

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN CLEVELAND COLLEGE

Hinckley

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120299

Headteacher: Mr T. Bartlett

Reporting inspector: Ms M. L. Glynne-Jones

2918

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th January 2002

Inspection number: 243014

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	14 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Butt Lane Hinckley Leicestershire
Postcode:	LE10 1LD
Telephone number:	01455 632183
Fax number:	01455 638030
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G. Wass
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	M. L. Glynn-Jones	Registered inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9188	J. McHugh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3534	A. Braithwaite	Sixth form co-ordinator	Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8361	M. E. Burley	Team Inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 & 4) Biology (Sixth Form) Chemistry (Sixth Form)	
19991	P. Devereux	Team Inspector	Geography	
19586	W. Easterby	Team Inspector	English	
31981	E Forster	Team Inspector	Art and design (Sixth Form)	
11626	M. Goldring	Team Inspector	Music	
22524	S. Innes	Team Inspector	Information communication technology Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
30005	P. Legon	Team Inspector	History (Key Stages 3 & 4)	
20192	T. McDermott	Team Inspector	Physical education	
12897	M. Mealing	Team Inspector	Health and social care (Sixth Form)	
23569	D. Nicholl	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 & 4) French (Sixth Form)	
17258	C. Phillips	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
14516	A. Skelton	Team Inspector	Religious education	
23891	P. Slape	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
13623	J. Waddington	Team Inspector	Business education (Sixth Form) Psychology (Sixth Form)	
31831	J. K. Watson	Team inspector	Art and design (Key Stages 3 & 4)	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
WS7 8XA

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John Cleveland Community College, a voluntary controlled comprehensive school, is in the town of Hinckley. It is one of 16 colleges organised on the unique Leicestershire pattern which provides for students in their last two years of compulsory schooling (Years 10-11) and for students of sixth-form age. With 1566 students on roll, including 444 in the sixth form, the college is considerably larger than other secondary schools, including those catering for students aged 11 to 18. Its sixth form is much larger than other sixth forms. The numbers of male and female students are evenly balanced in all year groups. A relatively small number of students are from ethnic minority families, none of whom is at an early stage of English fluency. When they enter Year 10 from four high schools, students' overall attainment is above average, close to being well above average. There are no national data available to compare the proportion of students with special needs in each year group. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the average national figure available for all secondary schools, whatever their organisation. Students are drawn from an area of low unemployment and from families with a wide range of social backgrounds. Overall their home circumstances are neither particularly advantaged nor disadvantaged.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The effectiveness of the college and the value for money it provides are poor. Leadership, management and governance are very ineffective. Standards decline from above average on entry to Year 10 to below average by Year 11 and have fallen since the last inspection; students underachieve. Teaching and learning are poor. The college is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education for students aged 14 to 16. By contrast, standards in the sixth form are well above average and achievement is very good.

What the school does well

- Very good achievement in the sixth form with well above average A-level results in 2001.
- Very good provision for music; good provision for drama, history and physical education.
- Above average GCSE results in business studies, drama, history and music.
- Good teaching in the sixth form.
- Good relationships overall.
- Good programme of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Ineffective leadership and management failing to halt the decline in GCSE standards.
- Lack of clear lines of responsibility for the management of the sixth form restricts improvement.
- College not held to account for declining standards by the governing body.
- Teaching unsatisfactory, or worse, in 20 per cent of lessons in Years 10 to 11.
- GCSE results in the bottom five per cent when compared with similar schools.
- Declining attendance since the last inspection, very high unauthorised absence in Year 10 and Year 11, unsatisfactory attendance in the sixth form.
- Poor health, safety and welfare procedures.
- Parents hold the college in poor regard.
- Unsatisfactory provision in mathematics, science, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and modern languages in Years 10 to 11 and in psychology in the sixth form.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

In accordance with section 13 (7) of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been poor improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Standards, reported then as falling, have continued to fall. The quality of teaching and of students' attitudes and behaviour has declined. Attendance has fallen and exclusions have risen. Very little has been achieved to secure the improvements required by the five key issues identified in the last report, in particular to the priority of raising standards in Years 10 to 11 through six key actions. Raising standards in Years 10 to 11 had been a key issue from the 1995 inspection. Requirements for ICT and collective worship are still not met in full; risk assessment procedures remain unsatisfactory. However, the use of a separate base for all the teaching of students with special needs has been discontinued and the Year 11 reviews of special needs provision are now carried out as required. Arrangements for performance management (identified as appraisal in 1998) are now in place.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	E*
A-levels/AS-levels	B	B	A	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

