

INSPECTION REPORT

GARFORTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Garforth

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108089

Head teacher: Mr R P Edwards

Lead inspector: B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th September 2003

Inspection number: 262333

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

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Terms used in this report

Students in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at college after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for all ages at college. Years 7 to 11 are described as the main school where a distinction is drawn between students in these years and those in the sixth form.

At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science, called Standard Assessment tests (SATs). In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**).

Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the **full A-level**, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

Terms used in describing judgements accord to the following scale:

A* - very high (excellent); A - well above average (very good); B – above average (good);
C – average (satisfactory); D – below average (unsatisfactory); E – well below average (poor);
E* - very low (very poor).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1885
College address:	Lidgett Lane Garforth Leeds
Postcode:	LS25 1LJ
Telephone number:	0113 2869091
Fax number:	0113 2872727
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Garforth
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

The college is a much larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1885 students on roll. There are 951 boys and 934 girls. The college has a large sixth form, comprising 342 students. Students are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, but overall they are above average in terms of socio-economic status. On entry to Year 7, students attain above average results in their Year 6 tests in English, mathematics and science, but are broadly average in other subjects. There are very few students who have English as an additional language and none are at an early stage of learning English. Around four per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is below average. Some eight per cent of students have special educational needs, mostly for moderate learning difficulties, which is below average. Around two per cent have statements of special educational need, which is average. These include students who have visual impairments and four students who are autistic. Very few students leave or join the college other than at the ages of 11 or 16.

The college has specialist Arts College status. It has been awarded the Artsmark, (2002), Investors in People Award, (2003), Schools Achievement Award, (2003), Education Extra award, (2001), Sportsmark, (2002) and Beacon School status (2003).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
4926	T. Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics.
30941	K Brammer	Team inspector	English. Drama.
15079	T. Boys	Team inspector	Science.
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	Religious education. Vocational education. Business education. Provision for students with special educational needs.
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design.
1819	R. Crowther	Team inspector	Psychology.
19586	W. Easterby	Team inspector	English (Sixth form).
10209	V. Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology.
16548	D. Gwinnett	Team inspector	Music.
2942	A. Henderson	Team inspector	Physical education.
22046	J. Jolliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages. French (Sixth form). Provision for students with English as an additional language.
2048	R. Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
22458	G. McGinn	Team inspector	History. Citizenship. Leisure and recreation.
10392	D. Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Geography.
8248	C. Riches	Team inspector	Economics.
1611	P. Sadler	Team inspector	Chemistry.

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	25
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	71

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school, which provides very good value for money. The college is very well managed, ensuring very good teaching and learning. As a result, students achieve very well and standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11. Students in the sixth form achieve well and standards are above average and rising. The sixth form provision is cost effective.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher gives excellent leadership and is well supported by the governors and senior teachers in providing a clear direction to the college's work and future development.
- Students achieve very well and attain standards that are well above average.
- Teaching is very good and challenges students to achieve their best.
- Students' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is excellent, ensuring a very good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- Excellent links exist with other schools and colleges that benefit the learning of students throughout the college.
- The college is very successful in gaining the support of parents and students in its drive to raise achievement and provide a very wide and interesting curriculum.
- The college's status as a specialist Arts College is raising standards in the performing arts subjects.
- Target setting in Years 7 to 9 is not well enough established.
- The teaching of citizenship is not yet sufficiently developed.
- Aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory.

The college has shown good improvement since the previous inspection in November 1998. Results have improved and students now achieve very well. The quality of teaching has improved. The college has responded effectively to the issues in the previous report. There is still an issue to be resolved relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of students eligible for free school meals. This measure is used because prior attainment measures do not accurately portray the college's relative performance.

Students' achievement is very good. Standards of work seen of students in Year 9 are well above average in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also well above average. Standards are above average in the sixth form. Students achieve very well through Years 7 to 11 and achieve well in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make very good progress and achieve very well. Students with English as an additional language make very good progress. There are no significant differences in the levels of achievement between boys and girls. Citizenship is a recent introduction and students do not achieve the standards they should because the teaching of the subject is still at an early stage of development.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students' attitudes to the college are very good and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is well above average, and punctuality is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a very good quality of education. The quality of teaching is very good in the main school and good in the sixth form. There is a consistency in the very good standard of teaching, including a large majority that is good and very good and some that is excellent. As a result, learning is consistently very good. Teaching and learning are very good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, throughout Years 7 to 11. The teaching of citizenship is satisfactory overall, but needs to build on recent developments to improve provision further.

The quality and range of the curriculum are very good and provide a broad and balanced programme. Pastoral care in the college is very good because close attention is given to the care and welfare of students in general. In addition, students who need help because of individual difficulties or other personal circumstances receive very good care in a college that prides itself on ensuring a safe and secure environment. Students in the main school and students in the sixth form receive very good, well-informed advice and guidance so that they take courses that best meet their individual needs and aspirations. Students taking GCSE and post-16 examinations have realistic and challenging targets to help monitor their progress. The college has very good links with parents and the impact of their involvement on the work of the college is positive. The college has excellent links with other schools and colleges and strong links with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is excellent and management is very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership to ensure a very clear educational direction for the college. Senior staff support him very effectively and the college is managed very well. Key staff are effective in pursuing continued improvement. The governing body is very effective and is in a good position to hold the college to account for the standards and quality produced. They have a very good understanding of the college's work and they are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and ensuring that school policies are applied, other than in ensuring a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Most parents are very pleased with the college, particularly regarding the commitment and quality of teachers and the standards they demand. They appreciate the safe and secure environment and the way in which students and sixth form students are encouraged to participate in college life and take a pride in their college. Students and sixth form students also expressed very positive views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the very good target setting practices that exist for older students to students in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve further the teaching of citizenship.
- Extend the accommodation and improve its quality in some areas.

Sixth form

- Widen the range of teaching approaches taken to encourage students to become more independent in their learning.
- Improve the accommodation to suit the expanding number of students in the sixth form.

and, to meet statutory requirements, the college needs to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

THE SIXTH FORM AT GARFORTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is very good and its cost-effectiveness is very good.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. In 2002, overall results, including all courses in GCE, VCE, A and AS levels, were well above average. Results for GCE AS and A-levels were broadly average. Currently, standards continue to rise and students achieve well. In the courses inspected, standards are above average overall. The courses offered meet students' aspirations and successfully enable them to fulfil their higher education ambitions. The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good and occasionally excellent teaching. The students' attitudes are very good. Students enjoy their life in the sixth form and add much to the life of the college.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are very good.
- The broad and improving curriculum is very effective in meeting the needs and expectations of all students.
- Standards are above average because teaching overall is good and helps students to achieve well.
- The advice and guidance to students are very good and tutors use targets very effectively. As a result, students are very successful in realising their ambitions on leaving the college.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and produce a very good working atmosphere in lessons.
- Some teaching is restricted in style and does not help students to become independent and mature in their learning.
- The accommodation is too limited for the increasing numbers of sixth-form students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Mathematics	Mathematics very good. Students are achieving very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
Science	Chemistry good. Provision in physics and biology also good in lesson sampled as students receive good specialist teaching throughout science and achieve well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology good. Standards are above average and students achieve well in response to the good teaching.
Business	Business education very good. Standards are average, but students achieve well from lower than average starting points. The teaching and learning are very good. Economics very good. Very good specialist teaching helps students achieve very well and produce well above average standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical education satisfactory. Standards are below average on this new course. Teaching is satisfactory as is students' achievement. Leisure and tourism good. Students achieve well in response to the good teaching and learning that takes place.

Visual and performing arts and media	Art very good. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well in relation to their starting points. Drama excellent. Some inspiring teaching, an outstanding programme of enrichment activities and excellent students' attitudes ensure that standards are well above average and that achievement is very good.
Humanities	History good. Good teaching and learning and above average standards. Very good attitudes and good achievement by students. Psychology very good. Excellent attitudes of students combined with good teaching lead to very good achievement. Lessons were also sampled in geography and geology . In geography, teachers provide good guidance and students achieve satisfactorily. In geology, students are achieving very well in response to the very good teaching they receive.
English, languages and communication	English language satisfactory. Standards below average, but achievement satisfactory from starting point of students below average. Teaching is satisfactory. English literature and French good. Students achieve well because of good specialist teaching and their own positive attitudes.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The tutorial system provides very good care and support for the students' personal and academic progress. The working atmosphere is very positive although some accommodation is inadequate. The advice and guidance given for higher education applications are comprehensive and very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The director of sixth form and the team of teachers maintain the highest expectations of the students with regard to their personal development and their studies. The sixth form is very popular and continues to grow.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students like:

- The choice of courses that suit their abilities and career plans.
- Teachers are accessible and helpful and students feel they are taught well.
- Work is assessed helpfully and they can see how to improve it.
- The college is well run and students enjoy the sixth form.
- Staff have an expert subject knowledge.

The only dislikes featuring in the students' responses on the questionnaire used - for example, a criticism of support for personal problems - were not substantiated by the inspection team in subsequent interviews with students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the college with levels of attainment that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in other subjects vary, but overall are average. By the time students leave Year 11, standards are well above average, reflecting students' very good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Year 9, students achieve very well in English, mathematics and science. Students also achieve very well in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), history and religious education.
- In all other subjects, students achieve well. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used to very good effect.
- In Year 11, students achieve very well in mathematics, science, design and technology, modern languages, history, art and design and religious education.
- In Year 11, achievement is good in all other subjects, including English, where some earlier underachievement by boys has been tackled successfully.
- Students' high levels of attendance, their excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes are important factors in students' high achievement.
- Students achieve highly because of their positive response to the very good teaching they receive.
- Standards are too low in citizenship.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Standards are above average in ICT, modern languages, geography, art and design, and physical education. In citizenship and music, standards are average. The standards reflect the quality of teaching received. In music, teaching is good and students achieve well, but standards are average because students start from a lower point of attainment. Similarly in modern languages, teaching is very good and students achieve very well, but standards are above average rather than well above as strong foundations are laid through Years 7 to 11.
2. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average in mathematics and science and in design and technology, modern languages, history and religious education. Standards are above average in English, ICT, geography, art and design and physical education and average in music and citizenship. In music, standards are rising. In citizenship, achievement is satisfactory but standards lag behind other subjects because the teaching of the subject is still at a relatively early stage of development. In English the new leadership in the department has given an impetus to the work and has arrested some earlier underachievement by boys to bring standards up to above average.
3. Girls and boys reach higher standards than their peers nationally in Years 9 and 11. As is the case nationally, girls do better than the boys. The gap between the two is within that observed nationally at the end of Year 9, but widens at GCSE. The gap here is close to but exceeds the gap observed nationally. The college is aware that compared to the girls, boys do less well and much has been done and continues to be done to raise achievement especially among the boys. Most importantly the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been broadened, giving boys a much wider choice. In subject areas, schemes of work are being and have been revisited to ensure that what is being taught is attractive to both boys and girls. Other strategies have been put in place such as seating the slightly more industrious girls next to boys and mentoring for students where a potential problem in learning is perceived. Students, especially the boys, say that the individual help and advice received from their mentors boosted their confidence, improved their organisational skills and helped them achieve beyond expectation. Analysis of the results of students mentored confirms this. Students' progress is tracked over time and possible underachievement is addressed promptly, usually through mentoring. Setting arrangements in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science allow learning at higher levels and at a faster pace. In mixed ability groups, extension work allows students to do more if they so wish. This is not always provided; students confirm that they know they can and are expected to read on and do additional work

but the decision is ultimately theirs. This works well with older students but younger students require a more targeted approach.

4. Students make very good progress in the development of their literacy and mathematical skills because a consistent approach is ensured across the college to improving these skills. Students who are identified as gifted and talented receive very good provision that encourages them to flourish and they achieve very well. Lower attaining students make very good progress because they are very well supported and taught. As a result, they achieve very well in relation to their earlier attainment. Where individual students require particular help, they receive it because the college has very good pastoral systems in place to identify and provide help where it is needed. The target-setting process is very well developed for students in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form. The benefits in terms of challenge and knowledge of their progress need to be developed and extended to students in Years 7 to 9.
5. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. The great majority make very good gains in test scores by the end of Year 9. In 2003 a third of Year 9 students with special needs improved their Year 6 test scores in one or more core subjects from below average to average. Half of the Year 9 students increased their scores by two National Curriculum levels in at least one subject. In Year 11 one quarter of GCSE passes achieved were at higher grades. There are very few speakers of other languages in the main part of the college. The college does not monitor the performance of these students as a separate group of students but monitors individual performance. Based on this information, the college has determined that students with English as an additional language are achieving at least in line with their peers and sometimes better.

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

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	39.6 (37.0)	33.3 (33.1)
mathematics	38.6 (38.0)	34.7 (34.4)
science	37.1 (37.2)	33.3 (33.5)

There were 318 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 2002

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	71.9 (70.1)	49.9 (46.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98.3 (95.6)	90.9 (90.4)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best 8 subjects)	46.1 (43.0)	39.8 (38.7)

There were 302 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Students made very good progress in all three subjects given their results when they were in Year 6. Overall, results were well above average and have been improving at a rate above the national trend. This group of students achieved very well.
7. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average, which is similar to those noted in the previous report. When account is taken of the starting points of this group of students in Year 7, they achieved well. In 2003, the average points score of students increased significantly. Much of this improvement can be attributed to the college tackling some underachievement in boys, particularly in English. In addition, the number of GCSE subjects taken by higher attaining students was increased in order to challenge them further, and this resulted in a higher overall average points score. This approach counteracted that taken previously that left the college with a relatively low average points score when compared to similar schools.

Sixth Form

Students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment overall for the courses of study they undertake. By the end of Year 13, standards in the courses inspected are above average and students achieve well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in mathematics, economics, psychology, drama and art and design. They are above average in English literature, chemistry, design and technology, history and French.
- Standards are below average in English language and in physical education.

Commentary

8. Currently, standards continue to rise and students achieve well. The courses offered meet students' aspirations and successfully enable them to fulfil their ambitions on leaving the college. The range of courses is growing to better meet the needs of both higher and lower attaining students. Courses at GCE A level are being increased and vocational courses expanded. The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good and occasionally excellent teaching. The students' attitudes are very good. Students enjoy their life in the sixth form and add much to the life of the college.
9. In the courses focused upon in the inspection, students achieve very well in mathematics, business education, economics, psychology, art and design and drama. Achievement is good in English literature, chemistry, design and technology, history, French, and leisure and recreation. In English language, standards are below average. However, the students on this course are achieving satisfactorily from a starting point on the course that was below average. In physical education, standards are below average. This is a new course that has attracted students from a range of attainment. Their achievement is currently satisfactory as they are responding to teaching that is satisfactory.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95 [105] (89)	80 (76)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33 [105] (27)	25 (19)
Average point score per student	19.5 [105] (17.8)	17.4 (16.8)

There were 105 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

10. In 2002, overall results, in terms of average points score per candidate and including courses in GCE, VCE, A and AS levels, were well above average. This is because students achieved well across a broad spectrum of subjects and courses. In the specific Year 13 GCE A-level courses, results were broadly average and just above average in Year 12 AS levels.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and with staff are very good. Behaviour is excellent and exclusions are low. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. There is hardly any unauthorised absence. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is excellent and unauthorised absence extremely low in all year groups.
- Attitudes are very good.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the college is excellent. Exclusions are very low.
- Relationships throughout the college are very good. Students respect each other's beliefs and listen sympathetically to each other's feelings.
- There are too few opportunities for younger students to exercise responsibility, but where they have the chance they respond with maturity.

