satisfactory.
- Ensure that the provision of citizenship meets statutory requirements.
- Monitor more frequently and rigorously the quality of teaching to eliminate the unsatisfactory teaching.
- Encourage students, including those in the sixth form, to develop independent skills of learning.
- Improve the assessment for learning in order to plan for the next stages of learning.
- Ensure that tutors have high quality data to track the students' progress and set challenging targets.
- Ensure that college reports to parents detail progress and achievement clearly.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the statutory requirements for citizenship, religious education in the sixth form and the daily act of corporate worship are fully met.

THE SIXTH FORM AT LATIMER COMMUNITY ARTS COLLEGE

The sixth form is of average size: the intake is comprehensive. A wide range of advanced level GCE and vocational courses is offered at the college or through collaboration with other local sixth forms.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a sound sixth form. Students receive satisfactory teaching and their achievement is satisfactory. Examination results are average. Standards seen during the inspection are average overall. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory and students are 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 pass rate has increased from 84 per cent to 95 per cent over the last five years and the average grades achieved have also risen.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and vocational areas; interesting lessons motivate students well.
- Students are insufficiently independent in their work.
- The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of subjects to study and good progression from the courses offered in Years 10 and 11.
- Pastoral care is good; students are very well supported as they prepare for education and training when they leave college.
- Provision for mathematics has remained unsatisfactory: chemistry is unsatisfactory.
- Students do not all follow a course of religious education based on the Agreed Syllabus, nor can students participate in a daily act of collective worship.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of mathematics remains unsatisfactory. Standards have risen and attainment is often higher than expected from the students' previous GCSE results.

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' personal research is weak. Communication studies was sampled: teaching is good. French was sampled: teaching is satisfactory .
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory in mathematics. Teaching and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Science	Satisfactory in biology. Good teaching is leading to good learning and improving achievement Unsatisfactory in chemistry. Teaching and leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Human biology was sampled; teaching was good . Physics was sampled; teaching was very good .
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory in ICT. The new team leader is tackling the inadequacies.
Humanities	Satisfactory in history. Source material is wide ranging; opportunities for discussion are too limited. Geography was sampled: teaching satisfactory . Law was sampled: teaching was good . Psychology was sampled: teaching was satisfactory .

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Good in design and technology. ICT is very well used; achievement in practical work is very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art and design. Teaching is very good; ICT provision is inadequate. Very good in drama. Teaching, learning and achievement are all very good. Dance was sampled; teaching is good . Music was sampled: teaching is very good .
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory in physical education. Teaching is good; ICT provision is a weakness.
Business	Satisfactory in business education. Teaching and achievement are good; management is unsatisfactory.
Health and social care	Health and social care was sampled: teaching is very good .
General education	In 2002 examinations AS results were average ; A2 results were above average .

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **good** support, advice and guidance. They respond positively to the support they receive from teachers who know them well. Procedures for involving them in the life of the college through community service, the Sixth Form and School Councils and formal representation on the governing body are **good**.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **well nurtured** and students demonstrate a clear respect for the views of others and are willing to share their thoughts and feelings with confidence.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The Head of Sixth Form is providing **sound** leadership and management. Good links have been established with other local sixth forms (to extend the flexibility of timetable construction and the range of subjects which can be studied), the Connexions Service, Further and Higher Education and local businesses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy attending this college. They appreciate how readily accessible and helpful their teachers are, the quality of teaching they receive and the supportive way their work is marked.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 11. This reflects the satisfactory levels of teaching and learning in lessons and the way that the work of the staff is reviewed annually to check that students in their classes reach or exceed their predicted grades. The achievement of students with special educational needs, including the hearing impaired, from those minority ethnic backgrounds and the most able is also **satisfactory**.

Achievement of students in the sixth form is **satisfactory**. This reflects the satisfactory teaching and learning in lessons. Achievement is limited by the students' lack of independence as learners.

Standards of work seen are **average** in Years 7 to 13 with boys doing as well as girls. Students' competence in mathematical skills is **good** and **satisfactory** in English language, literacy and ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The number of students achieving 5 high grade GCSE passes has risen from 32 per cent to 51 per cent over the past six years.
- Standards in the sixth form are improving
- Achievement in drama is very good.
- Progress in lessons is improving as the quality of teaching improves.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics, ICT in Years 9 to 11, citizenship, geography and history in Years 10 and 11, business studies in Years 10 and 11 and chemistry in the sixth form.
- Systems are not yet in place to enable heads of department and pastoral staff to have high quality data to track the students' progress and set challenging targets on a regular basis.

Commentary

1. In the 2003 tests for 14-year-olds, results at the end of Year 9 were at the national average. These results are below average when compared to their prior attainment on entry to the college; they should have achieved better results in mathematics. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, standards were at the national average. These results are also at the national average when compared to schools with students of similar levels of attainment in Year 9. This represents satisfactory achievement when compared to their average level of attainment on entry to the college. 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 has risen from 32 per cent in 1998 to 51 per cent in 2003. The improvement in GCSE results is in line with the national trend.

2. Standards of work seen are average in Years 9 and 11. This reflects the satisfactory levels of teaching, learning and achievement. The quality of teaching is improving and students are now making good progress in just under half of lessons. Time will be needed before this becomes good achievement over time and reflected in improved test and examination results. In drama, teaching, learning and achievement are very good. In mathematics in Years 7 to 11 and ICT in Years 9 to 11 achievement is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory teaching and learning in these subjects. In mathematics the Key Stage 3 strategy and the new GCSE modular course are beginning to improve provision, In ICT the recently appointed head of department is driving improvement and teaching and learning have improved in Years 7 and 8. Achievement over time is unsatisfactory in geography and history where GCSE results have fallen over several years because students have fallen behind in their work. These difficulties have been successfully resolved, teaching is now good, but time will be needed for these students to catch up with the knowledge and understanding they currently lack. Achievement in business studies in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because

students do not take responsibility for learning their work and developing their skills over time. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship due to unsatisfactory curriculum planning.

3. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good in their specialist withdrawal groups for literacy and numeracy. Students with hearing impairment also make good progress in their specialist language groups. However, the standards achieved in subjects vary widely. This variation is due to the differing levels of support provided by subject departments and their commitment to the needs of students with special learning needs. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory.

4. The college's analysis of the test and examination results of students from ethnic minority backgrounds shows that these students make satisfactory progress.

5. There are very few students in the college for whom English is not their first language. None of these students are in the early stages of English acquisition and therefore do not receive extra teaching from specialists employed by the local education authority. Students who do not speak English as their first language achieve satisfactorily, through the care their classroom teachers take to ensure that they have full understanding of their work and the support, where possible of special educational needs assistants. The college does not review the progress of these students other than in the same way that other students' progress is tracked and reviewed.

6. The analysis of test and examination data concentrates on checking that students achieve or exceed their predicted levels of attainment. It does not separate out the extent by which predictions have been exceeded, nor does it review the attainment of groups of students such as those who are higher attaining, those with special educational needs including hearing impairment or those for whom English is not their first language. The present system of using of data is not effectively raising standards beyond predictions. Ongoing tracking of students' progress is now developing across the college, but there is as yet no system for collating this information on a regular basis during the college year. Heads of department cannot compare students' progress between subjects and pastoral staff cannot track the progress of individual students or groups of students on a regular basis and set appropriate targets. The college is not currently able to track the progress of the ten percent of students who enter the college on the basis of their talents in the performing arts and this is a weakness

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

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	33.0 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	34.7 (35.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.2 (34.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 202 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	51.0 (49.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92.0 (90.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (94.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	36.2 (34.7)	34.5 (N/A)

There were 203 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

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

8. Standards seen are average and achievement is satisfactory because of satisfactory teaching and learning in lessons and the work provided for study periods. Achievement is very good in drama because of the very good teaching. Achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics and chemistry where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Achievement is limited in most subjects by the students' lack of independence as learners.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.0 (80.3)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	25.4 (25.8)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	238.8 (242.7)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 52 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory** overall. Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory** and relationships throughout the college are **very good**. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall with moral and social education being the stronger features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The College's positive ethos and good range of arts and sports activities make a good contribution to students' moral and social development.
- Very good and constructive relationships with the staff enable students to gain confidence and self-esteem.
- The procedures for the prompt monitoring, recording and follow-up of absence are not sufficiently rigorous.
- Students are not given enough planned opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness.
- Not enough is done to encourage students, including those in the sixth form, to develop independent skills of learning.

Commentary

9. Most students have a satisfactory attitude towards college although some are often passive and slow to respond during lessons. They often lack a sense of independence for their own learning and depend upon the teacher to provide the necessary information. Relationships are very good. Students are confident to ask for help if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work or with personal problems. Behaviour is satisfactory. However, in some lessons where the quality of teaching does not engage students' interest, classroom management is weak or there is insufficient support for students with special educational needs, behaviour deteriorates and some students become noisy and disruptive. The staff work hard to promote good behaviour and self-discipline and deal very effectively with all forms of bullying or harassment.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last college year

Categories used in the Annual College Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1093	66	3
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0

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

10. The number of permanent exclusions is low and fixed term exclusions which involve 29 boys and 10 girls are generally in line with those of similar schools. The College does all it can to support disaffected students within the College only excluding them when there is no alternative. In such cases the College ensures they receive appropriate support, for example, through alternative courses at the College of Further Education.

11. Students' personal development is satisfactory and opportunities within the College and partner institutions contribute well to their progress and achievements. Students make a good contribution to the life of the college. They take on additional responsibilities such as membership of the College Council and Kettering Youth Council, Years 8 receptionists and training as counsellors in Years 10 and 11 for the Students Offering Support scheme and for mediation work at the nearby primary school. In all year groups students have the opportunity to take part in residential visits in this country and abroad and this makes a strong contribution to their independence and social development. Students work well together with partners and in small groups which develops their social skills and ability to co-operate and share ideas and knowledge. Students with special educational needs, hearing impairment and English as an additional language are very well integrated

12. Students' moral and social education is good and these aspects are developed well through the positive ethos, clear systems of commendation and reward, wider opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular provision. Insufficient time is allocated for the personal, social and health education programme and this does not provide enough opportunities for the formal teaching of

these important aspects of students' personal development. Good provision is made for sex and drugs education.

13. Students' spiritual awareness and experience is enriched through such areas as music, drama, dance and art and design. Opportunities are often missed within the planned curriculum for reflection and the development of independent curiosity. The students' spiritual development is limited by the College's unsatisfactory provision for collective worship. Where opportunities are provided for reflection and discussion of spiritual ideas, students clearly respect the views and beliefs of others and are willing to share their thoughts and feelings.

14. Students' cultural awareness is good. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. They appreciate a range of multicultural music and through religious education they develop an awareness of world religions and global cultures. Visits to places of cultural and educational interest and visitors to the college including artists and theatre companies enrich the curriculum.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
College data:	7.3
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
College data :	0.3
National data:	1.1

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

15. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. However, the College's procedures for the day-to-day monitoring and recording of attendance do not ensure that prompt action is taken regarding unauthorised absence nor absence from lessons, and this is unsatisfactory. The majority of students are punctual. Students in the sixth form register with Connexions cards and this has improved their attendance and punctuality. A significant number of students take holidays during term time and this results in them missing important parts of their education.

Sixth form

16. Students enjoy life in the sixth form and describe the teaching as challenging and demanding. They recognise their responsibilities for more independent study and they value the opportunity to set their own targets and objectives through regular discussion with teachers. Their attitudes to work are satisfactory although many students often rely too much on their teachers for information and guidance on the organisation of their work. Students have very good and constructive relationships with their teachers and with one another. The quality of these relationships makes a strong contribution to developing students' confidence and enables open and honest dialogue to take place.

17. Students respond willingly to the many opportunities the College offers. In lessons, they take pride in their work and demonstrate a sensible and purposeful approach in order to achieve the best possible results. Beyond lessons they participate with enthusiasm in a wide range of activities which widen their horizons, help them to become responsible citizens and make a significant contribution to college life. These include Year 12-induction team building exercises, community service either within the college or in the local community and membership of the Sixth Form Committee. A significant strength of the College is the membership of two students from the sixth form who are appointed to the governing body and this provides them with a clear voice about the running of the college.

18. Students are very aware of the impact that their actions can have on others and they act as good role models for younger students. They have a good knowledge and understanding of what the College expects of them and they respond well. Most students have a healthy respect for the views of other people. Through discussions during lessons and other activities they are careful not to dismiss the opinions of others even though they may disagree with them.

19. As with the main college students' moral, social and cultural education is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory, and students' experience is often enriched by their involvement in the arts. The general studies syllabus provides some opportunities for students to consider a range of spiritual issues but not all students in Years 12 and 13 follow this course. Planned opportunities in other subjects to enhance this feature of personal development are limited. Where opportunities exist for reflection and discussion of spiritual matters students demonstrate a clear respect for the views of others and are willing to share their thoughts and feelings. The College's unsatisfactory provision for collective worship does not contribute to students' spiritual development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The college provides a **sound** education for its students throughout Years 7 to 13.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 13. Assessment is **satisfactory** throughout the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently very good in drama and music and students achieve very well.
- Over two-thirds of the teaching is good.
- There is insufficient, rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics, citizenship, ICT in Years 9 to 11 and sixth form chemistry.
- The use of assessment to plan future learning activities is underdeveloped.
- Insufficient attention is paid to developing students as independent learners

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 186 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (2%)	48 (27%)	71 (38%)	50 (27%)	10 (6%)	1	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.

20. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Achievement is satisfactory and reflects the results in external tests and examinations where students enter the college at the national average, and standards remain at the national average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.

21. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The college is successfully focusing on improving teaching by designing lessons that recognise the different ways that different students learn. Teaching is now good or better in over two-thirds of the lessons. Students' progress in these lessons is now good, but time will be needed for this to build into good achievement and lead to higher test and examination results. A very good English lesson with Year 10 boys effectively combined background music with a time of silent reading. The following activities reflected the various ways students learn and there was a short break for mental and physical

activity after which the boys settled quickly and worked with greater effort. The advanced skills' teachers are well deployed at whole college and departmental level but there is insufficient, rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning to check that improvements are taking place.

22. Teaching in this Performing Arts College is consistently very good in drama and music where very good use is made of the state of the art facilities. Some very good teaching also occurs in English, mathematics, science, art and design, dance, design and technology, geography, German, history, media studies, personal, social, citizenship and health education and physical education. This is a good basis from which to improve further the quality of teaching and learning across the college. In these lessons teachers know their subject very well and explain ideas and demonstrate skills to a very high level. Teachers know their students very well, and plan lessons that cater very well for the different levels of ability of students in each group. Students enjoy their lessons, work seriously, and make very good strides in improving their knowledge and understanding. They behave very well because they are presented with a range of activities which engage their interest, and give them very good opportunities to work independently or in groups to develop their thinking skills. In some of these lessons, teachers use very well thought out questions to check on students' progress throughout the lesson. By using high quality self evaluation tasks and skilful application of GCSE marking criteria in Years 10 and 11, students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their work.

23. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in mathematics and ICT in Years 9 to 11. Unsatisfactory teaching also occurs in business education and religious education. Lesson planning is weak; the purposes of the lessons are not well thought out and activities are unimaginative. Tasks are not well matched to the abilities of students in the group. Misconceptions and imprecise answers are not corrected and the pace of lessons is too slow. In some lessons, class management skills are weak.

24. Assessment is satisfactory. It predominately takes the form of an assessment of what has been learned at the end of each topic. Insufficient attention is given to using questioning in lessons and the marking of student's work to find out about an individual student's learning during a topic in order to plan activities to help the individual make further progress. Too often students are informed about the effort that they are making rather than about the quality of the work they should be aspiring to and the steps by which this could be achieved. Insufficient attention is paid to developing students as independent learners. Often students are able to be passive in lessons and rely on their teachers rather than think things out for themselves

25. The teaching of students with special needs is satisfactory overall and good in the Learning Support Department. The withdrawal groups benefit from well-planned and intensive sessions together with effective and extensive use of computers to support their learning. The teaching of hearing impaired students is of good quality and this reflects the specialist skills of the teaching staff. Within main college lessons, however, the quality of the teaching received by students with special educational needs varies between departments. In some departments, such as design/technology and science, the strong lead and commitment of the staff and the subject managers result in good provision. In other subjects, however, insufficient attention is paid to students' needs and sometimes teachers are unfamiliar with students' individual educational targets. The teaching of students with special needs is also hampered by a lack of support staff. This can cause behaviour problems and disrupt learning. Also teachers are not provided with information on the strategies they can use to meet the learning and behaviour needs of students.

Sixth form

26. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good in over half of the lessons and whilst achievement is often good, too frequently it is limited by students' over dependence on their teachers and their unwillingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, lessons are well planned with good use of time and resources for learning. Assessment is satisfactory and is in line with the requirements of the GCE specifications. As in Years 7 to 11, insufficient attention is paid to the use

of assessment to plan future learning activities. Teaching is very good in art and design, drama and design and technology but unsatisfactory in mathematics and chemistry.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall, but **good** in the sixth form. The opportunities for enrichment are **good**. Staffing is **very good** in the sixth form and **good** in the main college. Accommodation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good staffing in the sixth form, and good curriculum breadth.
- The preparation for later stages of education and employment are good.
- The college is very committed towards the needs of students with special educational needs.
- The college does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship or religious education for all sixth form students.
- Opportunities for enrichment are good, particularly in the performing arts.
- Accommodation is good overall, but excellent for the performing arts.

Commentary

27. The curriculum provision in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The college provides for the National Curriculum, and the breadth of the provision is very good in drama, and good in English, music, art and design and modern languages. The breadth of curricular opportunities in mathematics is satisfactory, but provision overall in mathematics, ICT in Years 9 to 11 and citizenship are unsatisfactory. The balance of time allocated to each subject is satisfactory, except that insufficient provision is made for the new requirement to teach National Curriculum programmes of study for citizenship. Students do not have a daily act of collective worship, which is a statutory requirement.

28. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum provision is also satisfactory. In these years students are offered a broader curriculum, which includes greater attention to preparation for work. In relation to the National Curriculum the provision is very good in drama, and good in English, science, music, art and design and modern languages. The breadth of curricular opportunities in mathematics is satisfactory, but provision overall in mathematics, ICT in Years 9 to 11 and citizenship is unsatisfactory and students do not have collective worship daily. There are good opportunities for students of lower attainment to follow an appropriately structured programme that provides good progression to opportunities post-16, and there is a very good programme organised in collaboration with local colleges for students who are benefiting less from the curriculum at Latimer college. The college prepares all students well for the opportunities and challenges they will face in education or employment post-16 because careers education in Years 7 to 13 and work based learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good.

29. The commitment of the college towards the needs of special needs students is demonstrated in several ways. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. The provision of a work related curriculum for some of the older students has been very successful and results in them gaining a range of appropriate vocational qualifications. Specialist accommodation is of good quality and the college buildings effectively meet the needs of hearing impaired students. The department is well resourced. Specialist, individual teaching ensures students' needs are met. This is demonstrated by activities such as drumming lessons for hearing impaired students. Support staff are well trained and effective. However, there are too few to meet the needs of all the students on the special needs register.

30. There are good opportunities for enrichment. There are very good opportunities for students to take part in drama, music and dance outside the formal curriculum, and there are also good opportunities in dance. Students have good opportunities to take part in enrichment sports activities,

staff organise revision classes and visits, and the library is developing its support for learning outside the college day.

31. The curriculum is well supported by the good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the curriculum. It is also enhanced by the college's accommodation, which is good overall, but particularly in the performing arts where the excellent facilities for this specialist college can best be described as "state of the art" and contribute effectively to good standards. The quantity and quality of resources is satisfactory.

Sixth form

32. The sixth form curriculum is broad and varied. At AS and A level, 24 subjects are offered including vocational courses in business studies and health and social care. The range is good, encompassing all the traditional academic subjects and "newer" subjects such as law, psychology and accountancy. The organisation of subjects into option columns provides an unusually high level of flexibility. For example, offering biology and human biology in different option blocks provides good combinations for both the traditional science students and those heading for professions such as nursing or sports science. The consortium, which involves four other local secondary schools, adds much to the flexibility available and helps to facilitate unusual combinations. The consortium also ensures that subjects that traditionally attract few candidates are taught in viable groups. This arrangement is not only cost-effective but also generates lively teaching groups. Careful timetabling minimises the possible disruption produced by the movement of students and teachers from one school to another. This longstanding co-operation between the four schools is very effective and adds much to curricular opportunities. In Year 12, most students take AS level general studies, which includes religious education and key skills. The provision for general studies is optional in Year 13. This means that for a significant number of students, the statutory obligation to provide religious education for all students is not being met. In addition to the formal curriculum, there is a good programme of enrichment activities, which support academic and social development well.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care, welfare, health and safety are **good** and procedures are well established. Students in Years 7 to 11 receive **satisfactory** support, advice and guidance from their teachers. There are **satisfactory** procedures for involving these students in the College's work and development. In the sixth form students receive **good** support, advice and guidance and the procedures for involving them in the work of the College through community service are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good and trusting relationships with their teachers.
- The College is good at providing supportive alternative courses at the College of Further Education for students with special difficulties.
- Students receive very good advice about careers and options.
- Students in the sixth form are effectively supported and their progress is satisfactorily recorded and monitored.
- Good induction arrangements ensure that students settle in quickly and are well cared for.
- There is no central on-going tracking system to ensure that students' progress is well monitored on a regular basis.
- Individual education plans do not fully support students with statements of special educational needs.

Commentary

33. The College's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of students are good. Statutory requirements for health and safety are met in full. Child protection procedures meet requirements, and all staff are made fully aware of the procedures to follow in the case of concerns. There are effective arrangements, including efficient filters, to ensure the safety of students when using the Internet. The very good relationships and the College's positive and supportive ethos help

to raise students' self-esteem and confidence. This makes a strong contribution to their personal development.

34. Students feel secure that the staff know their achievements and personal development and support them well. However, in Years 7 to 11 the College has not put in place a central and consistent tracking system to assess students' academic progress and to closely monitor individual targets. The achievements of students with a special affiliation for the arts are not being formally tracked as a group to support their individual needs. This is limiting teachers' knowledge of students' progress and does not support the raising of standards.

35. There are good induction arrangements for Year 7 students and this ensures that they are well supported and helped to settle quickly into secondary education. Students are well advised when making their choices of subjects to study for GCSE examinations, with parental involvement and arrangements made for one-to-one consultations between students and teachers. The provision for Careers education is very good and supported well by the Connexions service and opportunities for work experience and Young Enterprise.

36. The College provides very good support, often in partnership with the Colleges of Further Education, for those students who have been, or are in danger of being, excluded from college. A number of students attend courses such as motor vehicle maintenance, electronics and hairdressing on some days during the week, and this has successfully integrated them back into a learning environment. The college takes prompt action to deal with any instances of bullying or racial harassment and ensures that appropriate support is provided for students.

37. Assessment arrangements for Year 7 students with special educational needs are extensive and of good quality. However, subsequent arrangements vary in effectiveness. Students' learning and behaviour targets lack precision and are often repeated from year to year. Assessment data and targets are circulated to all teaching staff. However teaching staff are not provided with strategies to enable them to effectively interpret the data or implement the targets.

38. Students appreciate the fact that their views matter in shaping the College environment, and they value the College Council and membership of the Kettering Youth Council as the student voice. The Council is well organised by a sixth form tutor and a student chairperson with representatives from each year group, and many of their suggestions have been acted upon. These have included improvements to the cost of food in the canteen. However, students are concerned about the long queues at lunchtime, the lack of student lockers and unpleasant toilet facilities and these issues remain unaddressed.

Sixth form

39. The very good relationships which students establish with teachers on entry to Year 12 are well maintained throughout the sixth form. Students are well supported through good induction arrangements into their sixth form studies and they appreciate the well informed advice and guidance they receive for individual courses. The head of the sixth form provides students with good and up-to-date guidance on managing the demands of A-level courses. Form tutors know their groups of students very well and they provide good pastoral support for them. Students speak highly about the support they receive and feel that the staff always make time for them. They value the regular one-to-one sessions with their subject tutors and the regular opportunity to discuss their work. The College places a strong emphasis on the commitment of students and provides good assistance and support to those who are in difficulties with their chosen subjects. Students sign an agreement with the College and this provides them with very clear guidelines about their role and responsibilities as members of the sixth form.

40. Through community service and membership of committees students have a strong voice in the life of the College. Students' views are taken seriously and they have influenced a number of improvements to social facilities and extended activities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a **very good** partnership with parents who hold the College in high regard. The **outstanding** community links and **excellent** partnership with other schools and colleges enrich the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive and have considerable confidence in the College.
- The welcoming nature of the College likened by parents 'to a primary school' encourages the strong partnership.
- The College provides parents with helpful information about the curriculum and organisation through regular communications.
- Reports to parents do not consistently provide sufficient detailed information about students' progress and what they need to do to improve.
- Excellent links with the community enrich the curriculum and the College has a very good partnership with a wide range of businesses and industry.
- Strong curricular links are well established with the primary schools and Colleges of Further Education.

Commentary

41. The contribution of parents to the work of the College is good and has an impact on students' achievements. A significant number of parents attend after college courses organised by the Lifelong Learning Service and some students and parents learn alongside each other. Summer schools are successfully organised and The Masque Performing Arts Centre is a catalyst for the whole community. Some parents provide valuable help with extra-curricular activities and assist when students go out on trips. Two members of the local community provide regular valuable help to support the design and technology curriculum. The Latimer PTA is an active group of parents who support the College well by arranging a number of social and community events to raise considerable extra funding. The College seeks parents' views through questionnaires aimed at particular year groups and many parents respond positively.

42. The College provides good and helpful information about the curriculum and organisation on a regular basis and parents appreciate the monthly newsletters. Some parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress. Inspectors agree that the reports are inconsistent across the year groups and do not always relate clearly to progress in learning for individual subjects. Targets for improvement are often insufficiently detailed to ensure that students and parents clearly understand what needs to be done to improve. 'Keep up the good work' does not sufficiently point a student towards improving their progress in a subject.

43. Parents are kept informed of developments regarding the support and progress of students with a statement of special educational need. They are involved with the annual reviews of their child's statements.

44. Community links are outstanding and the College prides itself on being at the heart of the community. The Masque Performing Arts Centre and the sports facilities are in constant use by a large number of people from the local community. Students in Years 7 to 13 benefit from the expertise of adults with extensive industrial and craft experience and highly qualified engineers who offer regular services to the College to support courses in design and technology. Students relate very positively to the excellent support of mentors from industry who are successfully enabling them to stay on at college. Strong links with the church provide good additional learning experiences for students, and a range of church activities make use of the College facilities.