- The fall in results reported at the last inspection has continued;
 - When the 2001 Year 11 group joined the college their Year 9 results were above average; their performance declined over Years 10 and 11, the decline in results showing that students have been achieving nowhere as well as they should;
 - Poor attendance affects GCSE results badly; if the 2001 results of those students who failed to achieve 90 per cent attendance are discounted, the college's results become average, not below average –although still not as high as they should be;
 - When compared with schools whose pupils come from a similar background, the college's 2001 results are in the lowest five per cent nationally for average points, for five or more higher grades and for five or more pass grades;
 - GCSE targets were not met in 2001; the shortfall was considerable;
 - In relation to students' attainment when they join Year 10, the GCSE targets for 2002 are not suitably challenging; in relation to recent performance they are;
 - When the 2001 Year 13 group entered the sixth form their attainment was average; they achieved very well over the two years to gain well above average results at A-level;
 - The 2001 results were well above average for both male and female students.
-
- By Year 11, the standard of work is average overall;
 - Standards are below average in English, science, geography and in ICT in all subjects, and well below average in modern languages;
 - Students underachieve in English, mathematics, science and modern languages;
 - Strengths are the well above average standards in music and above average standards in core (compulsory) physical education.

- Students achieve well by Year 11 in history and core physical education, very well in music.
- By Year 13, the standard of work is average overall.
- Standards are above average in English, chemistry, art and design, history and physical education, well above in music and below average in psychology;
- Students achieve well in English, art and design, history, ICT and physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory; while there is a body of students whose motivation is good, a significant minority in Years 10 and 11 shows poor attitudes - a decline since the last inspection.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory; a significant minority disrupts lessons in Years 10 and 11 through inattention and disregard for authority, a decline since the last inspection; round the college, most students behave with friendly tolerance. The number of fixed-term exclusions has risen.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall; good relationships overall that survive the disruption caused by the significant minority; limited development of independence and initiative.
Attendance	Poor; rate has fallen since the last inspection; well above average unauthorised absence in Years 10 and 11.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Poor	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

- Years 10-11: satisfactory teaching and learning in English, unsatisfactory in mathematics and science.
- Unsatisfactory teaching and learning in French and German in Years 10-11.
- Strengths in history, music and physical education where teaching is very good at both stages.
- Very good learning in music and physical education and, in the sixth form, in history.
- Weakness overall in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in Years 10-11, unsatisfactory in religious education at both stages.
- Overall, the needs of all students are not satisfactorily met in Years 10-11, although the specialist teaching for students with special needs is good.
- There is no planning for the very small number of students who speak English as an additional language; those who are gifted and talented are not yet identified across the college.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall in Years 10-11 because ICT provision does not meet requirements, satisfactory in the sixth form; suitably broad; weakness in provision for personal, social and health education, careers education and for literacy and numeracy teaching in subjects; not always inclusive because of poor organisation, for example, 'split' classes taught by more than one teacher.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory overall; good provision made by special needs staff, no support assistance in lessons for students with lower levels of need, unsatisfactory provision made in five subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory for the small number of students to whom this applies; no college-wide planned provision or guidance.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Unsatisfactory overall, and for spiritual and cultural development; sound provision for moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Unsatisfactory; this applies to procedures for health, safety and child protection; at an individual level, staff show personal concern for students; there are sound assessment procedures for all year groups.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Unsatisfactory; links are ineffective; the prospectus and annual report are provided as required, although they omit some of the required information; parents' views of the school are predominantly critical.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very ineffective; there is no clear vision for the college's future and an inability among senior managers to plan and implement strategic action for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very ineffective; the governors have not ensured that the college provides an acceptable standard of education for students in their last two years of compulsory schooling.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very ineffective; there are no procedures in place which hold senior staff managers accountable for the areas of the college's work for which they are responsible.
The strategic use of resources	Very ineffective; poor staffing and unsatisfactory learning resources, particularly computer provision; very poor budget management.
The extent to which the school applies the principles of best value	Poor; there is some attention to consultation with students and parents and participation in a local benchmarking group.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the college if there is a problem. • The college expects students to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children's liking of the college. • Behaviour. • Regular homework and clear information about it. • The quality of teaching. • Better information about how their child is getting on. • The college working more closely with parents. • The leadership and management of the college. • Higher expectations about their children's attitudes and values. • A better range of extra-curricular activities.

It is clear that some students make good progress. However, the inspectors find that overall, students' progress over Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because the standards fall from their Year 9 results. They do not find that students are sufficiently helped to work effectively. The inspection team disagrees with the view about extra-curricular activities, finding that a good range is offered, with notable strengths in sports and music. On other issues, the findings of the inspection confirm parents' concerns.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of John Cleveland College is bigger than that found in most schools. It has 444 students and numbers have risen slightly since the last inspection. There are almost equal numbers of male and female students; the small number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds reflects the composition of the main school. Almost four fifths of students from the main school continue their education after 16, half of these remaining at John Cleveland to follow mainly AS- and A-level courses. The other half continues their education in a local further education college, mainly following vocational courses. Very few students join the sixth form from other schools. The college normally requires students to have achieved five higher grade passes at GCSE in order to enrol on advanced level courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Sixth form provision is satisfactory and cost-effective overall. Results were well above average in 2001, an improvement on the above average results of the previous two years. Teaching and learning are good but leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Students' aptitudes and aspirations are generally met by the course programme, although the guidance provided is weak.