Commentary

11. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is excellent. Relationships across the college are very good and students' collaboration enhances learning. There is a high awareness of bullying and the need to treat others with respect. This is very well promoted through assemblies and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Staff deal promptly with all reported cases of bullying and this results in a happy and harmonious learning atmosphere. Exclusions are very low and incidents of racism rare. Boys are more often excluded than girls. Staff expectations of good behaviour are high and students respond very well to this. Discipline is firm but fair and although the behaviour policy dwells on sanctions, greater emphasis is placed on encouraging the positive. Students are honest and trustworthy and respect both the college's and each other's property.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1837	27	2
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	9	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	10	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	14	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Chinese	8	1	0

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

12. Students learn very well in college as a result of their very good attitudes. Students of all ages and abilities are enthusiastic learners and confident they will achieve their best. Students are keen to accept responsibilities around the college, such as caring for the pets on the farm, but there are too few opportunities, especially for younger students. Participation in extra-curricular activities is high. Students are involved in a very wide range of sports and music and drama performances as well as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The college ensures that students are given very good opportunities to mature in their attitudes and this is successful and reflected in students' maturity in their approach to learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

13. Attendance is excellent and unauthorised absence is negligible. Students enjoy coming to college, where they feel safe and secure and follow courses suited to their needs and interests. They arrive punctually at the start of the day and for lessons. The college has effective systems to monitor and promote good attendance. Parents are aware of the importance the college places on regular attendance and do their best to support this.

14. The college provides good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development, an issue at the last inspection, is good overall. This is mainly due to opportunities in drama, history, English and religious education for students to think about and explore the depth of feeling of people placed in difficult and terrible situations such as the trenches of the First World War or in more recent time, being subjected to abuse. Students' work shows a remarkable empathy and expression of a range of emotions, providing a spiritual experience for the reader or audience. It is in neglecting to provide a little time to dwell on the message or theme of an assembly or to collect one's thoughts or pray silently that the college fails to meet the requirement for a corporate act of collective worship.
15. Very good moral and social messages are given to students, reinforcing the college's code of conduct. Students show respect and consideration for each other and for their teachers. They know about right conduct and are well mannered. Students' own cultural heritage is not neglected and students show a good level of appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions; for instance, the college hosts regional folk festivals, and opportunities for multicultural education are provided through visits to local places of worship and by visiting speakers from the local ethnic communities. First hand experience is provided by school holidays abroad but much of the experience is derived from subject content. The college does not celebrate the cultural diversity of the college population or take note of significant religious festivals within the local community.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to learning are very good and students' behaviour is excellent. They usually show a very good sense of responsibility for their work, in response to teachers' expectations. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are keen to make the most of the opportunities available to them.
- Students participate very well in college activities and contribute very well to the college and wider community.
- Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good.

Commentary

16. Students' very good attitudes and excellent behaviour contribute very positively to their learning. They have a mature approach to their work and are very well motivated. They work well when left to their own devices, for example in time free from lessons, although some lack the confidence to take responsibility for developing their independent learning skills and are reticent in contributing to lessons. The very good relationships between students and with their teachers are supportive and the good collaborative work aids progress. Virtually all complete their chosen courses. Students develop very good attitudes to enable them to continue their learning in adult life. Attendance in lessons is good and students are usually punctual.
17. Students have very positive views of the college and their teachers. They make a significant contribution to the life of the college by acting as role models, organising performances, helping with sport and supporting younger students as peer counsellors. Half of them do some sort of community service. Students on the sixth form council have been very involved in the development of the new sixth form building. They organise many successful charitable events that are supported by the rest of the college. Students participate very well in the wide-ranging opportunities to extend their learning via day and residential visits out of college. Students develop a good degree of independence and are becoming mature and responsible adults. They are very well prepared for life as citizens in modern society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The overall quality of education provided by the college is very good. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good and leads to very good learning. The quality of assessment of students' work is very good. The college provides a very good curriculum and is very effective in ensuring students' care, welfare, health and safety. The college has forged very good links with parents to ensure their enthusiastic support.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is very good, resulting in very good learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good across most subjects and in all years, and a good proportion of teaching is excellent.
- Teaching is mainly undertaken by subject specialists. They show a very good understanding of their subject and an enthusiasm for teaching it.
- Teachers' expectations of students are kept high and they provide good role models for students.
- Teachers' planning is very good and students' learning has benefited by teachers successfully adopting the methods of the Key Stage 3 strategy.
- Students learn well because their behaviour is excellent, they concentrate very well and are not distracted from their work.
- Homework is used effectively to extend the work covered in lessons.
- Assessment is used very well to inform realistic and challenging targets for students in Years 10 and 11, but not so effectively in Years 7 to 9.
- Some opportunities are missed to spread the excellent practice that exists because not all heads of department monitor teaching rigorously enough.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 146 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (6%)	64 (44%)	55 (38%)	18 (12%)	0	0	0

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

18. The college uses national strategies very effectively in its drive to raise the quality of teaching. As a result, there is a consistency in approach that students respond to very positively. The impact is clearly seen in the attitudes of students to their learning. They appreciate the structured approach to lesson planning that gives them a security in their learning. They concentrate very well. This is aided by teachers' high expectations about the ethos of their lessons. Very good behaviour is expected, along with punctuality and completion of homework and students respond very positively. Both parents and students comment very favourably on the quality of teaching throughout the college.
19. Teachers are very effective in generating very good relationships in their classes. As a result, students work very well together. They can be trusted to co-operate and this allows teachers to give individual help, secure in the knowledge that other students will get on with their work. In the best lessons, the willing co-operation of students is used to promote lively debate and productive pair and small-group work.
20. Where teachers share their aims with students at the start of lessons, this helps to keep students firmly on target in the lesson. In many lessons, students were seen to share with teachers a sense of achievement when a summary of the lesson reinforced how such aims had been successfully met. Time targets within the lessons were used very well to inject pace, as students responded to the challenge by teachers to produce work within a clearly defined time limit. On occasion this was used very effectively to ensure that gifted and talented students worked to their capacity.
21. A feature of many of the best lessons was the manner in which teachers handled question and answer sessions. Here questions were posed to make students think, (often related to homework and thus reinforcing its importance). Very good and sometimes excellent learning was ensured where teachers took on students' answers and required other students to critically evaluate the response. This approach really involved students in thinking about what they said and what others said. The very good working atmosphere and the relationships between students allowed the best to be made from these sessions.
22. In the very good and excellent lessons the teachers demanded the best that students could give. There were no hiding places in such lessons and students of all levels of attainment were challenged. This level of challenge extended beyond the classroom and many examples of students' work show that they take a pride in what they present. The example below demonstrates the result of high expectation and challenge on the part of teachers.

Example of outstanding practice

This exemplifies some excellent practice that combines the teaching of history (and students learning how to develop empathy) with the creative use of ICT.

Students studying history in Year 9 covered the events of the 1914-1918 Great War and looked at the lives of soldiers who fought in the trenches. Their research began from names on local village war memorials and students gathered further details using the Commonwealth War Graves web site, old newspaper cuttings, libraries and some family souvenirs. Making extensive use of ICT, students put together Great War Scrap Books that offered a very powerful and creative opportunity to reconstruct letters sent and received from the war zone, accounts of death, poetry, diaries, newspaper reports and notices. Some of the work done was remarkable in its quality, expressing and inspiring a full range of emotions including excitement, euphoria, despair, disillusion and gloom. Students have used ICT skills not only to produce scrap books of quality but also of simulated authenticity with skilled use of layout, fonts and ragged parchment stationery to suggest age and wear. And included in some of their work are the real photographs and mementos of family members who are long dead, yet whose memory can still bring life to new learning.

23. The teaching of literacy skills is very good in most subjects and sometimes excellent. As a result, students' learning is very good and this stands them in good stead in meeting the literacy demands across a whole range of subjects. The teaching of numeracy skills is effective and students' mathematical skills are well above average. This is being reinforced as a start has been made to ensure that numeracy skills are both developed through and used to support other subjects.
24. The highest attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented receive very good teaching. The college identifies, at an early stage, students with particular gifts and talents and/or high overall ability. This information is shared with all teachers who provide appropriately challenging work and learning opportunities to enable these students to move forward at a pace suited to their intellectual capacity. The teaching of students with special educational needs ensures that they too achieve very well. Teachers have a good knowledge of students with special needs. Visually impaired students work confidently with appropriate resources provided. Learning support staff are used well and have a positive impact on students' learning. Students with different needs are supported very well in mainstream classes. Students with a wide range of needs work very confidently in small withdrawal groups and teaching is very good. Challenging work is assessed frequently. Constant feedback is a strong motivating factor that encourages very positive attitudes in these students. Students following the work-related learning course in Years 10 and 11 learn a wide range of skills. The teaching of basic skills provides a high degree of challenge and students' learning is very good. Students with English as an additional language receive very good teaching, in common with their peers. There is an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning received by these students in order to reduce any inequalities.
25. The college has improved its teaching since the previous inspection. The work undertaken by the headteacher, governors and senior staff to develop performance management in the college is having a clear impact and is further improved by the structured and formal monitoring of teaching within most departments. This process of review has not yet encompassed all departments and there are opportunities missed in spreading very good practice because some heads of subjects are not monitoring teaching and learning rigorously enough.

The quality of assessment of students' work

26. Assessment of students' performance, including the setting of precise targets for achievement at the end of Year 11, is firmly established throughout the college and is very good. Information from primary schools, tests undertaken in Year 7, results from the statutory tests in Year 9, together with records of achievement in college are all incorporated effectively into the process of target setting. Students are monitored regularly to ensure they make progress towards achieving their goals. The final performance of students is used by the college in order to monitor teaching and management at every stage. Students' work is marked and assessed regularly, but the work of students in geography in Years 7 to 9, for instance, is not marked frequently enough and marking, although supportive, does not give advice about improvement.
27. The college sets high standards for the quality of assessment and good advice is given to students who know what they have to do in order to succeed. The college very carefully sets its statutory targets for

achievement at the end of Year 11 and they are used well and are part of the story of improvement in results at GCSE that the college has achieved for its students in recent years. At present, the college does not set individual performance targets for students in their achievement at Year 9. There is very good assessment of students' work and standards but the best college practice does not extend to all subject departments for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Improvement is needed in art and design, geography and science.

Sixth Form

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 73 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1)	28 (38%)	32 (45%)	11 (15%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

Teaching overall is good. There is a smaller proportion of very good and excellent teaching than is seen in the main college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in mathematics, business education, art and design, economics and drama; as a result, students achieve very well.
- Teaching is undertaken by specialists and they demonstrate a very good knowledge of and enthusiasm for their subjects.
- Very good relationships between students and with their teachers engender a very good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- Higher attaining students are challenged and achieve very well.
- Students are not taught to develop their own independent learning skills sufficiently.

Commentary

28. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and the requirements of examinations. This ensures that they are able to prepare their students well and is reflected in the success that students enjoy in passing their examinations and progressing to higher education, training or employment. In vocational subjects too, students are served well by teaching that is demanding and based upon good levels of experience and depth of subject knowledge.
29. In the best teaching, students are inspired by their teachers. Such inspiration is projected in different ways, but a common feature is the enthusiasm such teaching reflects and encourages. Where teaching is satisfactory, this element is missing. In this teaching, students are too often exposed to more mundane note-taking and less exciting exposition. The difference in learning is significant. In the former, students are encouraged to a greater maturity; they are trusted to research topics and their independence is fostered. In the latter, the opportunities to develop the skills of independent learning are missed as students are fed information rather than stimulated to research for themselves.
30. A feature of the teaching of sixth formers is the conscientiousness of the staff. Parents and students comment on their commitment and the hard work they undertake to ensure good levels of success. All students are valued and lower attaining students achieve very well. The tutor system is particularly effective in reinforcing the good teaching provided to translate this into good learning by encouraging and building on the very good attitudes that students have towards their studies. Students in the sixth form with special educational needs also receive good teaching. The highest attainers and those identified as gifted and talented make very good progress in response to the good teaching they receive, as do students with English as an additional language. The progress made by male and female students is not significantly different.

The quality of assessment of students' work

31. Assessment and target setting are very good. The assessment of students' performance while in the sixth form is a very strong feature of the college's work. Information is used from each stage of a student's previous education to arrive at challenging goals for their work in the courses that they follow. Each student's progress is carefully monitored by their sixth form tutor and subject teachers. Students know what they need to do to improve their work. The challenging targets that have been set have been part of the story of improvement in post-16 results that the college has achieved for its students in recent years and are a factor behind the growing popularity of the sixth form.

The curriculum

The college provides very good learning opportunities across Years 7-13. The curriculum is broad, and ensures very good continuity and coherence for boys and girls of differing aptitudes and abilities. It prepares them very well for their academic and personal development, with a growing emphasis on vocational opportunities. The extensive extra-curricular programme is a very strong feature. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular leadership, innovation and development are substantial strengths.
- The variety of opportunities to meet the differing learning needs of students is very good.
- The expanding curricular development and continuity for students aged 14-19 provides very well for both academic and vocational courses, separately and in combination.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities are strongly supported by students, and are helping to raise standards.
- Very good staffing arrangements ensure successful delivery of the wide-ranging curriculum.

Commentary

32. The curriculum provided for Years 7-11 is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are properly met with the exception of the daily act of collective worship. Recent evaluation of the curriculum has coincided with the college's successful designation as specialising in the performing arts. This has provided substantial impetus for improvements that are both innovative and exciting. There is a clear intention to raise standards by ensuring opportunities for students of all aptitudes and abilities to continue their education post-16, and the staying on rate is testimony to its success. Priority has been given to establishing a continuity of opportunity for students aged 14-19, and progress has been rapid in setting up a flexible structure that widens students' opportunities within and beyond the college. By developing a very good range of academic and vocational GCSE courses, together with other accredited courses, it is ensuring that students have a variety of coherent pathways towards higher education, training and employment.
33. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is very good and includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama, and PSHE (including citizenship). All students take French or Spanish, and from Year 8 the more able also study German – this is an effective arrangement with good continuity into Years 10 and 11. Standards and achievement are still affected in English by a large number of split classes in Years 7 to 9 and by inadequate subject time in Years 10 and 11. As a result, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average rather than well above, and students' achievement is good rather than very good. The issue of time allocation has now been tackled, but its impact has yet to be fully realised. Recent innovations in the curriculum include the introduction of courses in dance and extended art and design as part of this 14 to 19 progression. In Years 10 and 11 all students follow a core of English, mathematics, and science, together with religious education and physical education. This will soon be supplemented by a vocational ICT course for all. Students are then able to choose from a wide range of interesting academic and vocational options to meet their specific needs and interests including, for example, geology, business studies, leisure and tourism, and recently, physical education. As a result, students are able to tailor their own courses to their varying aptitudes and needs, including alternative accreditation to GCSE. A very good and successful feature at this stage is the opportunity for 20 students, with parental approval, to follow a vocational skills-based course in conjunction with a local further education college, in combination with a reduced number of GCSE courses.
34. There is a very wide programme of extra-curricular activities in which large numbers take part. Parents are pleased with this provision, and students appreciate the time teachers give to these activities. Sporting opportunities and performing arts related activities feature very strongly, but the programme is extensive.

This work does much to extend students' learning experiences and is also helping to raise standards, as does the very broad programme of study support, including homework clubs, holiday courses, and community-based activities.