45. There are excellent and well managed links with other colleges. The arrangements for shared provision, training opportunities and curricular expertise with local infant, primary, secondary and

special schools is very effective. A particular strength is through the College's Advanced Skills Teachers who provide regular teaching and learning support to other colleges, primary and secondary schools in English, drama and dance. In the sixth form there are long-standing arrangements with four other schools to cover combinations of AS/A2 levels and shared 'A' level teachers for minority subjects. Generally this works well and adds to the flexibility of the curriculum and allows a wider choice of learning programmes. Very close links with Tresham College and Moulton College make very good provision for disaffected students and successfully provides them with an alternative curriculum which is very well managed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The governing body of the college has many strengths but governance is unsatisfactory due to ongoing breaches in statutory requirements which were raised in the previous inspection report. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory overall; particularly noteworthy are his vision, sense of purpose, high aspirations and strategic planning. The leadership of key staff and the effectiveness of management are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment and ability of the governing body helps shape the vision and direction of the college; and provides challenge and support to the senior management team.
- Financial management and application of the best value principles are very good.
- The college has a clear focus on developing workforce capacity through consistent performance management, coaching, professional development and induction systems. The governing body has failed to ensure that the college fulfils some of its statutory duties.
- The college does not make sufficient use of performance data to review achievement of specific groups of students, set appropriate individual targets or track students' academic progress.
- The new approaches to improve teaching and learning are not fully embedded throughout the college.

Commentary

46. The head teacher is a powerful driving force within the college and wider community and he has concentrated on the development of leadership teams throughout the organisation and the improvement of teaching and learning. The governing body shares his vision for a college that enables all students to achieve irrespective of background. They challenge and support the college through excellent communication structures and effective procedures. However they have been unable to ensure all sixth form students study religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus and that all students participate in a daily act of collective worship. Whilst they have ensured that the college provides all National Curriculum subjects and have assured all programmes of study are in place, citizenship currently does not meet the statutory requirements in Years 7 to 11.

47. The work of the senior management team has been recently refocused to increase their efficiency in supporting and challenging middle leadership. However, as yet their work lacks consistency. Staff relationships are very good and characterised by mutual respect and a shared understanding by all academic, pastoral and ancillary staff of the need to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning to raise attainment.

48. Leadership by middle managers is inconsistent. It ranges from very good in English, science and drama, to unsatisfactory in mathematics, citizenship and chemistry in the sixth form and broadly reflects to quality of teaching and levels of achievement in these areas.

49. The quality of management is satisfactory overall. College self-evaluation procedures are in place that monitor performance and review patterns of attainment in national tests and examination results across all subjects. These outcomes are very closely linked to the way the performance of teachers is managed. There is as yet no system to collate information about students' progress

across the different subjects regularly throughout the college year. Heads of departments and pastoral staff can not monitor the progress of individual students and groups of students on a regular basis.

50. Structured systems for managing the performance of teachers are in place and teachers' targets are annually reviewed. However a lack of regular, rigorous monitoring of teaching by middle leaders is hindering the spread of best practice and failing to identify important weaknesses. Professional development is well led and very effective. External providers, advanced skills teachers and experienced members of staff are well used, particularly where underachievement has been identified, to coach and support staff. A rolling programme of subject heads joining the senior management team is improving their understanding and skills as middle managers, as is the internal leadership-training programme.

51. The college improvement plan is thorough and detailed. It clearly identifies college priorities and how they are to be achieved. Very efficient financial planning processes and administrative procedures are in place that support the college's priorities and strategic planning. The college is undertaking considerable capital build, and through the skills of an experienced finance manager working closely with the governors and head teacher, the college has maintained a balanced budget and ensured that the principles of best value are understood and applied. The income per student, whilst high, is acceptable when compared with the similar colleges. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

52. The newly appointed special needs co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the future needs of the department. The strategic plan for the department's future is wide ranging and accurate. Of particular note is the intention to strengthen links with other schools to facilitate the exchange of best practice. The number of students on the special needs register is significantly above the national average for schools of this type. This is a consequence of the college's definition of students who need support. The college is generous in its definition but needs to consider the resources and staffing necessary to support it effectively.

Sixth form

53. Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. The head of sixth form provides sound leadership for taking this area of the college's work forward. He has a clear view for the way ahead and is actively developing links that will enhance provision. He is supported by a team of committed sixth form tutors and member of the leadership team. There are good links with the other local sixth forms, Connexions Service, Further and Higher Education and local businesses to help students to identify their best routes forward. A strong feature is the extent to which the college works with four other sixth forms to provide 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 vocational opportunities. The head of sixth form maintains a focus on pastoral management and the achievement of individual students, with prior performance and current achievement in class being used to assess progress and set targets. Regular monitoring systems are in place but the under-performance in mathematics and chemistry has not been tackled effectively Overall costs for the sixth form are cost effective. The governing body 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. This is clearly indicated with the proposed build of the new sixth form centre.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3 633 870	Balance from previous year	349 570
Total expenditure	3 748 189	Balance carried forward to the next	207 300
Expenditure per student	3 407		

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

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11.
- The Key Stage 3 literacy strategy has been introduced well in the planning of lessons, as well as in programmes of work, and the breadth of curriculum opportunities offered to students is good.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and it is managed well.
- Standards of speaking are lower than those in reading and writing.
- Students do not always write fully enough in timed conditions.
- Students are insufficiently independent in their work.
- Accommodation is very good and resources good.

Commentary

54. Current standards in English are average by the end of Year 9, but are above the national average by the end of Year 11. In the 2003 tests in Year 9, results were below average, but work seen during the inspection indicates that standards in the current Year 9 are average. In Year 11, examination results in 2003 were above average and this level was reflected during the inspection. Students' achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and it is frequently good in lessons as teachers increasingly use the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy well. It is good by the end of Year 11, when measured against national standards, the level with which students enter the college and the level attained in Year 9 tests. It is clear that both standards and achievement are improving steadily, largely because of the level of stability in the department, after several years of disruption caused by absence and the need for supply staff, good teaching, good curriculum planning and very good leadership of the department. The trend in English has been a rising one at Year 11, both in English and English Literature, with little difference in the performance of boys and girls. There is, however, good stimulation and extension of the smaller than normal proportion of higher attaining students. Most students with special educational needs and those few for whom English is not a first language achieve satisfactorily in both English and English Literature.

55. Good curriculum development in the subject uses the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy well to plan good coverage of literacy targets. The head of department has produced thorough and detailed plans for all years, prompted by the literacy strategy and new examination programmes. These are ensuring improvement in the quality of work in English and English Literature, since the plans make good use of literature as a tool for the teaching of English. The department provides very well for activities outside normal lessons. There is a wide range of intervention and revision classes, in the evenings and in the holidays. Extension classes and activities are provided to stretch and stimulate the higher attaining students. There are many theatre trips and visits to support students' learning, a celebration of National Poetry Day and the establishment of a Carnegie Award reading circle. The work of the department contributes very well and significantly to students' spiritual, social and cultural development, particularly in its attention to the main concepts of citizenship and the abstractions and emotions dealt with in literature. Students in Year 9 were observed working on 'Twelfth Night' with interest, understanding and a good appreciation of the characters and humour of the play.

56. Students' speech is the weakest of their literacy skills. Students contribute readily in lessons, but often find it difficult to express themselves coherently, in a sustained fashion. Vocabulary is often

over-colloquial and sentence structure inaccurate. Students have little sense of the purpose for which they are speaking and the appropriate style to use for the occasion. They listen well, in general, and absorb what their teachers say. Reading skills are generally sound and many students read fluently, though they are less able to read for comprehension and to draw inferences from what they read. However, they do not present what they read with expression when reading aloud, although teachers plan and use many methods to help them to improve. Most students are able to write in a wide range of styles for many purposes. Teachers use homework well to enable students to complete longer pieces of work, such as coursework. Some very good coursework was seen in Years 10 and 11, such as work on 'Lord of the Flies', 'The Crucible' and 'Frankenstein', as well as students' work on advertisement, travel brochures and other media. However, when written work is done in lessons, students lack the urgency and energy to complete enough written work in the allocated time, so not taking advantage of the opportunities to practise in readiness for test and examination conditions. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are rising to match those at the end of Year 11, now that the disruption in teaching suffered earlier, particularly by the younger classes, has been stabilised.

57. The quality of teaching and learning of English is good overall, with many very good features. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. Teachers are very strong in subject knowledge and show good competency in literacy skills; they plan lessons well to provide for the needs of all students and provide them all with a very high level of encouragement. Methods used are productive, varied and interesting, incorporating successfully features of accelerated learning and ways of stimulating concentration, such as the practice of 'Brain Gym'. Classroom management of students' behaviour is good, resources and classroom assistants are used wisely and well. In many lessons, there is insufficient support assistance to help teachers deal with students with behavioural problems, resulting in some disruptive and distracting behaviour. Teachers set and mark homework regularly and productively. They do not always, however, ensure that students work with sufficient independence, without too much reliance on teachers' input, and with a good pace when tackling written work in class.

58. The committed team of teachers is very well led by the head of department, who has a clear understanding of how the subject can improve further, is making very effective innovations to the curriculum and presents a very good role model to both staff and students. She ensures that students' work is carefully monitored and their progress analysed, tracked and targeted, in a determination to ensure that standards improve even further, so that management of the subject is good. A measure of her successful leadership is the strong, collaborative team of teachers she has built, after a long period of disruption through absences. Wherever possible, especially in Years 10 and 11, students are assigned to groups appropriate for their levels of attainment and those in need of help, such as those with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language, are quickly identified and given extra support by teachers. Higher attaining students are encouraged to strengthen their skills through extension work. As a result of these factors, improvement in the quality of provision for the subject since the last inspection has been good. The good curriculum plans for all years, the measures put in place to ensure stronger speaking skills and the raised standards by Year 11, added to the improved use of assessment of students' progress, are all moving the subject forward well.

59. The department's suite of teaching rooms provides very good accommodation and resources for the subject are good. ICT is being used well in the teaching of English and in helping students to improve their literacy skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The college is well aware of the need for the national literacy strategy to be widespread throughout the college and has taken many steps to ensure that all curriculum areas of the college are aware of and involved in the need to raise standards of literacy. Many of these measures, through the action taken to promote them by the co-ordinator for literacy, are beginning to have an appreciable effect on whole college literacy. Already, there is some good practice evident in art and design, drama, design and technology, music and religious education, as well as in English. Audits are

regularly made of all subjects' progress and each department has a member designated to promote literacy skills. Strong support is now offered to students entering the college with levels of literacy below the national average. Teachers are now becoming aware of the demands and advantages of promoting literacy in their own subjects.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 11 lesson on Lord of the Flies, inspirational teaching arouses intellectual curiosity and is an excellent preparation for individual essay work

Planning for this class of high attaining students focused on engaging students' interest and arousing their intellectual curiosity. A short, brisk starter activity proved very useful in reinforcing students' knowledge of Jack and Simon's roles in the novel. Pair work on Simon's importance in the novel was fast-paced and elicited very good, informed personal response. A striking ingredient of the lesson was the teacher's ability to inspire and enthuse students, using very good dramatic presence and much well directed energy. In the main task, that of close linguistic study of passages connected with Simon, previous very good teaching was obvious in students' knowledgeable use of literary terms and styles. The teacher's expectations of the students and the level of challenge they were offered resulted in students sparking each other off and working with absolute concentration. Students were totally involved and loving their own ability to learn and explore. Altogether, an excellent lesson in its preparation for individual essays on the use of language in the novel.

To replicate this lesson a teacher must have outstanding knowledge of their subject, high expectations of what their students can achieve, the ability to plan a complex and challenging lesson and excellent management skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is well led and works as a team.
- German is well taught and students achieve well
- Students do not have the resources to work to best effect on their own.

Commentary

61. GCSE results in 2003 from full course candidates were slightly below the national average in French but above it in German. The highest grades in GCSE were reached in both languages. These results were below average for the college but not so far below as some other subjects. In relation to their other subjects boys did almost as well as boys did nationally, but girls did not do so well as other girls.

62. All students take French up to the end of Year 10, and most do so through to GCSE. Some special needs students take an Entry Level examination in French before moving on to a vocational course in Year 11. Others take a GCSE short course, in which C grades are accessible. Higher attaining students in top sets take German in addition to French from Year 8, dividing the available time between the languages. These students respond well to German perceiving access to the second language as a privilege. They achieve well in the limited time available (half that allowed for French taken as the only language) and they come close to the average national standard by the end of Year 9. Standards in modern languages overall are average and overall achievement is satisfactory, though there some special needs students who do not achieve as well as they should in Year 7 because there are too many of them taught together along with other students. Higher attaining students in Year 9 have begun work on past tense verbs but this is not yet secure. Full course classes seen in Year 11 in each language were learning well in response to good teaching. Ten of them were taking both languages on a reduced time allowance, achieving well. This is more than in most schools and represents the special provision made for gifted and talented linguists.

63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is at its best where teachers make good use of their language skills, carrying students with them by force of personality even when the latter are too lazy to be bothered. This is especially true of boys, who outnumber girls in the college. Lessons are well planned and take account of the new national strategy for students age 11 to 13. Teachers manage students well and relationships are good, which leads to good learning by the more motivated students. The department has ready access to a computer suite and technician support. One Year 8 ICT lesson was seen in which students made satisfactory progress both with their French and with their computer skills. Students with special needs normally learn as well as others, especially in listening and speaking. High attaining students in one Year 9 French lesson were insufficiently challenged and their achievement in that lesson was unsatisfactory. This is why overall standards are not better than average despite students' willingness to learn. The college does not offer sufficient support for students to work on their own because they do not have books of their own.