Strengths

- Well above average results in 2001.
- Very good achievement from Year 11 to Year 13.
- Good teaching.
- Curriculum successfully builds on students' previous studies, including religious education for all.
- Good relationships supporting students' learning.
- Good support for students by subject teachers.

What could be improved

- Ineffective college arrangements for the leadership and management of the sixth form.
- Lack of a co-ordinated and appropriate guidance programme for students.
- Insufficient use of information from assessment to set individual targets for improvement.
- Role and responsibilities of form tutors not clearly identified and published.
- Unsatisfactory attendance.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards by Year 13 • Satisfactory achievement • Results have fallen from a peak in 1998 and are now average • Strengths in good teaching and teachers' knowledge.
Biology	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards in Year 12, limited work seen in Year 13 • Satisfactory achievement • Results have declined in last three years and are now average • Strengths in teachers' good subject knowledge and relationships with students • Resources for independent study are limited.
Chemistry	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards by Year 13 • Achievement is satisfactory • Results have improved and are now average • Strengths in leadership of subject and good attitudes of students • Limited use of ICT.
Design and technology Product design	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average by Year 13 • Achievement is satisfactory • Numbers too small for comparisons with national results • Teachers' subject expertise is good • Limited use of ICT and CAD-CAM facilities.
Business education	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average by Year 13 • Achievement is satisfactory • Results are well above average • Good use of visits and placements to support students' learning • Weakness in the use of assessments to plan for students of all abilities.
Computer studies	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average by Year 13 • Achievement is good • Numbers too small for comparisons with national results; most students gain higher grades • Strengths in good teaching and learning, and guidance for students • Weaknesses in narrow range of courses on offer to match abilities of students.
Physical education	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in Year 13 are above average • Achievement is satisfactory • Results usually above average but average in 2001 • Strengths in the good teaching and learning • Weakness in range of activities offered particularly aesthetic elements.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Health and Social Care	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average overall and above average in AVCE course • Achievement is good • Results at the national average for small numbers entering • Strengths are the quality of coursework and the care which students take in presenting their work • Weakness in students' selection and evaluation of what to include in portfolios.
Art and design	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards above average in Year 13 • Achievement is good • Results have improved and are now average • Strength in good subject knowledge of teachers and their high expectations • Weakness in the limited use of ICT.
Music	<p>Very good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards well above average • Achievement is good • Results above average • Teaching and learning are very good.
Geography	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average • Achievement is satisfactory • Results well below average • Strength is the good standard of students' coursework assignments • Weaknesses in management and leadership and some poor teaching.
Religious education	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory standards by Year 13 • Achievement satisfactory • Results are average • Strengths in increasing numbers taking up the courses • Weakness in students' lack of independence in their learning.
Psychology	<p>Unsatisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of work seen are below average by Year 13 • Achievement is satisfactory given students' attainment at GCSE • Numbers too small for comparisons with national results; few students gained higher grades • Strengths in the good attitudes of students towards the subject • Weakness in leadership and management towards raising standards.
English	<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are above average by Year 13 • Achievement is good • Results are above average, well above in literature • Strengths in good teaching and commitment of students • Weakness in opportunities for students to be involved in discussions in some lessons.
French	<p>Satisfactory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are average by Year 13 • Achievement is satisfactory • Numbers too small for comparisons with national results; a good proportion gained higher grades • Strengths in students' written work and listening skills and the good subject knowledge of teachers • Weakness in writing and speaking skills of students.

Other subjects were sampled and teaching found to be largely satisfactory but with some unsatisfactory teaching in the leisure and tourism intermediate course.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory overall, principally because students are supported by good relationships, particularly with subject teachers. The programme of advice and guidance about their future is satisfactory, but the co-ordination of this programme is weak. The daily contact with personal tutors needs strengthening to provide greater continuity of care and attention to individual needs. The college has assessment information, including predictive grades, but does not routinely use this information to help students improve their work.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Unsatisfactory; there are no clear lines of responsibility and a lack of focus for improvement. Monitoring and analysis of students' performance and of sixth-form provision as a whole are weak. There is no plan for the development of the sixth form. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject teachers provide help and support to students in their work • There is a good range of courses that meet students needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More support and advice is needed when making choices at 16 and 18 although printed information was thought to be of some help • Students do not feel well informed about their progress and what to do to improve and achieve their desired qualifications • The range of activities and enrichment courses need improvement • Many students do not feel that they could rely on help for personal problems • The way in which the college responds to the views of students.