35. The management of this curricular innovation by the senior team is very good. Each initiative is carefully evaluated and supported by very good staffing provision. This not only ensures a high degree of specialist teaching across the curriculum, but also explores greater flexibility in the use of staffing and other resources to meet the growing demands of the curriculum. The college is making very good use of additional funding from its specialist status to underpin the growing curricular opportunities, ensure their success and raise standards in the performing arts.
36. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Students have a wide range of needs and where necessary the college provides individual programmes to suit particular needs, including extended work experience and college taster courses. The work-related learning programmes provided enable students with different levels of need to combine "traditional" parts of the curriculum with vocational studies including college experience, plus key skills including life skills. The work-related learning programme is another very well resourced and effective aspect of the provision. The few students with English as an additional language receive good curricular provision in common with their peers. The college identifies, at an early stage, students with particular gifts and talents and/or high overall ability. Teachers provide appropriately challenging work and learning opportunities to enable these students to move forward at a pace suited to their intellectual capacity. Where the gift or talent is more specific, the college facilitates development through individual guidance by teachers in the subject area who, in turn, may arrange for peripatetic teaching in the case of music and/or referral to specialist centres of excellence. Students are encouraged to share their gifts and talents with others through involvement in college sport, music, drama and other activities and do so willingly.
37. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) that is well taught by a dedicated team of teachers. The programme has recently been reorganised and is still in its early stages of development. Aimed at spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, social and sexual development, it contributes well to students' personal and social development. Sex and drug education are satisfactory. Sex education is delivered in PSHE and well supported in other subjects. Careers education is very good and prepares students well for the next stages of their life.
38. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The level of subject qualification is good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting teachers. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the college. Staffing levels for teaching students with special educational needs, including teaching and support staff, are high. Learning support staff are appropriately deployed to support students with the greatest needs. Withdrawal support is very well resourced so that students receive lots of individual support within a small group environment that helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. Resources are good overall, but there are not enough computers for art and design. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and is well maintained, clean and used effectively. However, the college has reached full capacity as regards accommodation. Every available space is used and the accommodation is stretched to its limit. Some subject areas such as mathematics and science can no longer provide the experience for all students to use the facilities on offer in the specialist rooms and laboratories frequently enough. Shared rooms also inhibit the celebration of student work through display.

Sixth Form

Sixth form provision is very good, and provides a very extensive range of opportunities for students to pursue their academic and vocational ambitions. The successful rate of entry to higher education confirms the appropriateness of the provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of courses is outstanding, and the structure of the curriculum is innovative and flexible.

- Students are able to tailor their courses to meet their needs very well – they can choose from a very comprehensive range of traditional academic courses and an expanding range of vocational opportunities that can be studied to different levels.
- Management and review of the curriculum are key strengths.

Commentary

39. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good in the sixth form. Following the previous inspection the college has successfully implemented the requirements of Curriculum 2000, and following further review has extended both the academic and vocational opportunities available. High priority has been given to developing a flexible curriculum that meets the academic and personal needs of all students, regardless of their backgrounds.
40. The curriculum offers a very wide range of courses at a variety of levels with both vocational and academic accreditation. The college consults with students on their needs and aspirations. It has expanded its provision so that it is more comprehensive than at the previous inspection. Exciting developments include vocationally based additions such as music technology, textile technology, and business studies, together with performing arts courses, reflecting the college's specialist status.
41. The curricular structure is both flexible and imaginative, and includes an extended day twice each week, strong links with other establishments, and a successful innovation using videoconferencing that allows the college to share its expertise (for example in psychology and law) with another that is unable to meet student demand from its own resources. There is outstanding choice from 30 subjects in the sixth form. Some are new opportunities, but a key strength is the growing coherence and continuity that extends from Years 9,10, and 11 through into the sixth form. Students are able to successfully mix and match their courses and determine their pathways to higher education, training and employment through academic and vocational combinations that reflect their ambitions and aptitudes. This dynamic model is a major strength of this highly effective college provision, and ensures equality of access and opportunity for all students.
42. Courses recruit well and many students complete them successfully. Class sizes are efficient and are sufficiently large for meaningful debate and effective sharing of ideas. The development of key skills is provided for well, and many students also take general studies, although not all choose to take the examination. The tutorial programme provides good support and monitors students' progress well, and there is a rich provision of extra-curricular opportunities. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is not met. Aside from this, the curriculum provided by the college is very good. Its dynamic evolution is ongoing and its growth, development and use of additional funding are very well managed.
43. In the sixth form, students with a wide range of special educational needs follow full programmes of challenging and demanding courses and they are well provided for. That a high proportion of gifted and talented students stay on in the sixth form is a good indication of their satisfaction to date. They make transitions quickly and meet the challenge of AS and A level confidently. Students express satisfaction with the courses provided and appreciate being able to take up subjects for interest as well as those required for entry to higher education. They find both the level of work and the increased volume challenging. The intellectual level reached by some students is impressive, as are their results at both AS and A level. More recently, a small number of visiting students from overseas have joined the sixth form. Some of these students do have a need for English language support. At present, this is being provided by pairing them with other students who give very good peer support as language role models. This system is working very effectively to the mutual benefit of the students involved.
44. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is excellent, and has assured both specialist teaching and flexible arrangements to meet the complex demands of the rapidly expanding opportunities for students. Resources are good overall, but students complain that they have to buy their own textbooks. Facilities and resources to support independent study are good, and students appreciate the good facility on offer in the library. The growth of the sixth form has put pressure on the sixth form centre. Although some enhancement of facilities has improved provision, the first floor classrooms are too small, too overcrowded and uncomfortable.

Arts College Status

45. Provision for the arts is very good. The college successfully uses its status as an Arts College to initiate innovative developments. A strong commitment to arts-based learning with continual improvement is assured through rigorous monitoring of teaching, planning and delivery in the arts. Enterprising vocational courses that are being developed include a sixth form BTEC in performing arts, vocational GCSE and GCE A-level courses in art and design and a music technology course at AS level. The college is also expanding the vocational accreditations it offers in dance.
46. An advanced skills teacher was appointed for drama last year and a similar appointment for music is currently being processed. A member of the music department has recently been appointed to lead community arts initiatives and support the full time co-ordinator of arts. The college aims for all students to be engaged in some form of arts activity outside the prescribed curriculum. The music department has doubled the proportion of students having instrumental lessons in the last term and increasing numbers of students attend the regular dance activities. A Saturday morning Performing Arts School is opening shortly to enable students and members of the community to benefit from the enhanced facilities.
47. There are enterprising arts links outside the college. A major community thrust has resulted in extensive workshops and performance sessions at local and regional level. These well-received events have involved the whole age range, from infant children to the elderly, and the college summer concert had contributions from community groups beyond the college. A highly acclaimed performance of 'Les Miserables' was staged recently with the support of a local theatre company. There is a good programme of visiting artists in residence that complements the work of staff in the music, art, dance, drama and media departments. Work in the arts is high profile and receives focused support from the governors and senior managers. The headteacher's vision is being realised. The arts are increasingly used effectively to develop an ethos that emphasizes personal fulfilment, social responsibility and community endeavour.

Care, guidance and support

The college provides very good guidance and support for students, which has a positive impact on achievement. The college takes very good care of students' welfare, health and safety and ensures their involvement in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is very good.
- The very good relationships that exist between tutors and students are very supportive.
- Induction arrangements for new students are good.
- Students are provided with very good advice and guidance that prepare them very well for life both in the sixth form and after college.
- Students' views are respected and processes for seeking the views of students are effective.

Commentary

48. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues and students' welfare, health and safety are very good. Risk assessments are conducted appropriately, although awareness among staff of those for general college safety is low and procedures need to be formalised. The health and safety policy is comprehensive, but is generic and insufficiently specific to the college. Internet service provision is safe and secure.
49. Induction arrangements of students who arrive from a large number of different schools are well established, well organised and help students settle well into college. New students have good support from sixth form volunteers. The excellent links with other schools and colleges ensure smooth transition to, through and from the college.
50. Pastoral procedures are very good and support individuals' needs very well. There is always an adult that students can turn to for help and guidance. Form tutors establish very good relationships with their students to promote personal, social and academic development. Support for targeted students from learning mentors improves academic performance. Students value the support of sixth form peer counsellors, although relationships have yet to be established this early in the term. Personal, social and health education increases students' confidence and self-assurance, guides them through college choices

and prepares them very well for life in the sixth form or after college. Very good and impartial careers advice is given with the support of the Connexions service, but because the college sets no time aside, too few students take advantage of opportunities for work experience. Students feel that most teachers listen to them and welcome their ideas and comments, but there is no regular or formalised system of consulting younger students.

51. The quality of care for students with special educational needs is very good. Learning support staff are appropriately deployed to support students with the greatest needs. Withdrawal support is very well resourced so that students receive lots of individual support within a small group environment that helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. The division of staff responsibilities within withdrawal support enhances the specialist nature of the provision. Students have a wide range of needs and where necessary the college provides individual programmes to suit particular needs, including extended work experience and college taster courses. There is very thorough monitoring of students' progress.

Sixth form

The personal and educational guidance and support to students are very good. Students are pleased with the support and guidance they receive. The very good relationships with subject teachers and sixth form pastoral team are very supportive and helpful. Guidance for careers and future courses is very good. Students know that their opinions are sought and acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships that exist between tutors and students are very supportive.
- Induction arrangements for students are good.
- Students are provided with very good advice and guidance that prepares them very well for life in the sixth form and when they leave.
- Students' views are respected. Processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form are highly effective.
- Too few students take advantage of opportunities for work experience.

Commentary

52. The college takes good care of the welfare, health and safety of students and most procedures are common with the main school. Sixth form registration procedures are adhered to so that the college knows how many students are on site at any time of the day.
53. Year 11 students receive very good advice regarding entry to the sixth form. The interview process ensures that students are on the right course and there is sufficient flexibility in the system for students to change course at the start of Year 12 if necessary. Post-16 students have very good relationships with their tutors and regular one-to-one support to ensure they are making good progress both personally and academically. Interviews with sixth formers indicated that students are confident that they have easy access to a teacher, should they need particular help or advice. Students receive comprehensive advice on further and higher education, training and employment. They are encouraged to aim high and are helped to reach their personal goals. Work experience is enabled when essential for students' future career, but the vast majority of students undertake no formal work experience to help them with career choices.
54. The majority of students follow a course of general studies where they are encouraged to debate moral and ethical issues. This contributes very positively to personal development. Processes for seeking the views of students in the sixth form are highly effective. The sixth form council has been very influential in the planning and development of the new sixth form block. Their views are actively sought, listened to with respect and frequently acted upon. Students are confident and self-assured by the time they leave the college and are well prepared for adult life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college has established very good links with parents and the community and excellent links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good information provided to parents enables them to support learning very well.
- Parents have a very good involvement in the work of the college.
- Links with the community are very strong and are constantly improving.
- The college has excellent links with other schools and colleges that broaden curriculum opportunities and aid professional development of staff.

Commentary

55. The college has very good links with parents that enable them to support students' education very well. The college is popular and oversubscribed. Good information is provided to parents on transition, option choice, careers and sixth form entry. Occasional letters and newsletters are informative. Parents' attendance at consultation evenings is very good. They are interested in their children's progress and find the planners a very useful means of communication. Parents find students' annual reviews informative and helpful. The college contacts parents whenever necessary to deal with issues or congratulate them on their children's performance. Any parental concerns or complaints are resolved effectively and sensitively.
56. Parents are very keen to be involved. There are a good number of parent governors and places are always oversubscribed. A focus group for invited parents is very effective in canvassing the views of parents, which are used to shape the college's development. An active Community, Parents and Staff Association (COMPAS) makes a very good contribution to the social and financial life of the college as well as the personal development of students through their involvement in the association's events and through support for college transport and off-site activities. COMPAS has also been instrumental in improving parental information, for example in the development of an examination guide for parents.
57. The college has worked hard in recent years to establish very good links with the local and wider community to improve its management and students' learning. There is a good number and range of outside visits to enrich the curriculum, especially within the physical education department. Strong community links support the many students participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme very well. The local community makes good use of the college facilities and the college plans to increase this provision still further.
58. The college's excellent links with other schools and colleges significantly enhance the range of learning opportunities for students and enable staff to share and extend their expertise with others. Well-established transition arrangements and good transfer of information ensure that students settle well in Year 7. Strong support in many subjects within primary and junior schools, and especially in French, ensures that students are familiar with many of the staff and learning routines when they arrive in Year 7. Links with other colleges greatly enhance the 14 to 16 curriculum, especially for students following work-related learning courses. The college makes an effective contribution to the initial training of teachers. Through its Beacon status the college works with many other schools in the local and wider community to improve both curriculum and management. This contributes very effectively to the professional development of staff and broadens the opportunities of students in the college. The Leadership Incentive Grant funds the support for inner city schools and is managed effectively. Management arrangements for linked provision are very effective.

Sixth Form

The college has established very good links with the community and excellent links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college's excellent links with other schools and colleges enable staff to share and extend their expertise with others.
- Well-developed links with the local community make a good contribution to the learning of business education students.
- There are excellent links with universities that raise students' aspirations.

Commentary

59. The college has established very good links with the local and wider community. Strong community links support the extra-curricular provision offered to sixth form students. The local Rotary Club supports college social and fundraising events very well, as well as enhancing the careers programme, both in the main school and the sixth form. Excellent links with universities are successfully used to raise students' aspirations and inspire them to achieve well.
60. An appropriate cycle of reports and consultations keeps parents suitably informed of students' progress. Very good links are in place to add to the breadth of students' experience on vocational courses. There are good opportunities for individuals to expand their experience by voluntary contributions to the life of the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Excellent leadership by the headteacher along with very good support from governors and senior staff have been shown in the education direction and development being taken by the college. The college is managed very well. Governors take an active and effective role in the college's development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has made a strong impact in creating a vision for the development and further improvement of the college.
- Governors make a very positive contribution to the decisions that are taken that help to shape the vision and direction of the college.
- The contribution made by senior staff to both the leadership and the management of the college is very good.
- There are very good systems and strategies in place for the self-evaluation of the college's work.
- Some inadequacies in accommodation represent a barrier to improvement, both in the main school and the sixth form.