64. The Head of Department has been in post for a number of years during which standards have risen. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The strength of management is computerised use of assessment data to track students' progress, but it is not supported by a whole college culture of targets and review of progress. Lesson planning is secured in schemes of work and overarching policies. The college provides opportunities for students to experience France and Germany directly through study visits and other trips.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The modular GCSE course is improving provision, particularly for higher attaining students.
- A significant proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory.
- There is a fair proportion of good teaching, often linked to the use of computers; some teaching is very good.
- Much teaching focuses on developing students' skills rather than their understanding.

Commentary

65. Overall, standards in Year 11 are broadly in line with national averages, but achievement is unsatisfactory.

66. In the past, students' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 has been close to the national average. There was a jump to a higher level in 2002, but this was not sustained in 2003, so the trend since the last inspection is broadly in line with the national trend. Compared to the attainment of students in similar colleges, results were generally very high in 2002, but very low in 2003. Standards in lessons now are broadly in line with the national average. In Years 7 to 9, many students in the past have achieved results in line with their capabilities, and many are now demonstrating knowledge and skills in their lessons in line with their capabilities, but there are significant numbers who do not. For example students in a higher attaining set in Year 9 did not have a secure knowledge of standard formulae for areas of common shapes and were unable to understand or apply a formula for the volume of a prism.

67. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grade A* to C has risen considerably over the last few years, but remained below the national average in 2003. For a number of years many students have achieved lower results in GCSE mathematics than would have been expected from their performance in their other subjects. However, in 2003 most students capable of achieving a higher grade GCSE did gain at least a grade C. The attainment of students currently studying for GCSE is in line with the trend of a rising proportion of students gaining grade A* to C. While progress on this modular course holds promise that underachievement is lessening, particularly for higher attaining students, it is not yet eliminated. For example, many students carrying out a GCSE coursework

investigation over several days were making reasonable progress on the investigation itself. However, they had only a relatively limited understanding of how they could write up their work to demonstrate their abilities across the required range of problem-solving skills including making and monitoring decisions, communicating and reasoning mathematically.

68. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. All teachers plan well, select clear learning objectives and pay good attention to key vocabulary for all their lessons. In some lessons learning is good because the teacher's explanations are very clear, and are coupled with high expectations of work and behaviour. In others, learning is good because the use of portable computers or the adjacent computer suite enables students to practise their skills quickly and easily, in a situation where they can discover and correct their mistakes immediately without feeling they are failing. Occasionally, there is very good teaching. This occurs, for example, when the teacher asks a challenging question that makes students think hard, but organises them into pairs or small groups so that they have the chance to discuss their ideas with others and do not feel isolated and exposed if they cannot answer confidently first time. The subsequent interchanges between the teacher and the class enables explanations to be pitched at exactly the right level to ensure students understand the work.

69. Unsatisfactory teaching arises either when explanations are not clear, or when the teacher does not fully manage students' behaviour, or from a combination of both factors. In addition, in many lessons, teaching is too tightly focused on ensuring that students can carry out mathematical routines or techniques. Not enough attention is paid to ensuring that students understand the mathematical ideas that lie behind the techniques, and how ideas and techniques from different topics relate to each other. Over the medium term, this means that students struggle to remember increasing quantities of isolated facts and skills, leading to misunderstandings and errors. Homework is set and marked throughout, but only some classes have rigorous routines for ensuring that it is always set and completed to a high standard, and that the information teachers gather when marking students' work influences their teaching in subsequent lessons. Assessment generally is satisfactory, but students working on extended investigative tasks for GCSE coursework have a relatively limited appreciation of how they can improve their work to meet the requirements of GCSE assessment at higher standards.

70. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, staff are committed to the college, working very hard for the benefit of students, and a number of developments are improving provision. The most successful so far has been the introduction of the GCSE modular course, and this is being enhanced by further developments in homework. Attention to the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 and the departmental system for tracking students' progress term by term are improving provision in Years 7 to 9. Senior managers have identified shortcomings in the department and have taken actions to tackle these difficulties. These actions have resulted in improvement, but have not yet impacted sufficiently on teaching or achievement. Overall, therefore, department leadership has been ineffective in improving all students' achievement to satisfactory levels, and this is partly because of weaknesses in the management use of data to raise expectations.

71. The mathematics department has a specialist learning support assistant, who makes a good contribution to the learning of lower attaining students. It has good accommodation, and makes good use of a set of portable laptop computers and of access to the attached suite of networked computers.

72. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is good. The use of mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum enhances students' learning, particularly in design and technology and science. The good provision arises from training for teachers of other subjects, the creation of a good policy and collection of examples, and close liaison between the college's numeracy co-

ordinator and teachers in other subject departments that are major users of mathematics, to ensure that schemes of work are co-ordinated

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative and well-planned teaching is resulting in good achievement by all students.
- Very good leadership has established a strong ethos, effective teamwork and good management.
- Despite teachers' enthusiasm and expertise, lack of equipment is limiting students' opportunities to use ICT within the science curriculum.
- Assessment of students' attainment and progress is thorough but is not yet being used to set motivating targets for students.
- Marking of students' day-to-day work is patchy and sometimes cursory.

Commentary

74. In 2002, results in the tests taken in Year 9 were above the national averages and well above the performance of students in other colleges who had similar prior attainment. In 2003, a weaker cohort of students, on average, matched the national performance. However, the proportion reaching levels expected of higher attaining students was above the national figure. Apart from the slight dip in 2003, standards have risen steadily over recent years and have consistently been above the standards attained in the other core subjects. Both boys and girls exceed the national figures for their gender. Standards evident in lessons, exercise books and internal test results confirmed the maintenance of this good attainment and indicated that the upward trend has been regained. The ease with which Year 9 students could relate animals' adaptations to life in extreme climates to the difficult concept of surface area, exemplified good standards.

75. When these students entered the college, their attainment matched the national average. The rise in standards evident by the end of Year 9 shows good achievement. Boys, girls, high and low attaining students, some with special educational needs, share in this improved performance.

76. Results in GCSE examinations have shown gradual improvement over the last three years. A marked rise in 2003, partly due to the introduction of a more appropriate syllabus, produced results that were above the national averages. Both the proportion of students gaining higher grades (A* to C) and the overall pass rate (96 per cent of the year gained an A* to G grade) exceed the national performance. When these students' results are compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9, they all show good achievement. Atypically, boys outperform girls, but both surpass their gender averages.

77. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that standards are still rising and are above average. Year 11 students in a lower attaining group most with special educational needs and learning difficulties, showed great competency when setting up an experiment to compare the performance of different types of washing detergent. Their grasp of scientific method and the need to control variables resulted in a standard of work beyond that suggested by prior performance.

78. Teaching and learning are good. Of the lessons observed, none was unsatisfactory and over two fifths were very good. Good understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses enables teachers to plan lessons that are imaginative and very effective. Very good relationships are resulting in orderly classrooms and giving security to students, who respond with respect and consistently good behaviour. Increasingly effective use of modern technology (data projection) and well-supported practical work are enriching students' learning opportunities. These methods add clarity to the presentation of information and help to meet the needs of students who learn in different ways. They

also add a lot of interest and fun. All these elements were present in a very good lesson for a Year 7 class on the effect of high resistance in a wire carrying electricity. Students were entranced as gradually increasing voltage resulted in their wire first glowing and then melting. Their immediate understanding of how a fuse works was testament to the effectiveness of their learning. Very occasionally, lessons lack focus and do not achieve all the learning objectives.

79. Leadership is very good. There is high morale in the department and all staff, teachers and technicians, work together as a mutually supportive team, sharing fully the commitment to excellence. The present head of department (in post for the last two years), well supported by colleagues, has effected major improvements in most areas of the provision. Good management is now evident in the following developments:

- Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum. The national strategy for science has been successfully introduced and is already proving effective in the Years 7 to 9. The new GCSE course has already contributed to improved results. Increasing familiarity with the demands of the course offers good potential for a further rise in standards.
- Methods used to assess students' attainment and progress have been completely overhauled.
- Accurate and thorough data is now enabling staff to track each individual's progress and the effectiveness of their teaching.
- Support for new and inexperienced colleagues is exemplary.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is good. Careful variation in the degree of difficulty of task supports students in mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9, whilst allowing them to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers. In Years 10 and 11, the setting system and careful deployment of teachers who are skilled in working with such students ensures that special educational needs are met.
- Very good technical support is enabling students to benefit from a rich variety of experimental and practical science.

80. Some aspects of management have not yet been successfully tackled. Students are not fully involved in assessment of their work and targets designed to increase individual motivation are not yet used. Citizenship has not been successfully incorporated into the science provision. Some teachers do not mark students' day-to-day work often enough or with sufficient rigour.

81. Although ICT is used extensively by teachers to enrich the quality of lessons, students' own direct use of computers and associated equipment (data loggers etc.) is unsatisfactory. There is not enough modern equipment or access to computers within the laboratories.

82. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 7 and 8 where teachers demonstrate good command of the topics taught and planning makes it clear what students need to learn.
- Students' work in Years 7 and 8 is assessed thoroughly and guidance is given to help them improve.
- Assessment in Years 9 to 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Students in Years 9 to 11 are underachieving due to lack of challenge within their lessons.
- The recently appointed head of department has a good understanding of the areas for development and a clear vision for improvement.
- Some staff lack specialist knowledge and understanding.
- There is no rigorous and established system for observing lessons, looking at students' work and monitoring of students' progress.

Commentary

83. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is in line with national expectations. Discussion with students, scrutiny of ICT work and observing of lessons indicates that standards are just below national expectations by the end of Year 9 and that students are underachieving. Skills of word processing, desktop publishing and communicating information generally are average. However, knowledge and understanding of how computers can be used to handle data, particularly the value and use of spreadsheets and databases are below average. Through design and technology lessons students have a very good understanding of computer aided design.

84. Standards in Year 11 are just below national averages but students' prior attainment indicates that students are underachieving. Looking at coursework shows students are making limited progress from Year 10 to Year 11. Most students demonstrate through their coursework an awareness of audience and can confidently combine information from different sources including the use of the Internet. They are able to carry out basic spreadsheet and database functions but struggle to apply them to solve problems. Higher attaining students use few advanced features within databases and their evaluations lack rigour.

85. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has begun improving the quality of planning and assessment in Years 7 and 8 and this is reflected in the teaching seen in Years 7 and 8. In Years 9 to 11 the schemes of work currently do not support teachers to ensure skills, knowledge and understanding are being developed systematically. Students are learning new skills and making some progress but following discussion with students, they could achieve more. Students can add, amend and combine information from a range of sources. They are less confident using spreadsheets and databases to handle data.

86. Achievement is unsatisfactory where students are given too few opportunities to work independently to solve problems where they can apply skills previously used at home. Often all students are given the same task with little guidance given for using more advanced skills.

87. Where teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 9 to 11, teacher expectations are too low, students are unclear what they need to learn and how to improve. Students are making insufficient progress. Whilst they work hard to help and support students in their learning, some of the teachers lack experience and expertise to teach the subject in depth and would benefit from further training. Students' misconceptions are not challenged and high attaining students are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their thinking and to work independently. Whilst talking to students in lessons, many are using more advanced skills on their computers at home but they are not given opportunities to develop these skills independently in lessons.

88. Teaching in Years 7 and 8 is good where effective teaching strategies are adopted as a result of following the Key Stage 3 strategy and when students are clear about what they are expected to learn.

89. Assessment is satisfactory for Years 7 and 8. Students' work is marked at the end of each unit and graded in line with national curriculum levels. Appropriate guidance is given so that students know what they have to do to improve. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory for Years 9 to 11. Marking is inconsistent and consequently students are often unclear as to how they are performing and do not know how to make improvements to their work.

90. A recently appointed, enthusiastic and committed leader with very good subject knowledge is driving improvement and has the capacity to effect change. Priority has been to improve provision for Years 7 and 8 which is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Leadership is satisfactory.

91. Management is currently unsatisfactory. There is limited monitoring of student performance, which restricts the ability to meet the needs of individual students. There is insufficient support for new non-specialist teachers. Systems are not in place to enable key priorities to be targeted and supported through professional development opportunities.

92. Since the previous inspection students now have opportunities to experience control technology within ICT discrete lessons and through CAD/CAM in design and technology. Current reporting arrangements still do not give sufficient information about students' individual attainment and progress. Technician time has improved but part time provision does not fully meet the demands of ICT across the college. ICT accommodation has improved since the last inspection. There are now 3 dedicated suites and clusters of computers throughout the college. Rooms are a good size. Insufficient computers in some suites require students in Years 7 to 9 to share resources. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. There are more subjects using ICT to support learning than during the previous inspection and some specific ICT skills are taught to Years 10 and 11 within core subjects. Some subjects when using ICT are producing presentations at the start of lessons. There is limited evidence of ICT being used effectively to enhance the quality of teaching. There is very good use of music technology with students confidently composing and sequencing music and also within GCSE Media Studies lessons where students produce web sites and presentations. Computers are used well within drama to control sound and lighting. Students with special education needs are well supported through the use of literacy software. Extra curricular provision is good with ICT clubs well attended during lunchtimes. A cluster of computers is used frequently within the library to support student study. Overall, students' competence in ICT is satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and students are now achieving well in lessons.
- Results in GCSE are below average.
- It is beneficial that systems are now in place to assess, track progress and share targets with students.
- Improved planning is designed to help students in all years attain higher standards.