Three-quarters of students in the sixth form responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, most of Year 12 and about half of Year 13. The response indicates a high degree of dissatisfaction with most of the areas explored. Inspectors agree with students' views and concerns, which are supported by inspection evidence. The main reasons stem from the lack of clear leadership and planning for the direction of the sixth form, which reflects the weakness in the management of the college. Students are not helped to see the Year 12 and 13 arrangements as a coherent programme. While there is careers advice for those entering the sixth form and when considering choices after college, these are often provided through whole group sessions and insufficiently supported by individual tutorial guidance. The advanced general studies course provides good enrichment opportunities, but the wider programme of activities being planned has yet to be implemented. The support for students' personal and academic development varies unacceptably in quality and largely depends on students seeking support for themselves. Confident and successful students manage this, but too many students clearly need more support and guidance as they make key decisions.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, 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”.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Main school Years 10 to 11

1. The last inspection report in 1998 flagged up the fact that while the average points score at GCSE appeared to be stable, this did not reflect the national picture which was showing a rise. In real terms the results were in decline. Since the last inspection, the decline has continued. A decline in results can follow from changes in student attainment when they enter a school. However, there has been no change in the relative performance of the students joining the college in Year 10. Students' average points in the Year 9 tests taken in their high schools have been consistently above average, as was reported at the last inspection. By Year 11, overall, standards fall, the college failing to provide for students to maintain their standards on entry. When compared with the results in similar schools the stark picture of exceptionally poor performance is shown. No action taken by the college succeeded in reversing this overall falling trend by 2001.

2. Weaknesses in the 2001 results are evident in English, English literature, single and double science, French, German and art and design. In each of these subjects, students do less well than they do overall in their other subjects. The difference compares unfavourably with the difference nationally. These weaknesses apply to both boys and girls in English and English literature; to boys in French and German and to girls in art and design. The standard of the work seen in English is below average and reflects the previous year's examination results. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory. However, in the work seen in English there is evidence of a turn-round beginning to happen under the department's new management, although it is too early for this to show in a rise in standards. In modern languages, the standard of work seen is well below average and reflects the 2001 GCSE results. Long-term staff absence has adversely affected standards and students' achievement is poor. While overall provision is unsatisfactory, the recently appointed head of department already has a full and accurate picture of department weaknesses. In both the English and modern languages departments, appropriate action is being taken to raise standards. In double science, the below average standards of work seen reflect the 2001 GCSE results and students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Overall provision in science is unsatisfactory because not enough is being done to prevent underachievement. Ineffective management of overall science provision at senior management level is the major contributory factor.

3. Smaller numbers than usual take art and design. When students join Year 10, their experience of the subject is very varied and their basic art skills are often undeveloped. The work seen showed students reaching average standards, better standards than suggested by the 2001 GCSE results which were below average. There is no evidence that explains this improvement. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory, and for some it is good. Both the work seen and the lessons observed indicate that the main reason is good teaching.

4. The strengths in the 2001 results were in history, humanities and music where A*-C grades were above average. In history and music, the numbers taking the examination are smaller than usual and mostly include higher attainers. However, the standard of work seen in history is average and shows good achievement from students' standard of work when they joined Year 10. In music, the achievement from the beginning of Year 10 is very good and the standard of work is well above average. Humanities was not inspected. In these three subjects and in business education, students did notably better in 2001 than they did in their other subjects; the difference comparing favourably with the national difference. This applies to boys in history and to girls in humanities where there were sufficient numbers to permit

statistical comparison. While results in drama were a little above the national average in 2001, the difference is not significant. The standard of work seen is above average and students achieve well over the two years.

5. A factor affecting the GCSE average points score in 2001 was the low attendance rate of the Year 11 group. A similarly low rate was reported at the last inspection. While remaining below average, the 2001 average points score rises a little if the results of those students with below 80 per cent attendance are discounted. However, when students with below 90 per cent attendance are discounted, 216 students, 38 per cent of the year group, the score rises to the average range for 2001. While the college has a general awareness that low attendance affects standards, there is no evidence that this has been tracked on an individual basis or that strategic action has been undertaken on a college-wide basis to bring about improvements.

6. The 1998 inspection judged the planning for continuity and progression between the college and its partner high schools to be poor and a key issue for improving attainment and progress. The lack of any significant progress on this issue on a college-wide basis is a further factor in the declining standards. In the absence of comprehensive information about Year 9 teacher assessments for incoming Year 10 students, other than for English, mathematics and science (for all students, but not separately for boys and girls), departments have not carried out, nor been required to carry out any base-line assessments in their subject. The objective for such assessments would be to establish a clear understanding of individual levels of attainment as an essential basis for ensuring that all students successfully build on their prior attainment. That this is not happening means that students are not getting an equal opportunity to succeed.