Commentary

61. The outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher has a profound impact on the standards and achievement in all areas of the college's work. The headteacher successfully communicates his vision, promoting a coherence and confidence that is shared by the staff, governing body and students. The communication of this vision has improved since the last inspection and with the appointment of the current headteacher, when long-term developments were not sufficiently articulated. The impetus and energy of the college are directly traceable to the headteacher's farsightedness and decisive influence.
62. Governors take a very active role in the leadership of the college and make a very positive contribution to the decisions that are taken that help to shape the vision and direction of the college. The relationship between the governing body and the staff is very good and enables governors to gather information to put them in a good position to hold the college to account for the standards and quality produced. The regular reporting to committees of the governing body and regular discourse that takes place ensure that the governing body can and does act as a critical friend to the college. In doing so, governors both challenge and support the college very effectively. A good example of this is seen in the support given to tackle the inadequacies in the accommodation that are proving to be a barrier to further expansion and improvement, particularly in mathematics and science and some aspects of the sixth form provision. Governors have not ensured that the college meets the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
63. The leadership provided by key staff is very good. They share the vision of the headteacher, successfully applying agreed policies and procedures in a consistent and intelligent way in order that standards and achievement continually improve. Consequently the college's results are consistently well above the national average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. This makes the college a popular choice for parents, who recognise its high standards.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5902758
Total expenditure	5725698
Expenditure per pupil	2996

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-172390
Balance carried forward to the next	177060

64. Financial planning is very good and there are effective procedures in place to ensure that the college consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied well in the college's use of resources. Specific funds are used appropriately; for example, some of the ethnic minority achievement grant has been used to provide interpreters for parents as required. Strategic planning provides a clear rationale and focus for improvement.
65. The college is managed very well. Very good systems and strategies have been put into place to guide progress and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards. The headteacher and other managers are aware of the importance of curricular innovation. The college leadership successfully promotes equal opportunities and full inclusivity. This supports and values the contributions of staff, students and parents. The curriculum is responsive to the particular needs of students with special educational needs through the effective learning support programme, and those who are gifted and talented benefit through the work of the excellence centre. Leaders provide good role models for other staff and students, who are proud of their association with the college.
66. The college's development plan focuses primarily on improving the quality of teaching and learning. It also endorses new developments that will further impact on standards. There is also highly influential and positive intervention work being provided by the college within neighbouring schools that are experiencing difficulties. The 'don't be afraid of mistakes' philosophy espoused by the headteacher and key staff encourages others to be critically reflective about their work in an honest and accurate way. Tasks are successfully delegated so that staff are aware of their responsibilities and have opportunities to develop both leadership and management potential.
67. There are very effective procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Priority is given to training that meets the aims of the college improvement plan. Evaluation and feedback systems are used effectively to ensure that the college receives best value from the courses attended by its teachers. The college has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are good. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the college. The college is a very good provider for initial teacher training.

Leadership and management of the sixth form

68. The headteacher and governors have taken appropriate action to create a strong and effective senior management team for the sixth form. There is good teaching provision in the sixth form by a committed group of teachers. The management of the sixth form budget is very good and the sixth form is cost effective. The leadership of the sixth form is very good. The whole college planning is equally effective in the sixth form, where development planning has improved since the last inspection. This promotes a clear vision that is owned and shared by staff working in the sixth form. It also communicates itself to students, who are proud to belong to the college and who willingly embrace its values of hard work, academic success and personal responsibility. The high proportion of Year 11 students who stay on at the college is a measure of the regard with which the sixth form is held in the college community.
69. As a result of the clarity of vision and aspirations of staff, standards are above average in most subjects and students are well prepared for studies at higher education level or in subsequent work. Sixth form development planning successfully focuses on improvements and extensions to the curriculum and to the pastoral and management structures.
70. The curriculum has recently broadened with added weight given to new vocational routes to accreditation, and now provides a wide range of subject choices. Students state that they are able to follow the courses they wish to from the existing options. This results in a very good retention rate with almost all students completing the courses they start.

71. Individual subject department plans primarily emphasise measures to improve standards. The success of this planning is evident in the increasing popularity and academic success of the sixth form. The college's commitment to equality ensures that the sixth form operates inclusively, with concern for individual students' particular needs and aspirations. For example, the tutor system identifies and compensates for students with particular learning needs and a recent initiative to support 'high flyers' has identified eight students who have the potential to enter Oxford or Cambridge Universities. These students are receiving intensive support to help them realise their ambitions.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and achievement is very good.
- Students' positive attitudes and strong self-motivation contribute very well to their learning.
- Rigorous and robust monitoring systems are raising the standards of teaching and learning.
- The new head of department provides clear vision and direction, efficient organisation and thorough planning for improvement.
- There has been underachievement by high ability students and many boys at GCSE in recent years.
- Performance data and the examination board's level and grade criteria are not yet used effectively by all teachers to set targets and show students how to improve.
- Inadequate curricular time and the large number of split classes have an adverse impact on standards.
- Some important issues from the previous inspection are still being addressed.

Commentary

Examination results

72. In the 2002 national tests, Year 9 results were well above both the national average and those in similar schools. Girls' results were better than boys'. Students did considerably better in English than in mathematics and science; and the percentage gaining higher grades was very high. The 2002 GCSE results were well above average, but there was some underachievement, particularly by boys, and very few gained top grades. The 2003 results, although not yet confirmed, show some improvement by girls, but boys and high ability girls did not do as well as in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

73. Standards of work seen are well above average by the end of Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Speaking and listening are well above average in all years. Most students speak confidently and well because there are frequent opportunities in lessons for them to use discussion and debate to explore and develop ideas. Comprehension and reading skills are developed well and, by the end of Year 9, many students already have good deductive and inferential skills. All but the least able read fluently from a range of fiction and media texts. Creative writing is lively and entertaining, but some critical writing in literature and media, particularly by boys in Years 10 and 11, tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. The most able write cogently and well, but they are rarely given choices which allow them to show their flair and independence.

74. Achievement in recent work seen is very good. Students' positive and mature attitudes and their desire to do well contribute considerably to their success. Work in books and examination results shows that, in the past, GCSE students have not been sufficiently challenged and therefore achievement in English has not been as good as in other subjects. All students study both English and literature at GCSE. They use ICT effectively for writing and research, but there have been few extra-curricular opportunities to enrich and develop their learning. Standards and achievement are still affected by a large number of split classes in Years 7 to 9 and by inadequate subject time in Years 10 and 11. As a result, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average rather than well above, and students' achievement is good rather than very good. The underachievement of past years, particularly among boys, has been successfully tackled. The issue of time allocation has now been tackled, but its impact has yet to be fully realised. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers are aware of their needs and provide good quality individual support.

Teaching and learning

75. Teaching and learning are very good overall and stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use a range of teaching methods and interesting resources to make learning enjoyable and rewarding. Teaching has improved further this term since the department has started to use assessment information to plan students' learning objectives in lessons. Previously, most marking was positive, but not always helpful. Performance data has not been used to track individual students, measure their achievement or set targets, nor has it been common practice to use examination board level and grade criteria to plan lesson activities or to show students what they need to do to improve. Teaching has been adversely affected by these factors in Years 10 and 11, and, while now improving, is good rather than very good.

Leadership and management

76. The leadership and management of the new head of department are very good. There is now strong leadership with a clear vision for the future and a clear capacity and commitment to improve matters very quickly. Former departmental shortcomings in organisation, such as those in the monitoring and use of assessment and marking, and a lack of robust action planning, are being rigorously tackled. Already this term, the curriculum offered to boys and systems for recording students' progress have been revised. An exciting programme of extra-curricular activities for all students has also been introduced, as well as one to support and challenge the most able. Other strategies being established include a plan to reduce the number of split classes and to give English the same curricular time as mathematics and science. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because of some past ineffective management. Appropriate action is now being taken to improve the performance of boys and the most able at GCSE. The regular use of a wider range of ICT by all students is also planned, as are the introduction of class novels and units of work, which will help students to learn more about other cultures and races.

Literacy across the curriculum

77. Standards of literacy are well above average throughout the college. Students' speaking and listening skills are particularly strong because they are given many opportunities to use talk to share ideas, both in whole class and small groups, and also because of their willingness to participate in discussions. Reading skills are also well above average. Most students read fluently and confidently for their age and show a very good understanding of a wide range of literature, including some on the Internet. They have good research skills and are able to skim and scan text with ease. Writing too is very well developed. Work is usually well presented and technically accurate and in most subjects students often respond personally, creatively and critically. Achievement in literacy is very good because of students' very good attitudes towards their work and some very good teaching in which teachers ensure that there are opportunities for all students to develop and extend their skills.
78. Teaching and learning in developing the skills of literacy are very good in most subjects and sometimes excellent. In history, for example, the quality of students' project and coursework is most impressive. There is also much very good teaching and provision in other subjects, such as geography, design and technology, art and design and science: however, not all subjects systematically plan opportunities for the development of literacy and not all teachers regularly correct errors. Effective steps are now being taken to ensure that all subject leaders systematically monitor teaching and that there is consistency of practice within departments. The National Literacy Strategy has only recently been introduced into Years 7 to 9

and the college is looking at how it can implement more of its recommendations, such as progress units designed to help lower attaining students and booster classes for the more able, and thus improve standards even further.

Drama

Provision in Drama is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching, based on excellent subject knowledge, is very good and results in very good achievement and learning.
- The students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.

Commentary

79. Overall standards in drama are well above average. Drama is a core subject in Years 7 to 9 and although students only have one weekly lesson, standards are above average in these years. In the GCSE option, students attain standards that are well above national expectations and most do better in drama than in their other subjects. Standards of performance are well above average. From Year 7, students collaborate readily and work well in groups to devise presentations and to discuss their work. They show very good discipline, creativity, responsibility and teamwork. At the end of Year 11, students are competent and confident actors. Their ensemble work is very good and they show their understanding of a wide range of theatrical styles and conventions through their interpretations and performances.
80. Students achieve very well in drama. Not only do their acting skills and knowledge of the theatre rapidly improve, but their self-confidence, and therefore their self-esteem, grows rapidly. Their trust and relationships, communication and social skills, problem solving and decision making are constantly being developed by the subject. Additionally, their cross-curricular and cultural and moral awareness are aided considerably by inspiring and relevant units of work, such as those on Shakespeare, the Victorians, young offenders, bullying, homelessness and prejudice.
81. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Students enjoy the challenges presented in lessons and, because of their enthusiasm and excellent attitudes to drama and each other, they readily and maturely evaluate their own and group performances, encouraging and learning from each other. Teachers are first-rate role models for their students and provide challenging and exciting courses, which are enhanced by an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities. The leadership and management of drama are excellent.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages (French, Spanish, German) is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards of work seen	Above average	Well above average
National test & examination results	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very Good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and this results in high standards.

- The students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent, enabling them to learn effectively.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- ICT is not used well enough to support teaching and learning.
- Students' independent speaking and writing skills are underdeveloped.

Commentary

Examination results

82. Results in examinations are well above average in French and Spanish. Girls perform better than boys although boys in the school are performing much better than boys nationally. Students will take German for the first time this year.

Standards and achievement

83. Most students started learning a new language when they arrived in the school. By the end of Year 9 students are reaching above average standards in speaking, reading and writing, and listening skills are very good. Because teaching is very good and full of enthusiasm, students are keen to learn. Achievement by Year 9 is good in French and Spanish and very good in German. By Year 11 the students' achievement is very good. Students are well drilled in responding to set questions and topic based situations. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. More able students, including those gifted and talented, are reaching the highest grades (A* and A).

Teaching and Learning

84. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject and this encourages students to learn. Students are put into mixed (boy/girl) pairs or groups for tasks such as asking directions and sentence building. This is very effective in involving boys and is raising their achievement. The excellent attitudes and behaviour of students ensure that they learn very well. This, as well as the completion of homework to a good standard, is contributing to high standards. Language learning is supporting the development of students' literacy skills very well, particularly in grammar. ICT is not yet fully exploited by teachers to help develop students' more independent learning skills.

Leadership and management

85. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department provides vision and very clear direction and leads by good example. Students who are identified as underachieving are closely monitored and given extra support from the head of department.

MATHEMATICS

One lesson in a new optional GCSE statistics course was observed in Year 10. Teaching was very good. No judgement can be made on standards at this early stage in the course but all students who took the previous extra-curricular course attained grades A* to C in 2003.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Excellent	
Management	Excellent	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are well above average in Years 9 and 11.
- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good achievement.
- Both the management and leadership of the subject are excellent and this has a direct impact on teaching and therefore standards.
- Provision for gifted and talented students is excellent.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts further improvement in teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

86. For students in Year 9, national test results in 2002 were well above average. For similar schools they were above average but very narrowly missed being judged well above average. GCSE results were also above average. Unvalidated data for Year 9 results in 2003 and provisional GCSE results indicate that results have improved further with more students achieving the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

87. By Year 9, standards are above average in all aspects of mathematics and remain so throughout Years 10 and 11. Girls consistently attain higher standards than the boys, but boys make very good progress in their learning from the time they enter the college. Students with all levels of prior attainment achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

88. Teaching is very good. Teachers manage students very well. This means that behaviour is very good and that no time is wasted in lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and present topics clearly, carefully developing each small step needed to ensure understanding. They link topics together very well, constantly reinforcing key skills. Work is demanding, and in almost all lessons it is carefully matched to the needs of the students. Students with all levels of prior attainment are expected to complete a large quantity of work neatly and carefully, developing very concise mathematical communication skills and very good work habits. Very good questioning techniques give students the opportunity to explain their reasoning and teachers consistently use correct mathematical vocabulary, also developing literacy skills. Study skills are also developed through the consistent practice of giving brief but useful notes to students which they are expected to refer to at other times. Although mostly very good, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and its use to assess understanding, but assessment in lessons and frequently at the end of lessons is very good and used effectively to structure further work. ICT skills using computers and calculators are both developed through mathematics and used very effectively to support learning.

Leadership and management

89. Standards are steadily improving because teachers are very well supported with subject guidance and through regular and rigorous checks on teaching and students' attainment. The department works as a team and, as such, continually seeks to improve teaching through regular meetings where good practice is shared. Responsibilities are also shared to make best use of individual teachers' expertise. There is a clear vision for development and so ways are continually sought to improve provision. The subject leader provides an excellent role model for other teachers. Many opportunities are provided in lessons, by challenges for students to take part in national and international competitions and activities and through extra-curricular classes for gifted and talented students to achieve their full potential. The unsatisfactory number of rooms of a suitable size limits the opportunities for teachers to improve standards further. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Teaching has improved and there has been a consistent trend of improvement in the attainment of students.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. A start has been made to ensure that numeracy skills are both developed through and used to support other subjects, although few subjects have opportunities planned into schemes of work. In science, provision is very good, and mathematical skills used very effectively, for example recording and analysing data. Skills are sufficient to support learning in geography, although students do not maintain the same accuracy of presentation expected in mathematics lessons. Mathematical skills are frequently seen in art around the college, but these are not specifically linked to mathematics. Numeracy skills are developed well through ICT. A new appointment has been made to support the development of policy and practice across the college.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students behave very well and have very positive attitudes to their work.
- The teachers work very well as a team, with a clear focus on high standards and achievement.
- There is a need to provide more opportunities for students to think for themselves in order to develop their skills in predicting, explaining and evaluating their work.
- The teachers mark work regularly but they do not always give advice that tells the students what they need to do to improve.
- Some of the science accommodation is unsatisfactory, with insufficient laboratory space for the amount of science being taught.

Commentary

Examination results

91. Results in the 2002 national tests for students at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. The proportion of students reaching the expected standard was well above average in comparison with similar schools. The test results have improved at about the national rate over the past five years. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average and continue a rising trend. Girls performed better than boys overall, but the differences were in line with the national trend. The 2003 Year 9 test results were slightly down on the previous year but the GCSE results were further improved.

Standards and achievement

92. By the end of Year 9, students attain well above average standards in their knowledge and understanding of living things, the properties of materials and physical processes. They remember their work well and they accurately carry out calculations, for example on forces and electricity. They represent their results in tables, graphs and charts and have a good understanding of the work they have done on digestion and healthy living. Their practical skills are above average and they handle equipment safely and confidently, with due regard for safety. The highest attaining students make predictions using their existing knowledge and they evaluate their work in order to improve it but these skills are less well developed in other students because they are not given enough opportunities to practise them.
93. The standards at the end of Year 11 are also well above average and show very good progress from the end of Year 9. The students' investigational work is not quite as good as the rest of their work because they need more practice at predicting, analysing results and evaluating experimental work.