Commentary

94. GCSE examination results in 2003 were below the national average. Fewer students than normal attained the highest grades. There is also a sequence of results over the past four years, whose declining trend has been at levels below national averages. Teachers assessed Year 9 students in 2003 at above the normal levels for the National Curriculum. During the inspection standards were found to be average in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11. There were no substantial differences between the results of boys and girls. Achievement is currently unsatisfactory for students in Years 10 to 11 because they have not built up the expected knowledge, understanding and skills base over time due to problems in staffing the subject. Overall the achievement of students with special educational needs met the general targets set for them satisfactorily. All students are included in all aspects of the lessons. A small number go into the sixth form study and make satisfactory progress.

95. From lesson observations during the inspection and from work presented by the college, the quality of teaching and learning is now good, with a small number of lessons being very good. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives and with good use of the resources of the department. Students at age fourteen benefit by developing skills in observation, investigation and documentation. Most use map skills, and use pictorial and text material to draw simple conclusions. GCSE students understand many physical and human phenomena and describe them with accuracy. Some are able to think through problems set for them in a challenging way by the teachers, for example in investigating traffic congestion and its consequences. The more able make good deductions and draw cogent conclusions. The descriptive writing of students of average and below average attainment does not have sufficient depth of analysis.

96. Leadership of the recently appointment of a head of department, who is also head of humanities, is good. In management there is satisfactory evidence of plans to turn the trends in decline around by satisfactory management procedures, which are being applied across the faculty. Assessment and tracking of students' progress through the curriculum is now in place and co-ordinated throughout geography. The results of regular and frequent end of unit tests are reported to the students and targets agreed with the students set for the next stage. This gives a clear strategy for both teacher and student to raise standards. For GCSE students there is a more focussed course work approach in place in Year 10 and students are being increasingly challenged to meet the requirements of the higher, level entry examination. It is too early for substantive judgements to be made on the effectiveness of these changes.

97. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Although teaching is now good, provision is currently satisfactory although achievement of students over time throughout Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is good support for students through the good out of college activities.
- There is no system of regular and frequent assessment of the progress of students.
- Assessment information is not yet used for planning for improvement.
- Students do not get sufficient help to improve the standard of their work.

Commentary

98. In 2003, GCSE examination results were below the national average. This follows two years in which results have been below levels attained nationally. The decline whilst not at a constant rate is against the overall trend in the county that is upward. At age fourteen students are assessed by teachers to be at the national average. Standards seen during the inspection in lessons and in work presented by the college were in line with these results at both stages. There are no significant differences between boy and girls, or any other groupings. Achievement is unsatisfactory for students in Years 10 to 11 because they have not built up the expected knowledge, understanding and skills base over time. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress to the general targets set by the college.

99. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons are carefully planned to meet the objectives displayed to the class and resources are effectively used. Students aged fourteen have a firm grasp on chronology, the passing of time and its effect on the lives of people. Most of the influential people in British history are well known to students who know of their achievements are understand their influence on society. In many lessons video clips are used relevantly to help students to identify with the people of the times. For example in Year 11, the death of Emily Davison

at the Derby in 1913 was shown on a contemporary newsreel. Year 10 students were enthralled to be put in the position of the revolutionaries in Petrograd in 1917 in an exemplary lesson. Students mostly concentrate well and take part in class discussions, expressing themselves with confidence. Homework is regularly given, which extends students' experience and gives opportunities for the more able to develop themes more deeply. The occasion for those students who undertake the good quality outside visits underpins their progress. Their understanding of the development of our industrial society is expanded by visiting local museums, and of World War I by studying the sites in Belgium.

100. Leadership comes mostly from the recently appointed head of humanities. The rest of the faculty, including history, is following the lead given by the head of humanities. As a consequence the remedies for decline that are being put into place in other areas are only just beginning to appear in the history department. Assessment is unsatisfactory in that it does not yet inform teaching as immediately as it might, and students are not aware of where they are in relation to National Curriculum levels. The reason for the teaching being better than the management, in that students are not sufficiently guided to make the most of their opportunities to consolidate their learning and thus raise standards.

101. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Example of outstanding practice

Inspirational teaching uses re-enactment as the key feature of a Year 10 lesson

Lesson was inspirationally led. Students were involved in an active re-enactment of the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. The teacher asked the students to close their eyes while he dramatically set the picture of the desolation of the people and the army, the deadly risks involved in the enterprise and then gave them a time limit to plan the insurrection. The class used their knowledge of the situation, their knowledge of Lenin, Trotsky and the provisional government to bring about a complete understanding of Russian society at that point in history. It was an altogether memorable lesson for all students that imprinted on their minds an important date in world history. To reproduce this lesson teachers should consider how re-enactment could be used to such a outstanding effect.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership provides a clear vision for the subject.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11.
- All students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE examination course.
- Relationships are very good.
- New and required assessment systems are being introduced.
- ICT is not easily accessible from the religious education classrooms.
- There are insufficient resources and artefacts.

Commentary

102. Results in the 2003 GCSE short course examinations were below the national average. However, the college was pleased with the results from this first entry.

103. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are below the expected levels of the Agreed Syllabus or examination course that all the students follow. Students enter the college with below average standards in religious education. They gain a satisfactory knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the main religions in British society. However the absence of any study of Islam in Years 7 to 9 give students a weak base on which to build for GCSE. In lessons and work seen students' learning and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and standards are improving. In Years 10 and 11, learning and achievement are satisfactory because students are starting from a weak knowledge base and so

despite good teaching do not make as much progress as they do in Years 7 to 9. In Year 9 lessons, students are able to develop their thoughts on the reasons for racism. They feel comfortable exploring and sharing their own ideas. The department makes a good contribution towards students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

104. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. Teaching about religion has strengths in planning and preparation, clear delivery, very good relationships and developing questioning techniques. Students respond well and enjoy the activities, which give them opportunity to work collaboratively. Teachers work hard, constantly moving around the class to explain, encourage, develop and praise good work, as appropriate. There is good quality display material in classrooms that is stimulating. There is particular attention made to key words in all lessons. The element of the work in the syllabus that requires further development is Islam, as this is not covered until Year 10. In most lessons there is a good balance between learning about religion and learning from religion. Students' work is conscientiously marked according to a common policy. Their work shows that, in general, students take care with its presentation and with their homework. The newly introduced assessment system which will enable students to track their own progress through the use of the end of Year 9 statements suggested by the Agreed Syllabus is a beneficial development. There are insufficient resources including artefacts due to whole-college financial constraints. Some use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning however, it is not easily accessible from the classroom.

105. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed by the recently appointed Acting Head of department who has introduced new schemes of work and thorough assessment systems. The developing curriculum is innovative, for example, as seen in one Year 8 lesson on Buddhism. Since his recent appointment, the Head of Department has made clear his vision for religious education within humanities. Since the previous report, the department has made good progress introducing the GCSE short course for all students in Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership and management have raised teachers' expectations and started to improve standards.
- The achievement of students in using computers, for the design and manufacture of products, is very good.
- Too few opportunities are provided for students to evaluate their work with one another or to feedback information about what they think they have learned to the teacher.

Commentary

106. By the end of Years 9 and 11, students' overall standard of work is average. In 2003, teachers' formal assessment of students' work indicated that more students reach the national benchmark of Level 5 than do so nationally but results were not moderated and are too generous. In GCSE in 2003, students gained a slightly below average proportion of grades A*-C but slightly above the national average for grades A*-G.

107. Teaching, learning and achievement are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Inspired by new leadership and management teachers and students are invigorated with a new sense of purpose and standards are rising.

108. All students, from Year 7 to 9, can use computers well for designing and refining ideas. Students understanding of modern processes grows as they for example, see the technician set up computerised machines in order to manufacture their designs for lining their hand held games. All students learn to work with a range of traditional materials and tools including wood and metal. As a result of the information provided for them by their teachers they understand the theory involved and most use the correct technical vocabulary. Spelling and written expression in books is often unsatisfactory. Only the most confident or well-motivated students take an active part in oral discussion with the teacher.

109. In Years 10 and 11 students build on earlier experiences and use computers efficiently in order to research products, evaluate the results of questionnaires and produce and refine design ideas, as for example when planning a toy for a young child. Standards of numeracy are good, because students understand the need for accuracy in their work. Year 11 students draw on their knowledge of mechanisms but have no previous experience of electronics in college, and this limits the range of design outcomes, particularly for higher attaining students.

110. Few opportunities are noted for student/student evaluation of work or feedback to the teacher as to what students think they have learned. Teachers' written comments on students' work are good for improving motivation. The messages however, do not explain what is good or what students could do to improve further. Similarly reports to parents lack clarity as to students' achievements and the standards reached. Staff illness and absence have resulted in less well-developed hand drawing and modelling skills across all year groups. Teachers have worked very hard, under a new and very effective leader, in order to rewrite schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and provide quality homework and class workbooks, which will support independent learning. Good ideas are planned but not yet operational for supporting students' literacy and citizenship development. The subject manager's record keeping system, for students with special educational needs, is exemplary and as a result support for students within lessons is appropriate and their progress is good.

111. Improvement since the previous report is satisfactory. ICT provision and use is much improved and the achievement of students using ICT is very good. Dust problems in workshops, identified during the inspection, have yet to be resolved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In **dance**, students in 2003 attained 33 per cent A* - C which was significantly below that predicted by the college and lower than that attained by similar schools. Results indicate a significant decline in attainment from 61 per cent in 2001 to the current figure. Curriculum provision for dance is excellent within the Arts Centre and the departments' drive to encourage increased participation by boys, wider community involvement and extensive enrichment provision is now in place. The small sample of lessons observed indicated that the quality of teaching is good and that the good achievement of girls was significantly better than the satisfactory achievement of boys. The majority of students responded to dance in a composed and enthusiastic manner, being able to develop a taught motif, identify separate actions and show an understanding of dynamics and styles of movement.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributes to good achievement.
- There is a good range of provision including four courses at GCSE.
- Three-dimensional work in pottery and sculpture is particularly good.
- There are extensive exhibitions of high quality students' work throughout the college.
- There is not enough use of ICT in the development of students' work.
- There is inadequate space for storage.

Commentary

112. Students enter the college with average attainment.

113. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and achievement is good. Students acquire good drawing and painting skills, especially in the use of line and composition. Although shading techniques to represent tone and texture are taught formally in Year 7, these are not used sufficiently and developed fully afterwards. Work in pattern and design is good and work in ceramics is very good, particularly masks.

114. Almost half of the students choose art and design for GCSE - this is a much higher than average proportion of students doing art and design. They have a wide range of options; drawing and painting, three-dimensional studies, textiles and photography. They research the work of other artists in good depth to gain ideas for their own work. Standards are above average overall and achievement is good. The standard of practical work is above average for the vast majority of students but some students, boys in particular, do not do the recording and evaluation to a level required for the higher grades. Although there is some use of ICT for research, there is little use in the development of students' work. This aspect of work is hindered because there are inadequate resources within the department.

115. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise that they impart to their students. They give good individual support, as appropriate, to all students in turn so that all students make equally good progress. They give visual demonstrations of the key skills in drawing and painting, design and pottery and this enables all students to gain a confident understanding of what they have to do. The teachers create a good climate for learning in all lessons and exercise a firm and supportive discipline. There are very good relationships that support learning. Students are encouraged to be creative and imaginative and to think for themselves. Homework is planned carefully to support and extend learning. However, a minority of students do not spend enough time on this. A few students, again boys, freely admit to not doing enough work outside of lessons for their GCSE coursework. Students are involved in self-assessment and this enables them to identify how they can improve. Good links with other subjects, especially archaeology and ICT, support students' learning further.

116. The students are encouraged to enter competitions where they can exhibit their work regionally and nationally. This is done with a significant degree of success.

117. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for extending provision. The head of department has used links with the local community to extend the range of resources. There has also been good initiative to extend storage space. There are extensive displays of high quality students' work throughout the college. These inspire students and enhance the college environment.

118. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE. There is a very significant improvement in three-dimensional work in pottery and sculpture that is now very good. There is still inadequate use of ICT and storage is still inadequate.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in GCSE.
- Teaching is very good and inspires students.
- There are very good opportunities to promote thinking skills.
- Relationships are excellent and this contributes to the high standards.
- Drama makes an excellent contribution to the local community.
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship and to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

119. Standards in GCSE were excellent in 2003. All but one student gained the higher grades and the proportion of students gaining A* and B grades was almost double the national average. These results continue a rising trend. A greater than average proportion of students take GCSE drama.

120. Standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Students have a secure knowledge and understanding of the key skills associated with drama. They build up and use the correct vocabulary effectively. They learn to analyse aspects of drama in detail and respond very well to its human and emotional aspects. They are at once confident and spirited in their practical work. There is less attention to the use of voice and scope for improvement.

121. By the end of Year 11 GCSE students show excellent composure and dedication to their work. They use and perfect the skills learned earlier in their performances. They listen attentively and learn to evaluate drama including their own. They can analyse, perform and improvise with equal panache and confidence. This represents very good achievement.