7. Other factors which are detrimental to ensuring that students on Years 10 and 11 achieve as well as they should are poor teaching and students' unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, sometimes worse, in 16 per cent of lessons – a decline in quality since the last inspection. Although satisfactory improvement has been made on the key issue from the last inspection concerned with integrating students with special needs into timetabled subject lessons, inadequate staff training has been provided to ensure that all departments update their skills for teaching students with a wide range of attainment. The progress of students with special needs reflects this. It is unsatisfactory and reflects the general quality of students' achievement. However, when taught by staff with special needs expertise, students with special needs make good progress.

8. There is no evidence to suggest that, overall, gifted and talented students and those for whom English is an additional language progress any better or worse than other students. The college has not identified who its gifted and talented students are, although the intention to do so is published. Where it was possible to judge the progress made by these students, in music it is very good; in history and physical education it is good; in mathematics and art and design it is satisfactory; and in geography, modern languages and religious education it is unsatisfactory. Departments have not identified who the students are for whom English is an additional language in order to check that they achieve as well as they should. The fact that none is at an early stage is sometimes interpreted as indicating that no support is needed.

9. Underachievement by Year 11 shows in several ways. First by the fall in standards from Year 9 to Year 11. Second, by the very unfavourable comparison with the results in similar schools. In the work seen, students are not achieving as well as they should in English, mathematics, science, ICT and modern languages. Comment about these subjects has already been made, except for ICT. Students are not achieving as well as they should in ICT because the curriculum opportunities which should be provided in all subjects are not in place. This weakness is compounded by the poor level of computer resources. Students achieve well in drama, history (comment made previously) and physical education (core physical education for all students). In physical education, students learn very well because the teaching is very good and they have positive attitudes to their work.

Sixth form

10. Results at A-level rose from above average in 1999 and 2000 to well above average in 2001. When the 2001 Year 13 students joined the college in Year 10 their standards were above average. About two-fifths of these students stayed on into the sixth form. The actual attainment of this student group (analysed by inspectors from college data) was average when they entered Year 12, and higher than the overall GCSE results for the year group in 1999, as might be expected. This group added very good value over Years 12 to 13. Using the actual Year 9 attainment of the 2001 Year 13 group, it appears that their gain from Year 9 to Year 13 was very good.

11. In 2000, well above average results for male students combined with average results for female students led to above average results overall. The college has not tracked this difference against prior attainment to determine whether the gender difference is significant. In 2001, the results were well above average for both male and female students. The poor A-level results in 2001 were in geography.

12. The range of evidence for standards in Year 13 included few lesson observations because the inspection took place in an examinations week. Samples of work were seen and some subject discussions took place with students. The pattern of observations in Year 12 was minimally affected by examinations. Overall, the standards of work seen are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. This finding does not reflect the high A-level results in 2001. The actual profile of attainment of the current Year 13 from when they joined Year 10 has not been established in college data. The work seen shows standards that are:

Well above average	Music
Above average	English, chemistry, art and design, history, physical education
Average	mathematics, business education, biology, geography, ICT, French, religious education
Below average	Psychology.

In all of these subjects except geography, students' achievement by Year 13 is at least satisfactory when compared with their performance at GCSE. It is good in English, art and design, history, ICT and physical education where the main factor is the good quality of teaching and learning. However, it is evident in the comments made by parents and students that a factor in the high results was students' own commitment and perseverance in the face of college difficulties. In geography, students are not doing as well as predicted by their GCSE results, although the work in Year 12 shows some improvement.

Whole college

13. There is no evidence, and no college analysis, to show that students from ethnic minorities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with special needs do not achieve as well as their peers. However, in geography gifted and talented students do not achieve as well as they should, while in history, French and physical education they achieve well.

Basic/key skills

14. Students have a satisfactory grounding in the basic skills of literacy. In most lessons their capacity to discuss and describe what they are doing is satisfactory and is a factor in helping them to understand the underlying ideas of the subjects they are studying. Their competence in applying numerical skills is more variable. In chemistry, lower attainers have difficulty with some calculations and in psychology, students' capacity to interpret research material is limited because of their weak numeracy skills. However, in computing, students have sufficient skills in numeracy to understand the mathematics concepts involved in programming tasks. Students' work is presented well and often word-processed, but other than this, their use of ICT is a weakness. In many subjects there is insufficient use of ICT beyond word-processing. The Internet is often used simply to gather information that is not always sufficiently analysed and integrated into students' work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Students' attitudes to the college are unsatisfactory overall. This is a school with two distinct communities. One where the majority of students display positive attitudes, have a desire to learn and to play a part in school life despite some disillusionment and disappointment. The other, where a significant minority displays poor attitudes towards learning, a disregard for authority and in varying degrees shows disaffection from the opportunities education offers them. This is now a significant minority whereas at the last inspection the reference was to 'minor exceptions' and 'occasional disruption'. The judgement is equally true for students from all cultural backgrounds and for those with special needs.