Teaching and learning

94. Teaching is very good throughout the college although it is a little better in Years 10 and 11 because the students are given more opportunity to think for themselves. The teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their work well to meet the needs of all students. There is a good variety of teaching styles and the ideas from the national strategy to improve standards in Key Stage 3 have been adopted. These factors, together with the teachers' very good control and classroom management, help all students to achieve very well, including students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive and they behave very well. This also

contributes to the very good achievement seen in the college. The students' literacy and numeracy are well developed in their science lessons and they have the necessary language and mathematical skills to succeed in their work. The science curriculum includes suitable opportunities for the students to use computers to support their learning. The teachers assess the students' work systematically and set appropriate targets for improvement, although there is a need to improve the feedback given to students through routine marking.

Leadership and management

95. The department is very well led and managed because appropriate priorities for development have been identified and the staff clearly focus on maintaining high standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning is very good overall although there is a need to monitor the consistency of marking more closely. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and all the identified development areas have been tackled, apart from the science accommodation, which has insufficient laboratory provision for the numbers taking the subject. The science technicians provide good support for the teaching although the amount of technician time available is rather low for the number of groups being taught.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and has a very positive impact on students' standards of achievement.
- The strength of curricular provision in Years 7 to 9, supported by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for ICT, is helping students to achieve well.
- The attitude and behaviour of the students in their lessons contribute greatly to their development and success.
- The leadership and management of staff teaching ICT are very good.
- The highest attaining students are not challenged enough to develop greater levels of independence and responsibility for their own progress.
- The college needs to make more effective use of the Internet and other digital resources to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

Examination results

GCSE and GCE AS-level examination courses in information technology have been recently introduced but no students have yet taken external examinations.

Standards and achievement

96. Standards in Year 9 are above average. Students can operate complex computer equipment, multi-task software applications and competently research the Internet. They use word processing and presentation software to very good effect and understand how to set up spreadsheets and databases. Students connect the work they undertake in ICT with that covered in other curriculum areas. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average and students are on track to achieve a good level of examination

success. Students understand the concepts taught in their applied ICT course and many produce coursework of a high standard and with great pride.

Teaching and learning

97. Teaching and learning are good overall and in Years 7 to 9 they are very good. Staff have a good command of their subject and their teaching methods fully engage the students. The pace of lessons is brisk and students' learning is clearly evident. Teachers effectively use a full range of resources, including using interactive whiteboards and computer laboratories. Teachers plan their work together and provide well-planned and stimulating lessons. Students are given very full advice on the work they have completed and how it can be improved. In consequence students make rapid progress, enjoy their learning and display considerable flair in the work they undertake. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. The working atmosphere in lessons is very positive, which further improves the effectiveness of teaching. Students with learning difficulties are fully supported. More able students are not sufficiently extended and encouraged to develop greater levels of responsibility and autonomy for their progress. In Years 10 and 11 many students could respond to even greater demand and challenge in terms of detailed facts to learn and complex tasks to undertake.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear strategic vision for ICT that extends to the work of the whole college and a very effective team of teachers and support staff. Clear strategies for college improvement have been adopted including the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 and there has been extensive encouragement for students' use of ICT throughout the curriculum. Cross-curricular work, developed through an innovatory college accreditation programme in Years 10 and 11, meets National Curriculum requirements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

99. Students' skills in using ICT are developed effectively throughout the college. Classes are offered at the end of the normal day in order for sixth form students to develop the competency in ICT that they need for higher education. The success rates are good. At the time of inspection, these classes had not yet been started and teaching could not be inspected. In Years 10 and 11, students work towards a college accreditation in ICT by collecting examples of work undertaken in many different subjects. This is a powerful incentive towards students gaining relevant skills as is testified by the very high quality of some of the work undertaken. The accreditation scheme merits further development to ensure fully that every student records all the relevant strands of ICT applications.

100. Within college departments there is growing use of ICT to support subject teaching. However, some subjects, for example geography and art and design, do not use ICT effectively enough in their teaching. There has been considerable investment in hardware and the college is progressively providing networked access to its servers and to the Internet throughout the campus. There has been a recent fillip to investment in the use of cross-curricular ICT through the government scheme for "e-learning" credits. There is also very considerable and widespread use of the Internet as a resource for learning with a broadband service offering rapid and secure access.

101. The college has invested in the creation of a public web site and a private Internet area for use by staff and students only. Although its content is currently very limited, it offers the college a route to develop a fully resourced learning environment to support 'any-time-any-where' learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average

Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and all students achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Good, well-organised teaching is producing good learning.
- ICT is not used frequently enough as a tool for teaching.
- The large number of students taught by individual teachers in Years 7 to 9 is adversely affecting the frequency and quality of marking.

Commentary

Examination results

102. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above average and have been sustained over time. Boys do as well as girls. Students reach above average standards at the end of Year 9

Standards and achievement

103. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired good map skills. Written work shows a good understanding of how physical and human processes shape the landscape. Students' evaluation of the impact of human activity on the natural environment is good. Higher attaining students make and explain links, for example between plate margins and earthquake zones and the location of volcanoes. By Year 11, most students can apply a range of skills to their GCSE coursework. The effort put into this piece of work by all students and the quality of the work of higher attaining students is impressive. Most students write well and can link cause and effect in some detail. Students with special educational needs produce creditable graph and map work and their written answers, although brief, are correct.

Teaching and learning

104. Students benefit from well-organised teachers whose planning ensures students consolidate and extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers benefit considerably from students who want to learn and whose exemplary behaviour enables them to teach effectively. Teachers make good use of resources but not enough of ICT. They do however encourage students to apply their own ICT skills to their work. Teachers' have very good subject knowledge, which they use to provide a range of learning activities. Although teachers know their students well they do not always provide resources to challenge higher attaining students and meet the needs of those with specific literacy difficulties. Teachers do use homework regularly and to good effect, but the work of students in Years 7 to 9 is not marked frequently enough and marking, although supportive, does not give advice about improvement.

Leadership and management

105. The department is well led and managed. The head of department is relatively new to the post and is already effecting positive change, especially in the design of enquiry-based assessments. Collaborative planning is evident. The department is under-staffed and under-equipped as regards new technology. The number of students allocated to three teachers in Years 7 to 9 is having an adverse effect upon marking, because teachers are overwhelmed by the amount of work to be assessed.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
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Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are stimulated and excited by the high quality teaching so that history has become a very popular subject.
- The effect of very good learning is enhanced by the students' very good attitudes to work.
- Very good leadership provides the subject with a clear vision and direction, but monitoring and evaluation of teaching through more regular classroom observation are underdeveloped.
- There is not enough systematic use of ICT to further promote research skills.

Commentary

Examination results

106. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average and some of the best in the college. This continued a rising trend, which was maintained in 2003. Girls performed much better than boys.

Standards and achievement

107. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment is well above average. This represents very good achievement as they enter the college with skills in history that are average. Students understand very well the causes of the world depression and the consequences of key events in the Second World War. The emphasis in the teaching on thinking and enquiry skills ensures that students of all abilities make very good progress in research work, such as the interpretation of Kennedy's death in Year 9. Higher attaining students in Year 9 write First World War diaries with vivid empathy, historical accuracy and a high level of ICT and literacy skill. By the end of Year 11, standards are also well above average and all students achieve very well. The high standards of interpretation and analysis are further developed. For example, Year 11 students confidently discussed the solving of problems in the Weimar Republic.

Teaching and learning

108. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities, which strongly engage the attention of all students. This is ensured by planning for the needs of all students. Students with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve very well because they are challenged by appropriate material. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. The well-planned enquiry work, a strength of the teaching, has clear learning objectives, challenging tasks and good resources. This strongly develops skills of research, empathy and literacy, especially extended writing. Students are encouraged to do their own computer research rather than it being taught systematically and regularly. The discussion of moral issues, such as Year 7 students discussing responsibility for the death of Thomas Becket, is helping students' moral and social development. Marking and assessment are done well. Students consequently know their attainment level and how to improve. They also have very good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is excellent. They show strong interest in the activities, co-operate well and work very effectively for long periods. This is encouraged by the very good relationships with the teachers and with each other. History is now one of the most popular subjects in the college.

Leadership and management

109. The department is led very well; management is good. A clear vision and direction are provided. The strong commitment to improvement is indicated by the good analysis of performance, resulting, for example, in successfully tackling the gap between girls' and boys' performance. The positive response has led to very good progress being made since the last inspection: standards are much higher, teaching has improved and schemes of work have been effectively revised to meet students' needs. The spacious accommodation and attractive displays of students' work create a rich and stimulating environment for learning. The sharing of very good practice is inhibited because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom observation is underdeveloped.

Religious education

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

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is consistently high.
- Students achieve very well in examinations because of the quality of teaching.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- There is no detailed planning of GCSE short course provision.
- The subject is less popular with boys in their choice of GCSE courses.

Commentary

Examination results

110. GCSE full course results were well above average in 2002. Students on average performed significantly better than in other subjects taken. Girls' results were better than those of boys. In 2003 there was a significant improvement from already well above average results with a very high proportion of students achieving grades A* - C. Boys and girls achieved equally well. Short course results for 2003 demonstrated a very high level of achievement with a very high proportion of students from a large entry gaining grades A* - C.

Standards and achievement

111. Work seen is well above average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Students develop a wide range of skills very well because of the consistently high level of challenge in oral and written work. By the end of Year 9, their ability to give personal responses to issues and to consider different religious perspectives develops very well. They are able to analyse and evaluate complex questions such as whether a particular war from recent history can be considered "just" from a religious perspective. By the end of Year 11, full-course students can argue and discuss issues in the abstract, such as the idea of prophecy. They grasp quickly the complexity of religious concepts, such as the Trinity, because of the specialist nature of the teaching. Short-course students are able to examine issues from different points of view very well because of the skills they acquired by the end of Year 9.

Teaching and learning

112. The key feature of the teaching is the consistency of its quality. The great majority is by specialists and this is consistently very good, with some excellent teaching. Non-specialist teaching is good, with some very good teaching, although challenge overall is not as great. Students respond very well with very positive attitudes because their interest is stimulated by the quality of the teaching. Lessons are characterised by a very challenging pace. Class discussion is often excellent so that students are motivated very well to learn. Involvement of all students is very good with, for example, students with special needs or the gifted and talented identified in seating plans. Written work including homework is also very challenging, for example Year 9 students writing an entry in a Holocaust diary. Difficult ideas are treated with a level of challenge that is uncompromising so that students gain a full understanding.

Leadership and management

113. The new head of department is sustaining the very good leadership and management evident from students' past and current achievements. There has been positive action to address the issue of boys' image of the subject and this is beginning to have an impact. At the whole college level there is a lack of planning of provision for the GCSE short course within the curriculum.

TECHNOLOGY

Two Year 10 manufacturing lessons were observed. Standards achieved in the manufacturing course are below average. A small number of students on this course have unsatisfactory attitudes and this adversely affects the progress of all students.

Design and Technology

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

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good quality of teaching promotes well above average attainment.
- Students make very good progress from entry to the college.
- Students' achievement is aided by very good behaviour in class.
- Leadership and management are dedicated to improvement in progress.
- Designing skills lag behind construction and making skills.

Commentary

Examination results

114. At the end of Year 9, students attain well above average results in teacher assessments. In 2002, students gained well above average results in GCSE examinations. Results in textiles and food technology were well above average, as were results in child development.

Standards and achievement

115. In work seen, a similar level of attainment is evident. Good making and construction skills are developed, but design receives less emphasis in the teaching, and skills in this aspect are of lower quality as a consequence. Computers are used effectively and work is very well presented. Boys and girls achieve equally well at this stage and students with special educational needs make good progress due to the nature of projects, which allow for success at a wide range of levels. For the same reason, gifted and talented students are able to make appropriate progress.

116. Work seen in Year 11 confirmed the well above average standards evidenced in recent examinations. Students achieve very well and very good quality teaching is an important factor in students' progress. Work in textiles and food technology is especially good and results in child development reflect the very good work in the subject, an option only recently introduced into the work of the department. Very good behaviour and concentration add to the effect of the teaching in supporting very good progress.

Teaching and learning

117. Teaching and learning are very good. Work is very thoroughly prepared and presents a good level of challenge. The teaching takes place at a good pace which is reflected in the pace of students' learning. The quality of learning also reflects the careful attention to detail in the teaching. This is evident in the high standards of presentation in books and folders. Both literacy and numeracy are emphasised in the teaching when opportunities arise. An important strength in the teaching is the quality of individual tuition which is sensitive to differing student needs. Individual education plans are used in the department to aid the progress of students with special educational needs. Homework is set regularly and monitored carefully.

Leadership and management

118. The department is very well managed with two recent appointments made to lead CDT and food and textiles respectively. Both are very highly committed with a strong interest in their subject area and ensure

very good leadership and a clear direction to the subject's development. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in standards attained by students, and in teaching. Accommodation has also been improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

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

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and the quality of teaching are very good and secure very good learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, try hard and make very good progress, especially in creative work.
- Results in GCSE are well above average for grades A* to C and show a rising trend.
- The quality of display throughout the department celebrates the high quality of students' work in a wide range of media.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to extend the curriculum, mainly owing to lack of resources.
- Projects linked to numeracy do not feature as often as they should.

Commentary

Examination results

119. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above the national average for grades A* to C and all students gained at least a G grade. Boys' results were much lower than those of the girls and lowered the overall figures.

Standards and achievement

120. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Students build up banks of skills and knowledge on short projects in the early months in college and consolidate these on larger pieces towards the end of Year 9. Their work shows good achievement as students enter college with few skills in the subject and limited knowledge of art and artists. The higher attaining students keep their sketchbooks in good order and produce a good amount of work with evidence of thorough personal research, often using ICT. The lower attaining students often produce good practical work, but struggle with theory, owing to their lower levels of literacy. In general, drawing, painting, printmaking, collage and clay work are good. Most students gain good knowledge of the work of real artists and of art throughout the world, but their understanding of art periods is thin.
121. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. Students' practical skills are above average and they produce work showing very interesting use of a variety of media and often on a large scale. They plan and experiment freely on their chosen themes, research thoroughly, and present good quality portfolio sheets with well-argued comments and appraisals. Use of ICT is best from the highest attaining students and many boys. As much of the GCSE work is self-generated, the lower attaining students are not disadvantaged as they compensate for less theory by setting themselves achievable targets and showing more practical examples. Achievement overall is very good, as the examination courses are very demanding of students' time and individual effort and students have to become accustomed to thinking for themselves and working to specific timescales. The gap noted in the performance of boys and girls in the 2002 GCSE has been closed significantly and both achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

122. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. The highest strengths in the department are: subject knowledge, expectations of work and behaviour, effective teaching methods and planning and preparation of lessons coupled with appropriately set homework to contribute to students' literacy and ICT skills. These aspects ensure students learn what they should, that they are encouraged to be adventurous and curious by being stimulated by challenging projects, and are helped to realise their potential in a supportive atmosphere. In lessons, students accept advice and act upon it willingly. Overall assessment is good and clear marking and appraisals inform students of the quality of their work and the degree of effort made. The gifted and talented students and, to a lesser extent, those with lower literacy levels benefit from being guided towards appropriate starting points to ensure they set themselves appropriately demanding work. Most students enjoy their lessons. They are polite to adults and get on well with their teachers because there is mutual respect. Students are good listeners and watchers, quickly grasp what is expected of them and settle to practical work speedily. They try hard in lessons, and show good degrees of responsibility and independence.