122. Within the topics studied students explore in depth issues such as justice, poverty, prejudice, bullying, drugs and relationships. They act out these situations and this enables them to gain a feeling for the consequences of people's actions towards each other. These studies make a very good contribution to students' learning in citizenship and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

123. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have a dynamic approach to the subject. They have very good knowledge and expertise and excellent relationships with their students that lead to high quality work. They inspire their students by the quality of their own ideas and by the quality of the plays they choose to study. There is a sense of joy and a quality of excellence pervading this department. Relationships are excellent throughout the department.

124. Leadership is very good; there is a clear vision for the further development of the subject. Management is very good with good use of team teaching and a full use of the excellent facilities. There is good extra curricular provision with visits to theatres and the use of visiting professional actors, especially for the gifted and talented. There is also provision for students to take GCSE in twilight time. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the local community and other colleges by links with teachers and by performances.

125. There was no report on drama at the time of the previous inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Year 9 are above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The provision for instrumental tuition is excellent.
- Assessment is not yet used to inform planning.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.

Commentary

126. Overall, standards achieved by students aged 14 in lessons and work seen, are above the national average. A significant minority in Years 8 and 9 are working at well above expectations in playing and performing. In GCSE, results and uptake have fluctuated. Results in 2003 show that overall students are achieving average standards and these are reflected in the work seen in lessons. There is a considerable increase in uptake in the present Year 10.

127. In Years 10 and 11 there is a considerable range of attainment. The current Year 11 GCSE group contains some students who are inexperienced players and performers. A few of these students say they are reluctant to perform because they have not had sufficient opportunities in previous years. This is having a negative impact on standards for these students. However, almost all students are achieving well in Years 10 and 11. In Year 10 lessons seen, students are attaining national expectations. Compositions show a range of styles and individuality. Almost all students' playing and performing skills are above average.

128. Most students arrive at the college with a satisfactory knowledge of the elements of music. The majority however, have had very little experience in playing and performing. However, students in Years 7 to 11 achieve well. They show enthusiasm and work well in lessons. Instrumental tuition and opportunities for students to play and perform in college and in the community are having a positive effect on standards in the classroom. Although ICT is recently acquired, most students are beginning to develop skills in using the computers for composition work.

129. Teaching and learning are very good. Strengths lie in teachers' subject knowledge, relationships, and thorough assessment systems. Lesson planning meets the needs of most students including those with learning difficulties. In some lessons expectations are not high enough for the most able students. Tasks are timed and the pace is quick leading to good achievement in most lessons. Two excellent lessons were seen where expectations were high and students' responses matched the quality of teaching.

130. The quality of leadership and management is good. Programmes of work meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs of the students. The department makes a good contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. There are, however, missed opportunities for students to play music from around the world in enrichment activities. The provision for instrumental tuition is excellent. The recently introduced assessment procedures are thorough and students are becoming better informed about their levels of attainment. The department is aware of the need to use assessment to inform planning, and the importance of monitoring teaching and learning in the subject. The excellent new arts building, planned at the time of the previous inspection, has helped to tackle many of the issues from the previous report for, example, accommodation, space in which to work and practise, ICT, technical support and instrumental tuition. All of which have had a favourable impact on standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding planning for progression in a Year 7 music lesson that met the needs of students with a wide range of ability.

All students in this mixed ability class 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 by the National Curriculum. Very skilful questioning to bring out prior knowledge and further develop knowledge and understanding of Gamelan music early in the lesson developed the knowledge base for the lesson based on playing and performing this style of music in a class ensemble. High quality explanation and demonstration by the teacher enabled students to explore various ways of using the instruments, an awareness of others and the skills needed to assess their work and the work of others. As a consequence the most able students coped well with the demanding tasks which involved reading and playing a melodic and rhythmic line reaching standards above expectations, whilst the least able in the group demonstrated levels of work at average levels. To reproduce this lesson, a teacher must have an outstanding knowledge of the demands of the national curriculum. Teacher's skills are then used as the basis for planning a lesson for students with a very wide range of ability.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 8 lesson about Japanese traditional music, excellent timing of tasks ensured students worked very hard and enjoyed doing so.

Students learned how to co-operate with each other as well as improving their practical skills and knowledge of the Japanese instruments needed to play and perform as part of an ensemble. The teacher's explanations of the students' tasks were very clear and carefully timed so that the students tackled them confidently and made very quick progress. They moved between activities quickly and responsibly. Questions and answers about the names of instruments and their role within the group were demanding and resulted in a fast response from students. Questions and tasks matched their needs and on going appraisal from the teacher raised students' morale and kept their interest so that all completed their work. They learned in detail about the sounds of the instruments and how to use them effectively. Most students were able to demonstrate their creative skills by including improvisation in their performance. Excellent planning included a variety of activities, some of which recognized the students' needs to learn to describe their work. Throughout the lesson the teacher's strong insistence on careful listening 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.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching, subject knowledge of staff and their commitment are good.
- Extra curricular provision and participation levels are good.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent.
- Inconsistent use is made of assessment to plan future learning activities.
- The lack of provision for citizenship, leadership or coaching programmes is restricting learning opportunities.

Commentary

131. Standards are in line national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results indicate that, as numbers taking the subject increase, attainment remains consistently better than that of similar colleges, with girls doing significantly better than boys. For the last three years all students have achieved an A* - E grade. In 2003, students achieved almost two grades higher in physical education than they did in other subjects.

132. In Years 7 to 9 achievement lessons is good and the standards of work seen is line with the national expectation. Students show above average standards in gymnastics and health related fitness lessons and average attainment in hockey, volleyball, and netball. In hockey, students are able to retain possession within practices and small-sided games, marking opposition effectively and using the jab and block tackle appropriately. Slightly lower levels of skill and understanding were observed in basketball where students displayed many footwork and dribbling violations within closed practice situations.

133. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is consistently good. Students have a good understanding of different energy systems and the principles of applying overload to personal exercise programmes. They are also able to describe and perform an effective and safe warm up. Activity levels are exceedingly high and students are able to plan and follow a personal training programme for a chosen sport.

134. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. Planning is meticulous, based on good subject knowledge and highlights specific learning outcomes and appropriate methodology to ensure students' motivation and high levels of learning. Teachers have formed excellent relationships with students based on consistently high expectations and mutual respect. A significant development has been the grouping of girls in Years 8 to 10 which is starting to have an impact on the standards attained by more able students and the motivation of less talented students. A team-working ethos pervades the department and colleagues often teach together in order to maximise feedback and aid students' progress. It should also be noted that the support provided by two initial training students was impressive. Whilst the girls' new grouping arrangements are improving provision within the department there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment for learning.

135. Leadership and management of the department are good and characterised by shared leadership and responsibility, effective development planning and extensive enrichment opportunities. A wider vision for physical education and college sport is developing which encompasses growing community involvement and the interaction with outside agencies. This is intended to enhance provision as will the increased sharing of best practice within the department through regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning.

136. Overall the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is below average overall because not enough responsibility is placed with the pupils for their own learning.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory, boys' standards are lower than girls' because they do not show the same level of commitment.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject which helps pupils to understand the subject
- The lack of systematic monitoring of teaching restricts developments in teaching and learning
- Information is not used enough to help develop and review practice.

Commentary

137. Overall standards are below those seen nationally. In 2003 girls performed better than boys, exceeding the national average for higher grades. The results achieved by boys were well below the national average. Over time, attainment in GCSE has been slightly below the national average for those gaining higher grades. Although there has been fluctuation in performance year on year, overall there is a declining trend. Results for 2003 show boys under performing and this was also reflected in the lack of commitment by a minority of boys in lessons observed. However, in previous years boys have performed better than girls. Higher attainers in the subject have sound grasp of business concepts and are able to apply their knowledge in discussion. Lower attaining pupils are not as prepared to speak using business language when questions are being asked. Pupils with special educational needs are supported through additional teacher guidance and perform at a similar level to other groups of pupils.

138. Overall achievement in the subject is unsatisfactory because pupils do not apply themselves consistently in lessons. Pupils achieved on average almost a grade below predications, based on end of Year 9 performance. Achievement of girls is better than boys but in 2003 girls still did not gain the level expected in the external examination. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers provide competent lessons that enable satisfactory learning to take place. All teachers have a good grasp of the subject but do not provide a great variation in style to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers know their pupils and provide good guidance on a one to one basis. They give good oral feedback on the work in lessons so that most pupils know how to improve the work they are doing. Objectives are not always clearly thought through or explained sufficiently well to pupils and this adversely affects the progress in lessons. In the least effective lessons pupils are not sufficiently involved in their learning. Questioning tends to be general rather than directed to specific pupils allowing attention to wander and reducing their contributions. In the lessons observed not enough time was allowed to review learning and test understanding.

139. Overall leadership in the subject is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. Development planning is in place but the costs involved in the developments are not shown. The department does little by way of self-review to identify areas for improvement. Examination results are analysed to some extent, including the boy/girl performance but findings do not result in action planning to improve the overall performance. Performance management is operating but no additional formal, systematic monitoring takes place within the subject to develop teaching.

140. The subject has an adequate range of books and teacher prepared resources. There are no computers within the department but pupils do have good access to a computer room, which they use well to support their learning.

141. The previous report looked at the broader aspects of vocational education, including business studies. Business studies was not reported as a separate subject.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education includes a full programme of activities including sex education and relationships, drug education careers education and preparation for work experience. Students also have access to a wide range of opportunities that make a good contribution to their personal development. These include a residential trip for all Year 7; a residential leadership opportunity for Year 12; back stage and front of house support during performances at the Masque; drama, dance and music productions for the local community and working with World Challenge visiting another country to work with disadvantaged young people. This aspect of personal, social and health education provision is very good. Personal, social and health education is taught weekly and the overall quality of teaching and learning is good with opportunities provided for students to engage in a wide range of activities. Leadership and management of personal, social and health education development is good with detailed schemes of work, demonstrating thorough planning and effective use of resources. Management of careers education is very good.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good contribution from drama to students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship and aspects of citizenship are taught very well in drama and English.
- Some elements of citizenship are taught well in personal and social education lessons.
- There is no co-ordinated strategy to ensure effective provision and monitoring of citizenship.
- Students' work is not collected in and assessed against national standards. Students do not know how well they are doing.
- Statutory requirements are not met for Years 7 to 11 because the National Curriculum attainment targets are insufficiently tackled.

Commentary

142. Standards overall are unsatisfactory. Most students' knowledge and understanding are limited because as yet there is no clearly identified provision across all subjects. There is not enough time within personal, social, citizenship and health education lessons to ensure topics are covered in sufficient depth.

143. Most students have good experiences to help them develop as good citizens. There are opportunities for students to take responsibility and to participate through the established Students Offering Support scheme, which involves Years 10, 11 and 12 students supporting younger students in the college. There is an active college council, which gives all students the opportunity to vote on issues, and they feel they make a difference. Yearly elections for Year 7 and 8 students to Kettering Borough student council follow adult protocols for voting. There are two student representatives for the governing body. Students are given insufficient opportunities to develop an understanding of the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens.

144. Planning in most subjects make incidental references to citizenship and does not take into account the need to ensure continuity and progression. Teaching and learning of citizenship seen within drama is very good. For example good input from teachers encourages students to consider and act out family situations, pressures, actions and consequences.

145. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The college recognises its responsibility for developing the area as an explicit part of the curriculum. An audit has been carried out to identify which aspects of citizenship are not being delivered so that these can be incorporated into a special course starting next year. A team leader for co-ordinating citizenship has been appointed and good plans for implementation are in place.

146. Statutory requirements are not met in Years 7 to 11 for students to acquire the 3 required elements of citizenship. The curriculum offered is not effective because students generally are not aware of citizenship as part of the curriculum and their role within this subject.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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
Business studies	8	25.0	89.1	12.5	31.7	8.8	35.4
General studies	32	65.6	78.6	18.8	25.7	23.1	30.0
Mathematics	12	0	74.2	0	34.3	0	31.3
Social studies	6	100	83.2	16.7	32.5	31.7	33.6

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
Business studies	10	100	96.4	20	32.8	62	76.5
Communication studies	10	100	98.3	70	36.8	1204	81.1
Drama	13	100	98.1	15.4	41.5	70.8	82.9
English language	7	100	98.3	85.7	36.5	91.4	80.1
English literature	6	100	98.5	50	43.7	76.7	84.3
General studies	17	100	90.1	23.5	29.1	78.8	69.3
Geography	7	100	97.1	28.6	40.5	74.3	80.9
Information technology	9	77.8	89.1	22.2	22.4	57.8	64.1
Social studies	6	100	94.3	50	38.9	83.3	77.7

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Courses leading to A and AS level in both English Language and English Literature are offered to all students who wish to follow them. The college also offers an A level course in Communications Studies and one in Media Studies. One lesson was sampled in Communications Studies; teaching is good.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good, so that students make good progress.
- Students' relationships with their teachers are good.
- Students concentrate well and work well in lessons.
- Leadership is very good.
- Students often lack independence on their work and too rarely undertake personal research.
- Students do not read widely around their set texts.

Commentary

147. At the end of the sixth form, both AS and A level results in English Literature in 2003 and inspection evidence suggest that standards of attainment are average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement is also satisfactory, though learning is often good in lessons, through good teaching. In English Language, standards of attainment are higher and achievement good, though the numbers taking this option are smaller than those taking English Literature. The very good curriculum offers a wide choice of subjects and range of topics from a variety of examination courses. The majority of students stay on to complete the A level course.