16. In Years 10 and 11, students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory or better in only 85 per cent of lessons, the vast majority of which were taught by permanent staff. There is strong link between the students' attitudes and behaviour and the quality of teaching, although in a small number of lessons, students' response is better than the teaching they receive. In lessons where the teaching is good, most students show an interest in the tasks set, listen and concentrate well. They are keen to learn; on occasion, their response is very good. Students' response benefits strongly from the clear boundaries and high expectations demanded by some staff which are a characteristic of the good teaching. However, students are quick to take advantage of situations in lessons led by staff they perceive as not knowing them well or those lacking good classroom management skills. The lack of co-ordination and guidance for the large number of temporary staff employed at the college, the unsatisfactory teaching skills of some permanent staff, and the wide variation in the way staff implement the behaviour policy have a direct and detrimental effect on students' attitudes and values.

17. Students who want to learn work hard to do so, ignoring the distractions around them. The disruption in lessons is not due to riotous behaviour or to behaviour which is out of control. It is caused by constant inattention by groups of students, on occasions mobile phones ringing or being used in lessons, students talking among themselves or using other attention-seeking behaviour. Teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time on these groups to make them concentrate on the task set, to the detriment of those who behave appropriately. This has an adverse effect on the progress of all the students in the class.

18. There is no national data against which to compare the exclusions rate for this school. However, the figure of 335 fixed-term exclusions in Years 10 and 11 during the previous academic year was more than six times higher than the top benchmark figure for secondary schools of a similar size, although not serving the same range of year groups. The figure includes multiple exclusions of a small number of students. The number of fixed-term exclusions is almost twice the number reported at the last inspection. However, the number of permanent exclusions has fallen by two-thirds since 1998. While the figures suggest that the proportion of students from ethnic minorities who were excluded was much higher than the proportion of white students who were excluded, the 15 exclusions involving students from ethnic minorities were in fact repeated exclusions of one student.

19. Behaviour around the school is generally good. Individual students are polite to visitors and friendly to one another; but the majority makes little effort to create a good impression of their school. Some congestion occurs in doorways and stairs as students move around the site between lessons. The college has attempted to solve this by keeping movement to a minimum. However, simple and sensible courtesies such as 'keep left' are not generally evident – and not promoted sufficiently.

20. While the college seeks to be fully inclusive in its provision for students, its procedures for managing students' behaviour do not always achieve this. One of the strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour involves the student standing outside the class to reflect on their behaviour and to allow others to learn. On one occasion, this was seen to continue for half the lesson, 30 minutes. The desired effect was achieved as the student, upon return, quickly settled to work and made satisfactory progress for the remainder of the lesson. However, the progress was less than that of other members of the class.

21. In assemblies, while all students sit quietly and follow instructions, many display a disregard for the occasion and little interest in what is being said. There is no participation by students during this period, a missed opportunity for promoting their personal development. This is not the case for a small proportion of students who, when asked, speak clearly of the content of the assembly and what the message is trying to convey.

22. Students usually get on well with each other and relationships are on the whole good. In general the college is a harmonious community in which adults and students respond to each other with friendliness and consideration. This is true for all groups, including those from ethnic minorities and students with special needs. Students with special needs are now satisfactorily integrated into the life of the school. They form good relationships with adults and their classmates. With some exceptions, it is true for boys and girls, although they do not always choose to sit in mixed groups in lessons. However, college records show that behaviour such as fighting, unprovoked assaults and stone-throwing occurs with unacceptable regularity. These incidents more often than not relate to students in Years 10 and 11. It is to the college's credit that such incidents are responded to promptly by senior staff and dealt with in an appropriate manner. However, the messages conveyed by the college regarding what it considers to be unacceptable behaviour are often contradictory or overlooked by staff. Consequently, students are left unsure of where the boundaries lie. For example, this applies to the rules regarding mobile phones, smoking, uniform code and litter. The code of socially considerate behaviour is frequently not put into practice by students.

23. Behaviour at lunchtimes is mostly satisfactory. However, where fewer adults are around the college, the behaviour of a significant minority is unsatisfactory. During the inspection, groups of students congregated at certain points on the site to smoke, with total disregard for the college's no smoking rule and unchecked by staff. The amount of litter dropped by students both inside and outside the buildings is unacceptable. The litter not only causes a health and safety problem, as the college acknowledges, but seriously detracts from the positive values expressed in the college's aims. The litter situation has not improved since the last inspection. There is very little graffiti. Although the school comprises eight large separate buildings, the indoor routes and outdoor pathways are efficient and do not cause excessive delays in the arrival of students at lessons.