Leadership and management

123. Leadership and management are very good. Relationships between the head of the department and the teachers are very positive. The development plan is visionary but realistic. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has tackled successfully all issues raised. In order to maintain high standards and extend the curriculum, the department should include more numeracy-linked work and extra funding for materials, ICT and photography.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good quality of teaching is lifting students' aspirations and improving standards.
- Good leadership and management of the department set a clear agenda for improvement, promoting renewed confidence amongst staff and students.
- The recent increase in extra-curricular activity is helping to rebuild a positive ethos.
- New accommodation and improved resources have a major impact on staff and student morale.
- Improved recruitment to GCSE groups is helping to re-establish a proud tradition of music making.
- Teaching is sometimes too cautious and fails to engage students' wholehearted commitment.
- Some students are too timid and lack enthusiasm.

Commentary

Examination results

124. Standards in the 2002 GCSE were average. The 2003 results are similar, although national comparisons are not yet available. Standards seen in lessons match recent results.

Standards and achievement

125. The department is recovering from a period of decline. The department now occupies new premises, has a full complement of qualified specialist staff and a new energetic head of department. All this has brought a renewed zeal amongst staff and students. Whilst standards in lessons are average in Year 9 and Year 11, students' achievement is good as a result of the recent changes. In one lesson, students in Year 9 explored musical clichés, developing a confident awareness of how devices such as broken chords, note clusters and repetitive riffs provide structure and mood within music. Whilst most students responded with understanding and appreciation, some students were a little diffident. The department is aware that students' confidence needs to be built up. By Year 11, students understand how to develop a piece of music in exciting ways. In one lesson, students successfully created their own arrangements of a well-known piece by Mozart. The average GCSE results are set to improve if students maintain the progress that was evident in this and other lessons. Flourishing extra-curricular opportunities are having a positive impact on standards. The proportion of students having instrumental lessons has doubled in the last term and this will have a major impact on students' enthusiasm and musical standards. The collaborative links with the drama department result in regular successful musical productions.

Teaching and learning

126. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years, although in occasional lessons there is a lack of get-up-and-go by both teachers and students that results in lethargic learning. Teachers appreciate the need for challenge and excitement and are working hard to build on the sense of buoyancy and anticipation offered by the new premises and resources. In one very good lesson, the students responded with delight to the teacher's animated use of 'scatting', a kind of verbal imitation of rhythmic and percussive elements in music. This was great fun and had the students wanting more. In lessons like this, an eagerness to learn and a sense of shared musical adventure are leading to high levels of achievement. Where teachers are engaging, students' attitudes to learning are positive. Students' behaviour is very good in all lessons. Teachers successfully identify those who need extra support or who are particularly able and set challenging work according to their particular needs. Teachers successfully promote literacy skills through regular opportunities for reflective writing and the new computer suite is set to make a valued

contribution to learning. The skilful contribution of visiting instrumental teachers is an important element in the dynamic musical culture that is growing.

Leadership and management

127. The new head of department's vision and hard work are providing a sturdy structure for improvement. Action planning is good and the enterprising new schemes of work provide fresh and engaging lesson models. The determination to rapidly expand performance opportunities is having a major impact on the atmosphere for learning. The vigorous emphasis on community music-making, including plans for a Saturday morning music school, is ambitious and typifies the new sense of optimism. The issues of the last inspection have largely been resolved and the confidence shown by the senior management and governing body through investing in new facilities is being rewarded with early signs of vibrant new growth.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Students achieve well and make good progress because teaching is good.
- Students' learning is good and is strongly supported by their very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Extra-curricular provision is a very strong feature that is helping to raise standards.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet fully in place.

Commentary

Examination results

There are no results to report, because GCSE courses have only recently started.

Standards and achievement

128. Standards in physical education are above average and represent good achievement by both boys and girls. When they join the college in Year 7, boys and girls have a wide range of capability and experience in the subject and their overall standards are average. They make rapid progress because teaching is good and stimulates their very positive attitudes to the subject. As a result, the standards of both boys and girls are above average by the end of Year 9, particularly in major games. Standards in other activities such as basketball and badminton are not as high because less time has been given to teaching them. A good feature of the work in Years 10 and 11 is the opportunity given for students to choose or to specialise in activities – this helps to generate their interest and enthusiasm, and maintains their progress so that by the end of Year 11 standards are also above average. It is too early to judge standards of work in the GCSE course because this new course only started two weeks prior to the inspection.

Teaching and learning

129. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes are good. Teachers are knowledgeable, structure their lessons well, and have high expectations of students. When activities are challenging and varied students quickly learn appropriate techniques and develop their knowledge and understanding effectively,

as in a very good rugby lesson for boys in Year 7. Students' behaviour is exemplary in physical education. Both boys and girls are very keen and enthusiastic, work very well together and concentrate fully in lessons – these are key factors in their good learning and progress. In the most effective lessons teachers plan work well to ensure the needs of different groups of students are met. They share clear learning objectives so that students understand what it is they are learning and why, and they frequently question students to check on their learning and understanding. In this way all students, including those with special educational needs and those with higher ability, achieve well because they are properly stretched by appropriate tasks. This was illustrated well in a very successful Year 9 gymnastics lesson that provided girls with demanding opportunities to plan, practise and improve their sequences. As a result, their achievement and progress were very good, and standards were well above average.

Leadership and management

130. The department is led and managed well. The recent introduction of GCSE physical education has provided considerable impetus and direction, and has contributed to the generally good progress since the previous inspection. The lack of formal monitoring of teaching and learning remains a weakness to be tackled. However, teaching is stronger and standards have improved, supported by good assessment procedures in Years 7-9. The good quality of provision is greatly enhanced by the very good extra-curricular activities. These are very popular with boys and girls, and are helping to raise standards by providing very good opportunities for many students to achieve high standards both individually and in their teams, at local, regional and, for some, at national level.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Five lessons were observed in Years 7 to 11. Standards attained are average. Citizenship in the college is an integral part of personal, social and health education (PSHE), and was only introduced last year. Aspects of it are also taught through subjects across the curriculum. During the inspection, most examples of citizenship teaching were observed in subjects other than PSHE. Citizenship is at a relatively early stage of development and students do not achieve the standards they should because the teaching of the subject is still at a relatively early stage of development.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Years 7 to 9	Years 10 to 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	n/a	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is now good and results in good learning.
- The college's supportive and caring pastoral system promotes responsibility and trust.
- Students' very good attitudes and relationships help them to learn well.
- A planned, whole college approach to the teaching of citizenship is not yet in place.
- There are inadequate, planned opportunities for participation in community activities.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory so that students do not know their progress.

Commentary

Standards and achievement

131. Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with national expectations. As a result of the good teaching now in place, students are achieving satisfactorily in acquiring knowledge and understanding of key issues in citizenship. Year 7 students understand the meaning of friendship and co-operation; Year 9 students are aware of the causes and consequences of conflict through their study in history of international conflicts in the 20th century. Communication skills are well developed, encouraged by group discussion in many subjects. Though these subjects make a contribution to the students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship, they are not yet part of a planned, whole college programme, which accounts for students' satisfactory rather than good levels of achievement. Thus, achievement is lower than found in many subjects, despite the good teaching, because the subject is still being developed in the college. However, the strong moral guidance and support provided by the college contributes much to helping students build up their self-esteem and personal development as responsible citizens.

Teaching and learning

132. As a result of the teachers' good subject knowledge and well-planned lessons, students are acquiring sound knowledge and understanding of important social issues. Teachers meet the needs of students of all abilities through helpful supporting materials. Their enthusiasm and encouragement produce very good relationships with the students, which lead to a good learning atmosphere. This is promoted by the students' very good attitudes to work. They work co-operatively and with enthusiasm, as when Year 11 students eagerly debated capital punishment in an English lesson. The good teaching and learning are adversely affected by teachers' marking of students' work, which is currently unsatisfactory. Work is not assessed separately from personal, social and health education. Therefore, students do not know how they are doing in the subject and arrangements are inadequate for the first statutory assessment for Year 9 in 2004. These weaknesses stem from the early stage of development of the subject and are being tackled currently.

Leadership and management

133. Aspects of leadership are good and aspects of recent management are unsatisfactory. Taking account of such strengths and weaknesses, both leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The subject co-ordinator has prepared a clear plan integrating citizenship with PSHE and sets a good example through enthusiasm, good teaching and organisation. However, the subject suffers from a lack of whole-college strategic planning: an audit has not yet been fully completed across subjects to determine where citizenship already occurs; not all subjects have a policy; there are limited, formally planned opportunities for students to actively participate in college or local community activities. Students raise money for charity and Year 10 students provide Peer Support for younger students, but there is as yet no year or school council for students in Years 7 to 11.

OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

Three lessons were sampled, two in GCSE business studies and one in GCSE applied business.

134. 2002 results in business studies were well above average with both girls and boys on average performing significantly better than in other subjects taken. Girls' results were better in terms of higher grades obtained. Results were higher in 2003 with girls and boys achieving equally well. Teaching and learning were very good in both lessons seen. Year 10 students' learning about public and private limited companies was reinforced by a well-paced lesson containing clear explanations. Students learned key terms quickly. They were given a clear structure for their own note-taking and their learning was then tested by challenging questions during discussion. Very well managed class discussion enabled Year 11 students to gain a very good understanding of local, national and international competition.
135. In applied business, teaching and learning are good. A higher attaining group of Year 10 students quickly grasped concepts of successful business practice and could relate them very well to their own experience. They responded very positively to the challenge of producing high quality work. Their responses were used well in class discussion and this motivated students to give thoughtful, considered comments. They were given good opportunities to work independently and this resulted in good learning.

Work Related Learning

136. Four lessons were sampled covering literacy skills, working as a group, agriculture and life skills. Teaching and learning in Year 10 are very good. In one lesson students acquired skills in scanning text for meaning through a series of very challenging questions. In another, small groups used a variety of resources including the library and Internet to answer quiz questions. Teaching and support staff are very effective as facilitators, leaving groups to decide how they would divide responsibilities and so learn skills in working together. Year 11 students gained experience of taking cuttings from plants in the college greenhouse. Learning was satisfactory with clear explanations given although there was a lack of real challenge in the tasks undertaken. Year 11 students also study independent living skills as part of their course. In one lesson seen they concentrated on food requirements when living alone. Whole class discussion was good with all students involved and good relationships established. They worked well through a series of timed activities with good collaboration and positive attitudes displayed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 14 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 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	26	92	74	27	34	36.9	31.3
Chemistry	32	100	85	41	37	39.7	35.2
Biology	39	85	82	31	33	34.1	33.2
Physics	28	75	82	14	36	26.8	34.3
Geology	6	100	n/a	50	n/a	43	n/a
Design and technology	11	91	89	36	32	40.0	35.7
Economics	20	100	86	50	42	43.5	37.0
Physical education	16	88	88	38	28	35	33.7
Art and design	26	100	90	54	43	44.2	38.9
Music	5	100	94	60	39	40	39.0
Dramatic arts	12	100	94	50	38	45.8	39.1
Media studies	39	92	n/a	26	n/a	35.4	n/a
Geography	29	97	88	45	36	40.3	36.3
History	32	97	92	16	37	32.2	37.8
Religious studies	16	100	91	56	39	45.6	37.9
Law	20	90	n/a	40	n/a	40.0	n/a
Psychology	38	100	n/a	50	n/a	44.7	n/a
English language	29	90	92	13	30	30.3	35.6
English literature	27	100	94	52	38	45.2	38.9
French	30	80	85	13	35	27.7	34.9
Spanish	15	100	87	60	36	44.0	35.8
General studies	174	90	79	29	26	35.1	30.0

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Mathematics	21	100	93	43	52	86.7	84.7
Further mathematics	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	80	n/a
Chemistry	27	100	94	41	46	80.0	81.1
Biology	20	95	92	35	36	77.0	74.1
Physics	10	100	93	50	43	80	78.6
Geology	2	100	n/a	100	n/a	100	n/a
Design and technology	25	96	95	12	35	61.6	76.5
Economics	11	100	96	45	46	80.0	83.0
Business studies	16	88	96	16	33	58.1	76.3
Leisure and recreation	4	100	n/a	0	n/a	75.0	n/a
Art and design	27	96	96	52	49	83.7	85.1
Music	2	100	98	0	42	70	82.1
Dramatic arts (drama)	9	100	98	67	41	97.8	82.8
Media studies	25	92	n/a	20	n/a	70.4	n/a
Geography	14	100	97	57	40	95.7	80.9
History	28	100	97	37	41	81.4	81.2
Religious studies	9	100	96	67	44	88.9	82.2
Law	4	100	n/a	75	n/a	85.0	n/a
Psychology	22	100	n/a	45	n/a	83.6	n/a
English language	26	96	98	19	36	68.5	79.9
English literature	21	100	98	43	44	89.5	84.3
French	13	100	96	15	46	73.8	83.0
Spanish	13	92	96	8	47	63.0	83.5
General studies	129	95	90	22	29	67.3	69.2
Extra subjects	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	120	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for the inspection was English language, English literature and French.

English Language

Provision in English language **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes help them to make progress, because they come to lessons prepared to learn.
- Standards are below average.
- Teaching does not use performance data and examination board criteria sufficiently to plan lessons and encourage improvement.
- Students do not read widely enough to extend their learning.
- The pace of some lessons is too slow to motivate students to achieve well.

Commentary

Examination results

137. Results in A2 examinations were below average in 2002, and this downward trend from previous years continued for 2003. They were below average for AS level, also. Very few boys elect to study the subject, but they perform as well as girls.

Standards and achievement

138. Attainment on entry to the course is below average because this group of students did not achieve as well as they should have done in aspects of English language in their earlier years in the college. The new leadership in the department has successfully tackled this problem; students develop linguistic understanding at a sound rate, ensuring satisfactory achievement over the course. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are below average, with fewer students attaining the highest grades than found nationally. In Year 13, all but the lowest attainers analyse language, for example in newspaper articles, systematically, with a good grasp of how language works. They use technical terms such as 'semantic field' accurately. Students work well co-operatively and also independently, for example on their individual investigations, which show confident analysis from higher attainers. They do not read sufficiently around their course to develop awareness of a range of styles. Very few read newspapers regularly, for example. Students at the beginning of Year 12 have insecure knowledge of the functions of words.

Teaching and learning

139. Teachers have good subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements. This, coupled with the good attitudes of students, ensures students acquire knowledge progressively. However, too often, the pace of lessons is slow, and students do not develop as quickly as they might. Good tracking and advice sheets have been introduced to ensure teachers know exactly how Year 13 students are progressing in their individual investigations, which is an improvement on previous years. Students are encouraged to use ICT for research and presentation of work, which they do well. Though marking is regular and students find it helpful, there is insufficient reference to examination grade criteria or, in lessons, to show students precisely how to improve. Not all teachers are convinced of the necessity to plan lessons using the performance data and targets that are available, and this weakens the impact of their teaching.

Leadership and management

140. The new leadership is introducing better assessment procedures and more detailed schemes of work. This, together with better monitoring of both teachers and the curriculum, is bringing about improvement and counteracting unsatisfactory management procedures of the past.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

141. Good use is made of language and literacy across the curriculum. In many subjects, teachers maintain high expectations regarding the technical use of language appropriate to their subject specialisms, both in writing and in oral work. Students are constantly challenged to combine information from a variety of sources and this ensures good development of their literacy skills.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average, with many students gaining the highest grades in their examinations.
- Good, stimulating, teaching is resulting in good achievement and original thinking by students
- Very good, positive attitudes of students lead to lively debate and high standards of written work.
- Teaching does not use performance data and examination board criteria enough to plan lessons and encourage and record improvement.