148. Teaching is good and teachers' expectations of students are realistically high. Time in lessons is well used and lessons are well planned. However, they are sometimes too teacher-centred, giving students too little encouragement to show initiative and to think for themselves. Extension work is offered where needed and teaching methods offer a good level of challenge and ensure interest and involvement. Students are pleasant and well behaved and classes are managed through good relationships, good humour and mutual respect. Teachers have good knowledge and ensure thorough understanding of texts, as observed in a Year 13 lesson on William Blake's poetry, where the students were challenged to think for themselves, prompted by the teacher's very good knowledge and her use of probing questions, and in a similarly challenging lesson on the poems of Carol Anne Duffy. Assessment of students' work is good and homework is used to good effect, ensuring that students make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Marking is thorough and helpful in showing students how to improve and students' targets are reviewed and updated.

149. By the end of Year 13, most students learn to speak with some maturity of vocabulary and to express themselves with care and thought. They read texts from all periods for examination and coursework purposes, but they do not read around them widely without much prompting, displaying little real intellectual curiosity. They work with concentration and interest, persevering until they understand new concepts, but need constant guidance on how to approach texts, as seen in an introductory lesson on Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus'. They learn to write at length, using critical terms increasingly appropriately. They do not, however, always work with independence and strong personal response to what they read, nor do they undertake personal research to supplement their knowledge of literary background.

150. The department is very well led and well managed. The head of department ensures that teachers work well as an enthusiastic and committed team. Teachers are always prepared to give extra help to motivated students and go to great lengths to offer advice and encouragement to those who find the work more difficult. Planning is good, ensuring good coverage of all texts for the examinations. Regular assessment is carried out and the information gained is used to help teachers to reinforce areas of weakness.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

151. Literacy is stronger in the sixth form than in the rest of the college, largely because the students who proceed to AS and A level courses are keen to achieve. As a result, literacy is satisfactory, with students writing more and more in vocabulary and structure suitable for different subjects and with a wider vocabulary. This was particularly evident in coursework throughout the sixth form. However, students' oral skills are still insufficiently high and they do not, in general, read widely enough in research on their subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Where teaching ensures the main ideas covered in the lesson stand out very clearly, learning is good.
- Schemes of work are inadequate
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory

Commentary

152. Standards in sixth form mathematics are generally below those expected for the courses and achievement is unsatisfactory overall. No students entered for A level mathematics in 2002, and in 2003 only four did so. All these students passed, and their grades ranged from A to E. Larger numbers of students have entered AS mathematics. Twelve students entered in 2002, but none passed. In 2003, a similarly sized group of Year 12 students entered, and all also failed. These results represent poor achievement for these groups of Year 12 students. Retention on AS and A level courses within Year 12 and within Year 13 is satisfactory, but retention from Year 12 to Year 13 has recently been poor. In lessons, standards are below those expected in relation to course requirements, and students are underachieving in relation to their capabilities.

153. There is now provision for borderline students aiming to achieve a higher-grade GCSE pass to retake GCSE mathematics modules in November or June, and most who did so in November 2003 were successful in gaining a higher-grade pass.

154. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Teachers set clear learning objectives, and where teaching ensures the main ideas covered in the lesson stand out very clearly, and there is good attention to homework, learning is good. In other lessons teachers often allow explanations to become obscured by details of algebra or trigonometry. This means time is not used effectively, and students can leave lessons without a firm grasp of the most important ideas and techniques, and sometimes with significant misunderstandings. For example following a mechanics lesson in which students were shown how to find components of forces, students did not realise that the components of a force are themselves forces that combine to give the same effect as the original force. In many classes trying to watch and listen, while at the same time copying notes from the board, makes it even more difficult for students to gain full benefit from teachers' explanations. When teachers ask questions, they often miss the chance to offer students time to discuss their ideas with each other before volunteering an answer. Instead, they choose to take the first answer

given by a student as an indication to proceed. As a result, students lack confidence in putting their ideas into words and are less secure in their progress. The overall approach to mechanics and statistics is very theoretical, with limited reference to the applications of these disciplines.

155. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is limited support for teaching from the AS and A level schemes of work, which consists of a straightforward list of topics and resources. They do not give guidance on teaching approaches, on the time to be spent on each topic, on appropriate homework and longer assignments, or on how assessments of different kinds should be used to monitor students' progress and ensure that they are learning at an appropriate rate. There has been little attention to professional development for teachers taking courses that are new to them. In the recent past there has been clear underachievement on the AS course, but little action to identify the reasons for this and hence remedy the situation.

156. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

157. Overall, numeracy across the curriculum is good. For example students demonstrate good mathematics competence in design and technology, and satisfactory competence in business education where they analyse and present research data. However some students are limited in their access to parts of the curriculum in physics because of weaknesses in their mathematical competence on entry to the course. As for mathematics in earlier years, the good provision for mathematics across the curriculum arises from training for teachers of other subjects, the creation of a good policy and collection of examples, and close liaison between the college's numeracy co-ordinator and teachers in other subject departments that are major users of mathematics. These factors outweigh shortcomings in provision for students on AS and A level mathematics courses.

SCIENCE

The focus subjects were biology and chemistry. **Physics** and **human biology** were sampled. In both, lessons were observed, students' work examined and results analysed. Over recent years, the numbers taking physics have been low and standards have varied. In 2003, four candidates started the A2 course, three completed who all passed and showed good achievement. Three are currently following the course and although attainment is below the national averages, are showing satisfactory achievement. The subject is well taught and managed. Numbers taking AS level in Year 12 are much larger and all are currently making satisfactory progress. Human biology was recently introduced and is to be examined for the first time in 2004. There are healthy numbers in Years 12 and 13. Teaching and management are good and standards, although below the national averages, represent satisfactory achievement.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching by well-qualified staff is leading to good learning and improving achievement.
- All aspects of the work within the department are led and managed well.
- Relationships with students are very good.
- Uptake into Year 12 has been low and too many students have failed to complete the course or continue on to A2 level.
- Criteria for admission to the course have lacked rigour, resulting in students starting the course but subsequently lacking the motivation needed for success.
- The standards attained in course work are very good.

Commentary

158. Results vary from year to year; the small numbers involved invalidate statistical comparison with the national norms. In 2002, six candidates completed the course, one gained a higher grade (A) and three others passed. Five students took the exam in 2003. Two gained higher grades (A or B) and all passed. Standards observed in the present Year 13, where there are five students, are below the national averages. However, all are showing high levels of commitment and are attaining levels that, when compared to their performance at GCSE, indicate satisfactory achievement. A much larger number (20) are taking AS level in Year 12. This group, which includes students with a wide range of attainment, have made a very good start to their studies and, overall, are matching the national standards. All are working hard, gaining in confidence and achieving satisfactorily

159. The three teachers who share the classes are all very well qualified and experienced. They have excellent knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the examination. Practical and experimental work are of an unusually high standard. Very good technicians provide high quality equipment and materials, which underpin good learning opportunities. Very successful course work is a natural consequence of good quality practical work. In 2003, all candidates achieved a higher grade (A or B) for this section of the examination. Relationships are very good and teachers are very committed to their students' academic and social welfare and engender confidence and effort. They put great energy and enthusiasm into lessons and are very aware of the needs of lower attaining students.

160. Learning is not always as effective as the good quality of teaching indicates that it should be. This is a consequence of the somewhat passive attitudes shown by some students. They are unwilling to take responsibility for their own learning and rely almost entirely on the efforts of teachers. They can be unresponsive in class and do not undertake independent study outside lessons. Consequently achievement is satisfactory.

161. All aspects of the provision within the department are led and managed well. The work of different teachers is carefully co-ordinated, progress is closely monitored through accurate assessment and the requirements of the syllabus met in full. A great deal of extra help is given to students who are not making sufficient progress, including the provision of extra classes in non-lesson time.

162. In the past, students whose attainment at GCSE indicates that they will struggle to succeed in AS/A2 level, have been admitted to the course. Some of these students have found the work very difficult, particularly those elements that rely on a good understanding of chemistry. Without the very high levels of motivation needed to overcome these difficulties, some students have inevitably "dropped out". The presence of a significant proportion of lower attaining students also tends to limit the pace at which lessons proceed and can affect the progress of the whole group.

163. Recently, more detailed advice and counselling have resulted in students with a clearer insight into the demands of post-16 biology. All the students in the present Year 12 class, some with modest attainment at GCSE, are working hard and have high morale.

164. Decisions already made to change the criteria for admission to the course should ensure that the 2004 intake will be more appropriately qualified and prepared for the demands of advanced level science studies.

165. Changes in procedure make comparisons with the last inspection difficult. There has been recent improvement and the potential for further advances are very good.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good teaching in the department.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory teaching.
- Students' notes are not well presented; these notes are not a satisfactory base for revision.
- The good source of past examination questions is not being used to help students produce high quality model answers in preparation for their GCE examinations.
- Examination results, students' work and teaching are not being evaluated to identify areas for development within the chemistry department.

Commentary

166. In 2002 and 2003, a total of 4 students entered A2 level chemistry. These numbers cannot be compared statistically with national averages, but one student gained a grade A, two gained grade B and one gained grade E. In 2002, the AS level results were well below national average with 4 students gaining grades C to E and three students failing. Retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is low. The college's data show that of 17 entries at AS and A2 GCSE over the last three years, 13 have resulted in grades less than predicted by the college based on students' overall GCSE performance. Achievement in examinations is unsatisfactory.

167. Standards of work seen are below average. The coverage of the basic subject knowledge is sound, for example there is comprehensive coverage of atomic structure, bonding types and the fundamentals of organic chemistry. There is insufficient attention to the development of the higher order skills of presenting ideas clearly, logically and making use of appropriate terminology or of applying basic principles to unfamiliar and novel contexts. The files of some students have incomplete syllabus coverage; one student's file contained some notes on the basic chemistry of benzene, but these notes did not include an explanation of the mechanisms behind the reactions.

168. Achievement in the work seen during the inspection is unsatisfactory due to unsatisfactory teaching and learning. The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent between lessons. Some lessons are well planned and the key ideas needed for the lesson are revised thoroughly. A problem solving approach readily engages students in their learning and students work at a good pace and take responsibility for their own learning. Skilful questioning throughout the lesson checks on understanding and corrects misconceptions. There are high quality extension materials and activities for the more able and lessons end with an in depth review of what has been learned. By contrast the level of planning in other lessons is unsatisfactory. In these lessons the explanation of the subject matter is satisfactory, opportunities are missed for students to express the new ideas in their own words or to apply them to new situations. When homework is discussed, the work is rushed, insufficient time is allowed for students to correct answers, and explanations are not always clearly presented by the teacher. Model answers to past examination questions are not prepared thoroughly before the lesson and links are not made to the mark scheme or the different style of answers required when questions begin with "state", "describe", "explain", "suggest", etc. Lesson planning does not cater for the range of ability of students in the lessons, and time at the end of the lessons is not well planned to check students' understanding of the key points from the lesson.

169. The marking of students' work by the three chemistry teachers is inconsistent in terms of the regularity of marking, the accuracy and attention to detail and the variation of guidance on how students should improve their work. Students' notes are a poor record of their work; too often they are fragmented, poorly organised, incomplete and do not relate clearly to the examination syllabus. These notes are a poor basis for examination revision.

170. Leadership is unsatisfactory. It is not focusing on getting the best examination results for the students and the team has not always been aware of changes in coursework requirements. Management is unsatisfactory. There is no rigorous self-evaluation of teaching, checking of students' work or evaluation of marking. Data is analysed centrally by the senior management team but no action is taken at departmental level to translate this information into curriculum action plans. There is no development plan for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The whole department is committed to change and improvement.
- The head of department has a high level of subject expertise.
- Students value the caring approach of their teachers.
- Examination results have fallen in recent years.
- Participation rates of female students are low.

Commentary

171. The following remarks are founded on the scrutiny of work of a very small sample of students, interviews with staff and the observation of teaching and learning in Year 12 and Year 13.

172. The latest data and trends extracted from preceding years indicate that overall results in ICT are below the national average. The highest result in the 2003 AS examinations was a D grade. Over 50 per cent of the returns for this group of Year 12 students were unclassified. In the A2 examinations the highest result was a B grade. Over 30 per cent of these Year 13 students were given an unclassified grading. Difficulties in retaining suitably qualified staff may account for this significant drop in performance

173. Standards of work seen are average A Year 12 folder was conscientiously assembled. It was accessible, logically ordered and unfailingly neat and tidy. Subjects such as the importance of information, application and system software and networks and networking were dealt with in some depth. However, information sources were rarely acknowledged. The wider social implications of ICT also appeared to be treated superficially. In some Year 13 project folders a range of appropriate software has been employed to solve problems that have a bearing on the real world. One student, using the interest of her family as a starting point on which to base her work, demonstrated considerable ingenuity in identifying what project to undertake, and thoroughness in finding a solution. Other less successful projects had more contrived origins. Very similar contexts were adopted by different students and evaluations were treated superficially.

174. The retention rate and achievement of female students is very similar to males, despite their low participation rates.

175. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In a Year 12 class on validations checks, a range of teaching techniques were employed to maintain student interest and energy levels. A combination of appropriate starter activities, a multimedia presentation and targeted teacher support for individual students provided a useful experience for all those involved. In a Year 13 revision class the pace was rigorous and a high degree of teacher expertise was evident. Key concepts such as Gantt charts were discussed and their relevance to course work explored fully. The knowledge gained was tested through a series of simple but very effective question and answer sessions that also served to keep the students focussed. Particular attention was paid to the accurate use of English. The head of department has a high level of subject expertise but the other in the team do not. Currently they struggle to elevate their teaching beyond the immediate needs of the students.

176. The overall quality of learning is satisfactory because students have a very positive relationship with the staff. In Year 12 they are prepared share their ideas and support each other despite the large number of students in the group. In Year 13 they recognise the improvement in the care and attention paid to their needs and respond positively to it. They readily identify their shortcomings in both the knowledge base they have and attitudes to work, and can identify ways of dealing with them.

177. Leadership and management of all aspects of the A level programme are satisfactory. The head of department has a clear commitment to and vision of how to address the inadequacies generated by the staffing difficulties of the previous year and has started to implement the necessary changes. However, the good practice evident in all the lessons observed is not readily shared amongst the team members. Close monitoring of the work of the non specialist teachers has also not been undertaken. There are insufficient links with outside agencies.

178. Satisfactory progress has been maintained since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

179. ICT skills are developed in students through the general studies programme. All are required to create a multimedia presentation on one of a number of themes related to this subject in Year 12. A generous suite of computers is also located near to the sixth form common room to help in the growth of their competency. ICT skills are further enhanced through the study of other subjects, particularly in design and technology. The overall provision is not monitored thoroughly. Hence clear picture of the impact of this policy cannot be ascertained by the college.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are in line with their GCSE results.
- Effective use is made of teachers' subject specialisms.
- A wide range of source material is provided.
- There is a lack of text books and the college library provision needs improvement.
- The use of lesson time for certain tasks, such as the preparation of essay outlines, is inefficient.

Commentary

180. The previous report did not comment on students' results and achievements. Only a limited amount of work was available for inspection but analysis of files and results show that students' achievements are satisfactory. Results cover the full range of grades and students perform in line with expectations. There is no significant difference between male and female students.

181. Students succeed in their transition to sixth form. Their files show a wide range of work and they benefit from the wide range of source material provided by staff. There is evidence of research using the internet and other sources. Their written work shows an understanding of historical themes and they can handle and analyse evidence.

182. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The effective use of teachers' specialisms, such as the analysis of documents, gives students clear understanding of the topics. Extensive notes are provided for the students. There are a range of examples of the use of diagrams and "mind maps" to aid students understanding of complex areas. The marking of students' work

provides useful guidance. However, there are occasions when tasks undertaken in lessons, such as the preparation of essay outlines, could be undertaken at other times.

183. The current stock of books needs further development. However, extensive use is made of computers and students have access to appropriate journals.

184. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of the subject is successful in creating an age appropriate atmosphere which results in a high retention rate. The subject is popular at AS level with students in both Years 12 and 13 undertaking the one year course.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative use of computer aided design and manufacture is leading to very good achievement in practical work in Years 12 and 13.
- The good quality of teaching and learning is raising students' awareness of the standards to be aimed for in work at this level.
- Weaknesses are evident in hand drawing, written work and time management skills of the lower attaining students, which adversely affects the raising of standards.

Commentary

185. Over the last three years GCE A-level results have been well below the national average for A-B grades and nearer average for grades A-E. Comparison with the national picture is unreliable however, because of the small numbers involved in any one year. Taking into account students' previous attainment in Year 11, their progress is good. The overall standard of attainment is above average.

186. Students in Year 12 can research, understand and apply the design principles of the Memphis group of designers. They use computers efficiently for design purposes. Motivation levels are high and peer support is readily available. Students listen well and learn quickly from the skilled demonstrations provided by the teacher. Gifted and talented students relish the freedom computers offer them, for creating new ideas but sometimes lack the motivation to apply those ideas further. Students with learning difficulty, including hearing impairment, work confidently at computers after receiving individual tuition from the teacher. Lower attainers however, have poor time management skills and are sometimes too content with low standards of hand drawing and written presentation. Students in Year 13 have learned a lot about Mackintosh, the designer, furniture maker and architect, after visiting examples of his work in Glasgow as well as the house designed for a client in Northampton. As a result of the vision of their teacher and the enrichment provided, these students are achieving very well with their practical work based on Mackintosh's principles. They talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the project and how they have developed their ideas for a client. They are well supported by the teacher and technician when working with power and hand tools. They work in wood, metal and plastic with good understanding of mechanisms but no grasp of electronics or textiles to enhance designing at this level. The quality of teaching and learning is good because teachers' combine expertise in using traditional materials with first hand experience of using computer-aided design and manufacturing processes. Students' model their practice on these principles.

187. This is a very good course staffed by very effective teachers. It is popular, particularly with male students, and retention rates are good. ICT is very well used but the lack of an interactive white board to aid the development of teamwork and problem solving limits students' independence as designers.

188. Leadership and management are good and improvement since the previous inspection report is also good. The course is attracting high numbers, ergonomics is still a strong feature and standards are rising.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding ICT demonstration skills are central to this excellent lesson with Year 12 design and technology students.

The teacher had an outstanding knowledge of the software programme being used. Students quickly recognised this level of expertise and the way it is being used to help them improve their work. References to areas for improvement arising from their previous practical work are central to the teaching. The level of teacher skill and the challenging manner in which they are engaged in learning transfixed students and gives them the confidence to use the software effectively in their own design work later in the lesson. To replicate this lesson the teacher must have an outstanding knowledge of the very complex software being used at this advanced level of college work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and drama. **Dance** was sampled. Whilst numbers taking dance increased, standards of attainment at A/S level dipped significantly from those attained in 2002. Achievement within lessons was good with students showing an appropriate ability to identify a section of a dance, analyse it and make links to other works, using technical and critical vocabulary to explain their views. Performance improvisation enabled students to develop solo compositions that showed bodily skill, spatial and rhythmical control and individual interpretation of the given stimulus. This was of a high quality. Teaching is good. Wonderful accommodation, high quality resources and the availability of technology enhanced learning. Students were challenged individually to develop ideas and make decisions in order to respond to given examination questions. The teacher made good use of grade criteria and technical language to challenge ideas and stimulate creativity in developing choreographic ideas that suited personal dance styles and skill levels. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department provides extensive community and curriculum opportunities.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average especially in the higher grades.
- Teaching is very good and contributes to very good achievement.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the development of students' work.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the subject.

Commentary

189. A Level results were at the national average in 2002. This continues a rising trend. The number of students taking art and design at A/S level has increased significantly. Results follow the national trend.

190. Standards are above average in Years 12 and 13. Achievement is very good. In Year 12 students working on the theme "A Sense of Place" are doing creative and imaginative work. They have done very good research on the work of major artists for inspiration and ensure that all the elements required for the A/S level examination are covered. In Year 13 students working on a project entitled "Problem Solving" have chosen some demanding themes such as time and advertising. They explore the use of symbols, patterns, forms and shapes from the realistic to the abstract. They speak fluently about their ideas, showing a clear understanding of how they approach problem solving within their chosen topic. They are confident and mature in their approach to work, their attitudes are excellent and this contributes to their achievement. There is insufficient use of ICT in the development of work. This aspect is hindered by the lack of ICT facilities within the department.

191. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise and inspire their students with a range of approaches and ideas for the development of their work. In all lessons they give very good individual support and guidance to all students in turn so that all students achieve very well and make equally good progress. They set clear written deadlines to ensure that students work at a good pace. They also give clear written step-by-step guidance on what has to be done to meet the examination criteria. Students are therefore well informed and aware of how they are progressing from one topic to the next. This also helps them in their independent study. The teachers also retain some high quality work from former students to inspire and guide students towards achieving the higher grades.

192. There is very good leadership with a clear vision for extending provision and raising standards further. There is very good management. The head of department has worked imaginatively to improve the accommodation and resources.

193. There are very extensive displays of high quality students' work. These help to motivate and inspire students. They also enhance the college environment very significantly. There is good provision for students to do art and design outside of the college day. There is a very significant increase in the number of students choosing art and design in Year 12. There is also a good tradition established of students exhibiting work both regionally and nationally.

194. All the good features mentioned at the time of the previous inspection are maintained. There is still inadequate provision for ICT and storage.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 12 and 13.
- Teaching is very good and inspires the students.
- There are excellent facilities that contribute to the above average standards.
- There is a good range of extra curricular provision.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is not enough attention to the use of voice.

Commentary

195. A Level results have been above average over the past three years. A/S results have followed the national trend. Recruitment and retention are very good.

196. Standards are above average in Years 12 and 13. Students study demanding plays including those with a strong philosophical and theological content dealing with society's and the church's responses to poverty and suffering. They respond seriously and can convey their feelings well in their actions and speech. They can analyse the concepts well in order to establish interpretation. They have a good knowledge of all the standard drama techniques and use these imaginatively and effectively. They occasionally speak too quickly thereby conveying some insecurity rather than poise and a confident command of what they are saying. There is a need for more attention to pace in order to convey ideas with more impact. Achievement is very good. All students work hard and are successful in perfecting their skills and presentations stage by stage. They make very good progress between Years 12 and 13 as they use and build on their skills and techniques learned at each stage.

197. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have very good knowledge and expertise and conduct lessons in a lively and interesting manner. They use a good range of teaching techniques and give the students good opportunities to think for themselves and develop their own ideas. They encourage and inspire their students to be imaginative and creative. The teachers know

their students well and give very good appropriate guidance to all students in turn, ensuring that all students make equally good progress. Teaching and learning are enhanced by the excellent facilities, particularly by the computerised provision for lighting and sound. Students value the subject, displaying excellent attitudes.

198. Leadership and management are very good. There is very good vision for the subject and an extensive range of extra curricular provision that includes visits to theatres and productions. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the feeder colleges and to the local community by presenting performances for parents and working with local dance groups and with community courses.

199. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by exploring emotional issues and aspects of the lives of the rich and poor over recent centuries and across different cultures.

200. There was no report on drama at the time of the previous inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Quality of teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Attainment at A/S and A2 is significantly better than in other subjects.
- The range of vocational, leadership and coaching awards is limited.
- All sixth form students do not have access to core physical education.

Commentary

201. In 2002 the overall average points score for sports studies was in line with that for similar schools and indicates that students attainment in sports studies at both A/S and A2 is significantly better than in other subjects. Girls' achievement is significantly better than that of boys. Standards observed in lessons were average.

202. Achievement within lessons was good with students fully engaged, productive and willing to work independently and collaboratively. They showed a good knowledge of movement and related this well to specific sporting actions. Files were detailed and well maintained.

203. The quality of teaching overall is good with examples of very good practice in relation to methodology and in depth questioning of understanding. Joint planning was of a particularly high standard and ensured consistently high expectations and challenge by all teaching staff. Subject knowledge was good and enabled teachers to explore subjects in depth. Where weakness existed it was in the lack of networked ICT provision within the teaching room and regular sharing of best practice between teaching staff.

204. Leadership of Sports Studies is satisfactory; management is good. Detailed schemes of work are in place, regular testing and summative assessments monitor progress and targets are set for students indicating current working levels and predicted grades. However the targets lack the necessary specificity that will enable students to research as independent learners.

205. Physical education was not reported on in the last report.

BUSINESS

Business education was sampled across the three specifications offered in the sixth form. The school offers a one-year GNVQ intermediate, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in business (AVCE) and A level business studies.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes, which enable them to attain at a level that matches national averages.
- Achievement is good because students show commitment and teachers support their learning with good written and verbal feedback.
- Teachers have a good command of their subject and they present material in such a way that students find easy to understand.
- There is a lack of systematic monitoring of teaching which prevents development of more innovative approaches.
- Data analysis is carried out but insufficient use is made of the information to formulate action plans for improvement.
- The department has no self-review process in place.

Commentary

206. Standards are above average overall. A level results for 2003 show a close match to national averages. There were no girls in the A level group. Numbers are small and therefore figures vary over time making comparisons unreliable. Eight students completed the single award AVCE in business attaining at a better level than that seen nationally. GNVQ students perform in line with national expectations. The GNVQ course involves students in the Young Enterprise Scheme. They have a sound understanding how a business functions because the scheme allows them to apply their knowledge. The two students doing A2 know how businesses prepare their marketing strategies and have a sound knowledge of financial control. AVCE students make effective use of ICT in their coursework. Most can explain the benefits of studying motivational theory and apply it to businesses that they know.

207. Achievement is good with little variation between boys and girls although the number of girls taking the subject is low. The majority of students achieved higher grades than expected. In lessons students demonstrate a good commitment to the subject, which means that they succeed at a good level. Students taking the GNVQ are generally well motivated and produce work at the level expected. Students with special educational needs receive additional help from teachers and make a full contribution to the lessons. In some instances they achieve better than expected.

208. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the students and provide helpful feedback on work, both written and oral. This ensures that students know what they need to do to improve their work. Students are appreciative of the effort made by teachers to help them to succeed. Most students know what grade they are likely to achieve. Teachers do use a variety of methods but do not place sufficient responsibility with pupils for their learning. Lessons are at times over directed and heavily structured. This is mainly because students are reluctant to volunteer comment in discussions and teachers feel the need to make even greater contributions.

209. Overall leadership is satisfactory. Management is unsatisfactory. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because there is no self-review process to inform

developments, analysis of results does not result in action planning and the monitoring of teaching is on an informal basis with no written feedback aside from the performance management system.

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

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