24. Opportunities for students to organise and make decisions about their own learning and personal development are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. When such opportunities do arise, students' response is good. For example in physical education, they work well on their own when left in small groups, always complete the tasks given and show a clear respect for the capabilities of others. Within each house, students regularly organise and support fundraising ventures for various charities.

25. The attendance rates for the college need to be evaluated in two ways. First in terms of improvement since the last inspection and second, because of the unique range of year groups in colleges in Leicestershire, by individual year group, not by the overall rate. The overall attendance rate has fallen since the last inspection in 1998; the 1998 report found that attendance had fallen since the previous inspection in 1995. The decline has been a continuing one for five of the last six years. In both Year 10 and Year 11, the rate is below the 90 per cent threshold of concern, only just below in Year 10 and well below in Year 11. In both Year 10 and 11, unauthorised absence is well above average. This pattern is similar to that reported at the last inspection. The examination of the registers and the attendance data produced by the college reveals an unacceptable and persistent level of absenteeism and truancy. There is poor punctuality by a high proportion of students, even those who achieve full attendance.

26. Data on attendance available for the autumn term shows a higher rate in both Year 10 and Year 11, than the overall rates for the previous academic year, although not significantly different from figures from previous autumn terms. The improvement can be in part attributed to the recent work carried out by the student support service team with a small group of disaffected students. Specific action aimed at raising the levels of attendance and behaviour of this particular group of 28 students is having a positive effect. Overall attendance during the week of inspection was particularly low, partly due to the large number of students on school trips abroad.

Sixth form

27. Students have divided attitudes to the college. In some respects their attitudes are good but to aspects of the sixth form as a whole they are unsatisfactory. Students are often enthusiastic about the subjects they study and for the most part they approach their lessons eagerly, showing commitment to their studies. In some subjects, particularly English, history, health and social care and physical education, students display a mature attitude towards their work. They make satisfactory use of their independent study time. They are developing good independent learning skills in subjects such as art and design when sketchbooks are used to record research and explore personal ideas. In computing, they organise their work effectively so as to meet course deadlines. Behaviour in lessons and around the college is good; students provide effective role models for younger students. Students are fiercely loyal to the college but feel disappointed about much of the organisation and co-ordination of aspects of sixth form life. Communication with students is poor, so that arrangements which

are satisfactory, for example for guidance, are perceived by students as being poor. A few, more confident students, take up the opportunities the college offers to broaden their skills and experiences beyond the subjects they study. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Young Enterprise are successful examples of such opportunities. However, this extension of students' subject studies is not a significant feature of sixth-form life. A positive aspect of the responsibilities that students can assume is that of the elected posts of house captains and college presidents.

28. The quality of relationships in the sixth form is good. Students work well together and respond well to one another and to staff. Many subjects use group work as a teaching method and this enables students to consider and respect the views of others. The AS-level general studies course followed by all students is effective in promoting an understanding of equal opportunities and issues of current importance. A very good lesson on entry to the European Monetary Union very effectively raised awareness of the issues through lively debate by all students in the group.

29. Attendance is unsatisfactory and below that usually expected in sixth forms. It has declined slightly since the last inspection. Attendance procedures in the sixth form are not always carried out with sufficient rigour and the accuracy of attendance figures cannot be assumed since retrospective registration takes place.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Teaching and learning are poor overall in Years 10 and 11 and the quality has declined since the last inspection. In the lessons observed in Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in only 80 per cent of lessons, the quality of learning in a slightly higher proportion. At the last inspection the figure for teaching was a little under 90 per cent. The subjects where some teaching and learning were less than satisfactory are English, mathematics, double science, ICT, personal, social and health education, and particularly, geography, French and German. Most of the lessons involved were taught by permanent staff, some by non-specialists, and included a broadly similar number of lessons in Years 10 and 11. Many of the unsatisfactory lessons were for lower attaining groups, but some were lessons for top 'sets'. These lessons showed:

- Students talking while the teacher was talking throughout the lesson; little attention paid to the teacher; students with special needs made less progress than other students; the learning support assistant had no prior knowledge of the lesson content; lack of appropriate challenge for the more able; no evidence of ICT skills being developed.
- No effort to stop students chattering; boring presentation; few entries in mark book; no possibility of using assessment for planning; poor use of time; silly remarks called out;
- Most students do not remain on task long enough to make the progress they are capable of; teacher has to spend too much time on managing behaviour; distinct lack of interest on part of about half the class; teacher lacks strategies to evoke and maintain students' interest.