Commentary

Examination results

142. Results in the 2002 A2 examinations were above average, and are similar for 2003. Results in AS level are also above average. As is common nationally, few boys elect to follow the course. Those who do perform as well as girls.

Standards and achievement

143. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average. Students are independent thinkers and respond to a variety of texts sensitively and perceptively. They analyse effectively how writers work, for example how symbolism is effective and how tone is created in *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, compared with *The Awakening*. Written work shows clear lines of argument and good ability to analyse. Lower attainers, a small minority, do not appreciate form and structure, but know their texts well and answer the question set. Students achieve well, developing confidence in their own opinions and enjoying lively, well-structured debate, confidently employing technical terms. They read reasonably extensively, but have limited knowledge of the theatre.

Teaching and learning

144. Very good subject knowledge and lessons which move quickly through a range of activities ensure students learn rapidly and retain interest. Class discussion, paired work and key words introduced on the overhead projector gave students in Year 12 a very good, clear introduction to, *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example. Skilled questioning assesses and develops understanding. Relationships are excellent and students are keen to extend their knowledge and improve their standards. The use of examination data to set challenging targets and inspire students is developing. Standards of marking are variable; some gives good advice on how to improve, but some is not sufficiently linked to relevant criteria. The subject makes a very good contribution to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its wide-ranging choice of texts and extracts for study, and opportunities for discussion. Texts are often selected from which students learn about different cultures and societies, such as Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*.

Leadership and management

145. The new leadership is introducing more detailed schemes of work and an improved system of assessment, which are having a beneficial effect on establishing greater consistency within the department.

Modern foreign languages

French

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

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are keen and have mature attitudes to learning.
- Good opportunities are provided for developing speaking skills.

- Students need to develop their general knowledge through independent study, to prepare for the topics covered by the syllabus.
- Expressive language skills need to be developed more.
- Teaching and learning need to be monitored more systematically.

Commentary

Examination results

146. Results were below average in 2002. There was an improvement in 2003. This is reflected in the higher standards seen during the inspection when standards were found to be above average in Year 13.

Standards and achievement

147. At the start of their first year in the sixth form, students feel unprepared for the demands of the course, but by the time they are in their second year their confidence has grown. This leads to improvements in their performance and they achieve well. In Year 13, students' comprehension is average, but their pronunciation is above average. Standards within the group are uneven in terms of the use of grammar, but all showed good progress in a lesson in the use of the subjunctive. Overall, standards at this stage are above average.

Teaching and learning

148. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is most effective when there is a good pace and challenge. Students have found the AS course very demanding. Learning and achievement are good in the second year as their language skills and confidence as independent learners grow. They are able to express themselves best when they have first researched a topic such as genetically modified foods. More use could be made of ICT to improve independent learning. A teacher who is a native speaker of French provides rich opportunities for developing language through texts and conversation. Learning objectives need to be more closely matched to examination requirements to improve results further.

Leadership and management

149. Leadership and management are good. The head of department who has been in post for two years is supported well by senior staff. A number of changes have been made and have led to improvement and examination results are better. Monitoring of teaching and learning are not yet systematic enough to ensure consistency.

MATHEMATICS

The focus for the inspection was mathematics.

Mathematically gifted and talented students may select to follow a course of nine units in mechanics and dynamics, pure mathematics, and statistics rather than the six required for A-level, giving them an additional AS level qualification in Further Mathematics at the end of Year 13. Students consistently attain high standards.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent

Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and leads to very good achievement.
- The breadth of expertise of different teachers and their effective deployment is raising standards.
- Standards are well above those of similar courses nationally.
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent and the subject leader sets an excellent role model for both teachers and students.
- More rigorous procedures are needed to ensure that students understand how difficult it is to make the transition from GCSE to A-level

Commentary

Examination results

150. Attainment in A-level examinations in 2002 was average, though missed being graded as above average by the smallest possible amount. Few students attained an A-grade. Provisional data for 2003 indicate that there has been a considerable increase in A and B grades.

Standards and achievement

151. Standards of attainment of students in Year 13 are well above those of similar courses and the expectation that over half of the students will attain an A-grade in 2004 is realistic. Students achieve very well, regardless of their standard on entry. In 2002, attainment at AS level was well above average and almost all students continued to A level. In 2003 there were more A and B grades. Achievement in Year 12 in the work covered this term is very good. Because of the high expectations of teachers and very good teaching that stretches many students to their limit in Year 11, occasionally students who enter the AS course with A or B grades find the transition to A level too demanding.

Teaching and learning

152. Within the department there is very good subject expertise across all the required areas of study, and teachers are well deployed to make best use of their expertise and enthusiasm. Teachers continuously assess students' understanding through questioning and marking and use this information in their planning. They meet the needs of those with English as an additional language very well. Lessons are very well prepared and structured to help students understand the work. There are high expectations of attendance, work rate, achievement and attainment. Homework and the teachers' consistent provision of helpful notes are used very effectively to reinforce and extend learning. Relationships are very good and students have confidence in their teachers. Attitudes are very good. Students are punctual to lessons and concentrate well. These factors have a very good effect on students' achievements. Students have a very clear understanding of their progress throughout the courses and how to improve.

Leadership and management

153. The excellent leadership and management of the subject leader have led to the development of a very effective and committed team of teachers, who share responsibilities and work together to continually improve provision and standards. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are higher overall and the quality of teaching has improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

154. Numeracy skills are above average and there are good examples of students improving application of number, for example in chemistry and economics.

SCIENCE

The focus for the inspection was chemistry.

Four AS and A level chemistry lessons were observed, together with one A level lesson in each of physics and biology, which allowed physics and biology in the sixth form to be inspected briefly. Standards in physics are average and in biology they are above average. In both subjects teaching and learning observed were good. As with chemistry, clarity of teachers' explanations and students' application of number were notable strengths. Both departments are addressing the fact that physics is chosen almost exclusively by boys and biology mainly by girls.

Chemistry

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

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations that help students to understand what they are learning.
- Teachers have good knowledge of students' attainment and potential and use this well to adapt their teaching.
- Students are keen to learn and work hard, making careful notes and paying attention to the teacher.
- Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding in most lessons.
- Students' skills of active and independent learning are underdeveloped.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory as there is insufficient laboratory space and many rooms are small, limiting opportunities for practical work.

Commentary

Examination results

155. Results in A level chemistry in the 2002 examinations were average in terms of the proportion gaining grades A or B. All students gained at least a grade E, which was above average. In work seen standards were higher than this.

Standards and achievement

156. Students make careful, accurate notes and are particularly good at solving numerical problems, for instance in calculating the gaseous equilibrium constant from a chemical equation, and information on the partial pressure of gases in a reaction. They also record observations carefully and conduct investigations accurately, for example in carrying out a titration to determine the concentration of hydrochloric acid using standard sodium hydroxide solution, which they had prepared earlier. The difference between examination results and the standard of work seen is explained by the fact that students' independent learning skills are relatively underdeveloped.

Teaching and learning

157. Teaching is good because teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to give clear, accurate explanations to their students. For example, a Year 12 group at a very early stage of the AS level course were taught the nature and shape of the p sub-orbitals in the electronic structure of atoms. The teacher used inflated balloons to explain the shape and relative positions of the electron clouds and students quickly understood this sophisticated three-dimensional concept. In carrying out the first titration experiment conducted by a group, the teacher very carefully explained the key points in obtaining accurate results and ensuring safe working practice, using technical language as appropriate. As a result students learned new skills very quickly and were able to demonstrate a high degree of accuracy in their work. Teachers use their knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses to give them the necessary help while challenging them to achieve more highly. Students are somewhat passive learners. They need encouragement to answer questions and often give the briefest possible response even when they know more. There are also periods in lessons when students write lengthy notes from dictation or by copying. This does not develop their ability to learn independently.

Leadership and management

158. Leadership is good as the senior leadership team gives strong support to the head of department who is new to the role. There is a common understanding of areas for development. Management is also good as seen in assessment results, which are analysed carefully in order to set challenging targets for students. There is effective line management and monitoring of teaching and learning. An accurate and honest review of the department's work has been produced, influencing the development planning of the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory as students' application of mathematical skills has improved, as has the monitoring of teaching and learning. There has been some decline in examination results due to the wider range of attainment of students taking chemistry. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory as there are insufficient laboratories, some of which are too small for effective and efficient teaching of practical chemistry. The use of ICT, although improved, remains underdeveloped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Sixth form provision was not inspected. GCE AS level examination courses in information technology have been recently introduced but no students have yet taken external examinations. Standards of work seen in Year 12 were satisfactory where students were just at the beginning of their sixth form studies.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

159. Students' skills in using ICT are developed effectively throughout the college. Classes are offered at the end of the normal day in order for sixth form students to develop the competency in ICT that they need for higher education. The success rates are good. Within subject departments there is growing use of ICT to support subject teaching and there has been considerable investment in hardware as the college is

moving towards providing networked access to its servers and to the Internet throughout the college accommodation.

HUMANITIES

The focus for the inspection was history and psychology.

Two lessons of geography were sampled in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Standards in Year 13 are average, however higher attaining students within the group are working at a higher level. Achievement overall is satisfactory. All students are competent in using the Internet and other resources for research in preparation for their extended essays. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of methods of analysis and evaluation. Teachers provide expert guidance and advice on a one to one basis. Students, however, work independently but are confident in asking for clarification. Students' attitudes are very positive and their behaviour is excellent. Student folders show an overuse of handouts but there is evidence of note taking and of short essays and practice questions all marked with appropriate guidance given. Standards in Year 12 at the start of the course are average with students still making the transition from GCSE. Achievement at this stage is satisfactory. The majority of students make good use of their prior knowledge and apply this well to work on coastlines and city zones. Students' map-work requires some revision. Teachers provide good guidance but much time is wasted reminding students of skills that were fundamental at GCSE. Students work too slowly. Student attitudes are good and their behaviour is good.

One lesson of geology was sampled in Year 12. Standards in Year 12 at this stage are well above average. Achievement for all students is very good. Students work well together as a group. They enjoy what they learn and are confident in asking questions. Students benefit from an enthusiastic and extremely knowledgeable teacher whose enthusiasm for the subject rubs off on the students and stimulates interest. Teacher questioning is good and student responses reflect a sound grasp of the subject. Good use is made of ICT to access current data. Students' attitudes are very positive and their behaviour very good.

History

Provision in History is **good**.

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is resulting in good learning, especially in giving students the skills to work by themselves and advice on how to improve.
- The subject is led well and managed effectively; this promotes good standards and the subject's popularity.
- The very positive attitudes of the students to the subject help them to make good progress.
- The very good resources promote thorough research and independent study.
- Lower attaining students need to develop their skills of analysis and extended writing.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to critically challenge each other and gain more confidence in their own learning.

Commentary

Examination results

160. In the GCE A level examinations in 2002, standards were below the national average in A-B grades and on the average for points scored. All passed with A to E grades just above the national average. Most students achieved as expected and in line with their other subjects. There has been a significant improvement in the last three years, especially at grades A-B. This has been maintained in 2003, with six of the 15 students exceeding expectations. There has been no significant difference in the attainment of males and females. AS results for 2002 were below average: all passed from a large entry of 32, but the proportion attaining grades A to B was well below average. However, in 2003, more students attained the higher grades.

Standards and achievement

161. Standards in work seen are above the national average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. They understand well the main concepts of the periods under study and effectively record relevant evidence from a number of sources. This has been promoted by the very good library resources, teachers' strong emphasis on enquiry work, and their encouragement of students to work constructively on their own. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson when students worked diligently in the library on individual investigations of their choice. Students generally show confidence and fluency in expressing their views, though some lower attaining students find this difficult. More able students discuss complex ideas with considerable insight. Essays are well structured, with well-chosen evidence from various sources and the interpretations of different historians skilfully evaluated. These skills are less developed in students of lower ability.

Teaching and learning

162. Teaching overall is good. Consequently students learn well. This has been promoted by the high expectations set by the teachers and their very thorough marking, which gives detailed guidance on how to improve. The advice given to guide their personal studies was particularly valuable. Students are made fully aware of the range of interpretations on a subject and are learning to question the reliability of sources. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons which offer stimulating activities based on the students' own enquiry. Where teaching is most effective, there is a brisk pace to the lesson; time is used well in setting deadlines and providing quick fire questioning to check understanding. It is less effective when the pace is slow and teachers do not sharply challenge students' thinking, nor encourage others to do so. The good learning is also promoted by the very good relationship with the students and their strong motivation. They are encouraged to work by themselves and readily respond. They also collaborate well with others in producing presentations and discussions.

Leadership and management

163. The very effective leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. In displaying good organisation and strong commitment to the subject, the head of department sets high expectations of standards and effort. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with new schemes of work and raising of standards. However, monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching is undeveloped.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Aspect	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	n/a	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers maintain high expectations of students.
- There is lively and well-organised teaching to responsive students.
- The overall rapport between staff and students ensures effective teaching and learning.
- Monitoring of student performance and target-setting are very good.
- Teachers' development of resources to support teaching is very effective.
- The timetable is not organised to maximise staff strengths or students' learning.
- The accommodation is not appropriate for the teaching of the subject.
- The team approach to teaching needs further development.

Commentary

Examination results

164. Results from 1998 onwards have never been less than average and in most years are above or well above average. Grades achieved exceed the targets set within the college for the subject at A level. The results also compare well with other subjects in the college. Many students in the subject achieve a grade above, or sometimes well above, that predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance. In 2002, results were above average, with boys' results – which had previously been less good than those of the girls – showing an improvement, at both AS and A level. The unvalidated results for 2003 suggest a continuation of these trends.

Standards and achievement

165. Oral and written work are both good, in most cases in line with that required for higher grades of pass in both Years 12 and 13. Written work is well organised, is consistent with higher grade criteria and forms a good basis for revision. Students achieve well in Year 12 and those who progress to Year 13 build upon a strong foundation and are achieving very well. By Year 13, students show a very good understanding of technical terms and concepts commonly used in psychology. For example, they can critically evaluate the work of Entwistle on learning styles and in doing so use terms like reliability and validity accurately and insightfully.

Teaching and learning

166. Teachers, in the way they structure and deliver lessons and in their adult relationships with students, ensure the latter can understand, evaluate and expand on the content of the subject. Learning is very well supported through teacher-developed resources in the form of unit information packs. Questions are used well to check knowledge, and make students think about the information they are given. On occasions students are not pressed sufficiently to expand on or clarify answers. Students work productively and co-operatively, particularly in small groups. Their contribution is in most cases articulate and shows the ability to draw on their own experience and their learning in other subjects. They enjoy their work. All this is most evident by Year 13. Some Year 12 students, at this early stage of their course, have still to gain the confidence and skills to make the most of the classroom opportunities for discussion and individual research.

Leadership and management

167. The subject is very well organised and led within the social sciences department. A new member of staff has recently started to contribute to subject teaching. There is a clear rationale for syllabus choice and the delivery and resourcing of teaching. The subject itself has a well-developed system, both paper-based and via the Intranet, for monitoring the level of student performance in each unit of work. The departmental handbook contains useful guidance on the identification and support of gifted and talented and other more able students. The timetabling of the subject prevents equal distribution of work between the two teachers across the four groups of students, or the amalgamation of groups for joint visits or visitors. It also generates differences in group composition between Years 12 and 13 causing discontinuity in how groups can work together. The base room, while well resourced, as is the main library, is becoming too small for the number of students taking the subject and is the wrong shape for the group work that is a necessary part of the way the course is run. The provision of unit information packs, study and revision guides and journals is a strength. There is an interesting development in providing AS level teaching by video-link to a school in a neighbouring authority. There are also good contacts with other schools, professional bodies and the examining board for staff development purposes and, for students, with local universities.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus for the inspection was design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Aspect	Sixth Form
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The management structure has been strengthened by new appointments.
- The curriculum has been broadened to include textiles at AS and A2 level.
- Monitoring of student progress is very effective.
- The very good student attitudes that exist form a very good basis for learning.
- Fluctuations in AS and A2 examinations need to be tackled.

Commentary

Examination results

168. In the sixth form, the AQA and AS and A2 syllabus in product design is taught. Currently there are 36 students taking AS level and 22 students taking A level. This represents a big increase on the previous year in the number of students electing to go onto A level from AS. Results in examinations have fluctuated. In the most recent year of validated results (2002), AS level results were above average whilst those at A level were below.

Standards and achievement

169. In the work seen in the inspection, the general level is above average. The newly introduced textiles option is being taken by a group of students who attained well above average results in GCSE. They are continuing to achieve well and produce standards that are above average. Year 13 A-level work is above average and represents good achievement by these students.

Teaching and learning

170. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. In the best lessons, the distinction between A-level work and earlier GCSE work in Year 11 is emphasised. Students are made aware of the need for rigorous thinking and analysis together with the development of high level skills. The fundamental properties of materials are explored and students learn how to approach their work in a questioning and mature manner.

Leadership and management

171. The new management structure has resulted in a more balanced curriculum for the sixth form. The new textiles option extends provision, thus providing opportunities for a wider range of interest. Additional developments have included a greatly extended provision for ICT in terms of improved accommodation, staffing and resources. This provision is seen in its impact upon a wider range of computers used in coursework. There have been important changes since the previous inspection. The new management structure has provided a greater positive impact upon learning and the revision of the course structure has broadened and improved provision significantly.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus for the inspection was art and design and drama.

Art and design

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

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and the quality of teaching are very good and secure very good learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, are very inventive and make very good progress in all aspects of art and design.
- Results in A-level examinations are above average for the proportion attaining grades A-B.
- The sixth form students do not have their own studio and cannot always use the art facilities in their free time.
- There are no photographic facilities.

Commentary

Examination result

172. Results in the AS and A2 examinations in 2002 were well above average for grades A-B and entry numbers are rising each year.

Standards and achievement

173. By the end of Year 13, students have mastered the skills of drawing and painting, creating effects with mixed media and manipulating the wide range of tools and materials on offer. Their work shows good development of personal styles and often stretches conventional boundaries when they respond to a stimulus. Their compositions are pleasingly individual and innovative. Students are well versed in the skills of appraisal and are confident in defending their arguments. They show a high degree of responsibility as many of them work on private studies out of lesson times. Presentation is good. Students know about placement and effect and their portfolio sheets and sketchbooks are thoughtfully arranged. Students achieve very well throughout the course.

Teaching and learning

174. The quality of teaching is very good and secures very good learning. There are no weaknesses in teaching and one of the main strengths is the high level of challenge offered, which results in students producing some very sophisticated work. The sixth form students benefit very well from being taught by different teachers for different aspects of their course. This ensures they gain highly from the teachers' individual and very high levels of expertise and experience. Relationships are very strong, with mutual respect shown between teachers and their students. Teachers show good humour and treat the students as adults. Students trust their teachers and are very receptive to advice and appraisal of their work, which in turn brings about improvement in standards. The sixth form enjoy their lessons, are determined to do well and show exemplary behaviour and attitudes. Most students who opt for art complete the course and extend their art studies after they leave.

Leadership and management

175. Leadership and management are very good. The department works well as a team to ensure the students are given every possible opportunity to experiment and produce worthwhile work. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, mainly because the results are higher and more students

now opt to take A level courses in art. In order to extend the curriculum, accommodation and equipment are needed for ICT and photography.

Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently well above the national average.
- Students are totally committed to the subject and their achievement is very good.
- There is an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities and links with the community.
- Very good teaching challenges and inspires all students.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Because of the rapid expansion of the subject, resources and accommodation are becoming inadequate.

Commentary

Examination results

176. In 2002, results attained at AS and A level are consistently well above the national average. Most students gained better results in drama than they did in their other sixth form subjects.

Standards and achievement

177. Writing standards seen in Years 12 and 13 are well above average. Students' work shows thorough research skills and good use of the library, the Internet and the department's own web site to investigate writers, plays, themes and historical, social and cultural contexts as well as leading practitioners. Diaries and notebooks indicate excellent awareness of assessment objectives and, consequently, writing is fluent and analytical with interpretations well justified and illustrated. Planning and story boarding are impressive as are devised scripts, which display a thorough understanding of practitioners such as Brecht, Stanislavski and Artaud. Textual studies and annotation are perceptive and mature: discussion and problem solving skills are very good.
178. Standards of performance are also well above average, and already very high in the newly introduced BTec course. Ensemble, improvisation and teamwork are impressive in all classes. Students readily explore ideas and themes together, challenge and support each other and work quickly and creatively. They use body language, space and levels well to give very effective presentations and know how to shape and direct performances. Their ability to evaluate their own and others' performances is assured and brings about immediate improvement.
179. Achievement is very good because of students' commitment and enthusiasm and the outstanding programme of enrichment experiences available to them. Frequent theatre trips, visiting theatre groups, drama festivals, close links with Leeds Playhouse, drama in the community and regular contact with professional actors and directors provide superb opportunities for students to gain valuable practical experience of how the theatre and drama contribute to society. Their knowledge of citizenship and their social, moral, cultural, spiritual and ethical awareness are considerably enhanced through their studies and presentations of themes such as political power and its abuse and the use of theatre for propaganda and social education as well as entertainment.

Teaching and learning

180. Teaching and learning are very good. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of students. Lessons are carefully planned, stimulating, challenging and enjoyable, and students are thoroughly involved in assessment procedures. In one excellent lesson, students were able to move from an introduction to some of the concepts and techniques of Peter Brook to a group performance which superbly illustrated them within just 20 minutes because of the interest, discipline and total commitment generated by inspiring teaching.

Leadership and management

181. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Innovation and a total commitment to the highest standards are the key to its success. Improvement planning is impressive. New syllabuses and a system to monitor students' progress have been successfully introduced. It has developed its own web site to support students and has just begun a vocational performing arts course in Year 12. Communication and teamwork in this ambitious department are also significant strengths. Community links are exceptional and yet they are still being developed further. However, the department is becoming a victim of its own success. It has doubled in size over the past year and specialist accommodation is now barely adequate. More portable equipment, such as rostra and lighting, is needed to give students regular opportunities to practise their staging and technical skills and to experiment with dramatic effects.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus for the inspection was physical education and leisure and tourism.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The A level course is popular and most students complete the course.
- Results are lower than they should be because too many male students have underachieved in their examinations.
- The monitoring of students' work is not rigorous enough and marking is inconsistent.
- The department lacks a dedicated base for the theory elements of the course.

Commentary

Examination results

182. Since the last inspection the college has successfully introduced physical education as an examination subject in the sixth form. This has been a positive improvement for the college – the A level course is popular and has recruited well. Course completion rates are good, although results have fluctuated. The initial AS results taken by students in Year 12 in 2002 were average, with almost all students passing the examination, including just over a third gaining the higher A-B grades. Most continued in Year 13 to complete the A2 course in 2003, but their results were lower than expected – three-quarters of students passed although none gained a higher A or B grade. When compared with their GCSE starting points

female students achieved the expected results, but a considerable proportion of male students underachieved. This picture is also reflected in the AS results of the Year 12 group in 2003 when just over half of the students successfully passed. Once again, female students achieved as expected, but male students did not do as well as they should. Since the course has been introduced there have been key staff changes, including a new head of department.

Standards and achievement

183. Currently, the standards of work seen during the inspection in both Years 12 and 13 are slightly lower than average overall but, significantly, represent satisfactory achievement by the students concerned. This reflects an improvement in standards since the last reported results.

Teaching and learning

184. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and ensures that students learn effectively. Teachers have a growing awareness of the demands of the course and use their good subject knowledge to promote understanding. Relationships are very good and students are supported well in areas of uncertainty. However, their passive response, for example in a Year 12 lesson on the concept of play and recreation, is indicative of the need for a more rigorous emphasis on developing their capacity for independent learning and increased personal responsibility. Where this is the case, and where links between the theoretical and practical elements of the course are established, teaching is more effective and progress is more rapid. This was illustrated clearly in a successful Year 13 practical soccer lesson where students made good progress in assessing each other's skills and in devising practices for improvement by drawing well on their theory work on skill acquisition.

Leadership and management

185. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The mixed quality of students' practical projects and written work in general underlines the need for greater consistency in teachers' expectations. Work requires more careful checking, together with clear, helpful marking that guides students towards improvement, so that early identification of any underachievement can be made. The lack of a suitable dedicated base for theory work is a major disadvantage both to A level development and also to the recently introduced GCSE course lower down the college. Although the absence of recreational opportunity within the curriculum is disappointing, the strong extra-curricular provision supports standards well along with opportunities for A level students to help younger students with their physical education here and in some local primary schools.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Aspect	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- The students' very positive attitudes to the subject help them to learn well.
- The good advice and support from teachers encourage students to work well by themselves.
- The department is well led and managed so that good standards are being set.
- There is a need to increase the pace of working with sharper deadlines and more resources.

- Formal and more regular marking of assignments needs to be undertaken, to build on the good day-to-day monitoring of work.

Commentary

Examination results

186. Results in the 2002 AVCE examinations were below average. The two students who completed the course achieved very well and far exceeded expectations. 2003 results were similar.

Standards and achievement

187. Year 13 students on both the leisure and recreation course and the travel and tourism course are attaining average standards. They are achieving well as their GCSE points score on entry to the sixth form was below average. Standards are better than the 2002 results because the current students are more highly motivated and staffing problems have been largely resolved. Standards of Year 12 students who have only just begun the course are just below average, but they are also achieving well in relation to their starting points. Retention rates are good with nearly all Year 12 students staying onto Year 13.
188. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of key terms and select and record information satisfactorily. Higher attainers research and analyse data well and write up their findings fluently. Literacy skills of lower attaining students are only satisfactory. ICT and numeracy skills of all students are very good. Skills of communication and working as a group are good. These have been enhanced by the teachers' encouragement and students' organisation of events such as the talent show for younger students.

Teaching and learning

189. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to plan challenging activities and set clear objectives. These focus strongly on the students being responsible for their own learning through enquiry work and problem solving. Teachers know the students well and give them good support. Their day-to-day progress is carefully monitored and short-term targets set. Students respond well as relationships and their own attitudes to work are very good. However, the more regular, formal marking of assignments to speed up the pace of completion and monitoring of progress requires further development. The availability of extension work and more book resources in the classroom will also help to increase students' productivity.

Leadership and management

190. The head of the department provides clear and enthusiastic direction for the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Staffing problems have been largely tackled by reducing the numbers involved and so providing more coherence and continuity. Plans are in place to sharpen deadlines for work completion and its assessment. The level of book resources in the department, as compared to the library and access to computers, requires urgent development to provide alternative sources for study.

BUSINESS

The focus for the inspection was business studies and economics. One part lesson was seen of law in which students appeared to be well motivated and the teaching good.

Business studies

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

Aspect	
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well on courses well matched to their needs.
- Teachers collaborate very well in planning courses.
- Efficient management is ensuring well-organised provision.
- There is not a strong culture of sharing the best practice in teaching methods.
- Links with the immediate local business community are not widely developed.
- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

191. AVCE results in 2002 were average. Boys performed much better than girls, although girls' results were from a very small entry. Results in 2003 had higher proportions of passes and higher grades for both girls and boys. In 2002 all GNVQ students (from a small entry) gained at least a pass. One third achieved a merit and one student a distinction. 2003 results were broadly similar from a smaller entry, with no passes at the highest grade.

Standards and achievement

192. In work seen in AVCE, standards are average with students achieving very well from their GCSE starting points. Similarly GNVQ students achieve very well, with some going on to take the AVCE course. On both courses, research and investigation skills develop very well because of the very good guidance in the completion of assignments. As a result, ICT and independent learning skills also develop very well. Literacy skills develop well because students are constantly challenged to combine information from a variety of sources. The application of textbook information including theory to real life examples is a weaker area for some students on both courses. Analysis and evaluation are weaker areas except amongst higher attainers. Year 12 AS students (at the start of their course) apply numeracy skills very well to cost calculations.

Teaching and learning

193. Planning is very good and is the key feature of the very good teaching. Students learn very well because of the integrated approach in the teaching with students' learning consolidated very well from the different perspectives of the teaching team. There is a very strong emphasis on grade requirements. Students respond very positively because they know clearly what they have to achieve although some are on occasions too "task oriented" in their learning and can sometimes lose sight of their objectives. The management of class discussion is a very strong feature of some but not all of the teaching. In a minority of lessons there is a lack of strong challenge in questions. Support for individuals is very good including excellent support for students with special needs although the monitoring of whole groups to check understanding is sometimes less thorough.

Leadership and management

194. Students experience continuity and progression in their learning because of the very well organised provision. There is a very strong collaborative approach in the department with a rigorous approach to self-evaluation in terms of results achieved, although this does not extend sufficiently to the sharing and development of good practice in teaching methodology. The arrangement of teaching accommodation causes some disturbance to teaching and learning.

Economics

Provision in economics is **very good**.

Aspect	
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	n/a

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher is very enthusiastic and has very good knowledge about the subject, and students respond in a very positive manner.
- Students are capable of using prior knowledge to inform and enhance present learning.
- Students read widely and apply the knowledge gained very effectively to improve their work.
- The standard of both written and oral work is very high.
- The use of formal assessment in the first term of the AS needs to be more rigorous so as to enhance the overall standard of work.

Commentary

Examination results

195. Results over the last five years have generally been above the national average although those in 2002 were at the national average.

Standards and achievement

196. The standard of work in the three Year 13 lessons that were seen was well above average. Students were able to contribute in a very positive way to the lessons that enhanced not only their own learning, but also that of all the members of the groups. In this, as in all aspects, there was no difference in the involvement of both boys and girls. In addition, students were able to raise pertinent issues such as poverty in a discussion on unemployment and government policies, which had not been directly thrown up by the context of the work. The standard of teaching and learning and the achievement demonstrated by the students both in and out of lessons indicates that the downward trend in results is likely to be reversed as students are achieving very well.

Teaching and learning

197. The very good teaching has led to students making very good progress in lessons with very clear explanations and the development of skills such as analysis. The organisation of the teaching enables students to engage with a wide range of issues. In one lesson this involved students having to synthesise work on unemployment and government policies so as to understand how they linked and had different effects. This in turn ensures that existing learning is reinforced and new learning and skills are developed.

Leadership and management

198. Leadership and management of the department are good. Appropriate plans have been put into place to tackle a number of important issues. These include the lower than expected results, a fall in numbers taking the course in the face of an enhanced range of sixth form choices, and the imbalance of girls to boys in the student numbers. Targets are set for all students. Equally, care is taken to ensure that, where needed, work is specifically targeted at particular requirements.

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

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