31. When such clusters of weaknesses occur in the same lesson, teaching quality is unsatisfactory. However, these are weakness that occur in lessons across subjects. where they reduce the quality but, alongside other stronger features, do not result in unsatisfactory teaching overall. The main weakness is that the learning needs of all students are not satisfactorily met because the planning does not routinely take account of differences in levels of attainment. This affects the progress of students with special needs and the progress of gifted and talented students, both of whom cannot learn well because the tasks are inappropriate. The weaknesses are a significant factor in students' underachievement at this stage.

32. In half the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good or better, and in a tenth it was very good. One excellent lesson was seen. The observation about two communities, referring to students' attitudes and behaviour, reflects the situation regarding the quality of teaching and learning as well. Comments by parents and students show their awareness of this dichotomy. Yet, there are no college evaluations which record it.

33. Very good teaching was seen on occasion in English, drama, science, history, music, physical education and religious education. These lessons showed:

- Well-planned content for a low ability group that was suitably challenging; different tasks for different abilities within the group, each with a framework as a guide; the teacher's very good subject knowledge was used to excellent effect in questioning which probed how well students were understanding the content; the process was an effective assessment procedure; very high expectations, with all students being pushed to achieve well; students motivated by praise, encouragement and the good-humoured, but strict approach.
- Energetic teaching with no time wasted; excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm stimulated students to listen intently; learning targets written on the board; previous lessons recalled through students' comments; excellent planning; would have been an excellent lesson if the work had been more challenging for the range in the mixed ability group.
- Systematic tutoring of students throughout the lesson through questioning which checked individual progress and moved students' learning on from practical work to an understanding of symbolism; good subject knowledge and planning challenged students to research information and communicate it to others; good opportunities for learning and using specialist vocabulary.

34. These lessons showed high level teaching skills in areas where there are also significant areas of weakness. Such inconsistency is itself a weakness and a reflection of the weaknesses in management at a senior level. Teaching excellence was characterised by inspiring demonstration and expertise; 'wonderful enthusiasm' which stimulated high student commitment and effort; a well-planned and structured lesson with challenging tasks sustained over the whole period; excellent class management and demanding pace so that a lot was covered and learned.

35. In specialist lessons for students with special needs the teaching is good. Special needs teachers provide appropriately challenging work which raises the self-esteem and confidence of students. In supported independent study lessons, SIS, students have good opportunities to improve their achievement in Certificate of Achievement and GCSE courses. Specialist teachers are well-qualified and, for example, use successful teaching methods to help students with specific reading difficulties. Learning support assistants are effective in supporting students who have statements of educational needs. They record students' progress and modify support as necessary. However, they have insufficient opportunities to plan work in advance with subject teachers.

36. The college has not yet identified its gifted and talented students, although this is known in some subjects: for example, geography, where their learning is unsatisfactory and physical education, where it is very good. The college sports success reflects the latter. No attention to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language was evident. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is generally sound.

Sixth form

37. Teaching is good in the sixth form and much better than in Years 10 and 11. The threshold of satisfactory teaching was evident in 96 per cent of lessons, and of good teaching

in 70 per cent. In a quarter of lessons, the teaching was very good, a lower proportion than might be expected at sixth-form level. No teaching was excellent. Overall, teaching is good in all the subjects inspected except biology, French, religious education and psychology where it is satisfactory. The quality is very good in history, music and physical education. As it is in Years 10 to 11, teachers' subject knowledge is a college strength, with excellence in history and music. Key skills are soundly taught. A strength of students' learning skills is their interest and independence which stand them in good stead for examinations. In most subjects they put good, sometimes very good effort into their work.

38. Less than satisfactory teaching was seen in two lessons. These showed:

- In a poor lesson, minimal planning, slow pace, undirected questioning, no attention to literacy skills, very unchallenging content taking no account of different levels of ability and far too much teacher talk 'at' students. Poor learning ensued.
- In an unsatisfactory lesson, redundant explanations of the course framework, already known by the students; 20 minutes 'exposition' with no opportunity for students' participation, low level challenge, no learning targets, lack of inspiration and no guidance about planning work.

39. The range of weaknesses is much the same as the range seen in Years 10 and 11. There is no evidence that this range across the college has been identified by staff. Neither is there evidence that the specific strengths of the good and very good teaching have been identified and utilised to improve the general quality.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

40. There is a sound curriculum policy, developed since the last inspection. Governors have begun to visit departments to review provision and this will enable them to assess strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. From the start of the current academic year, day-to-day management of the curriculum and the implementation of policy has been the responsibility of a curriculum team of senior managers.

41. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers a satisfactory range of National Curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities to meet the needs and interests of students. All students follow either a full or half GCSE course in religious education. However, overall the curriculum is unsatisfactory because the requirement to teach ICT to all students is not met. Those students not taking GCSE ICT do not experience the full range of ICT requirements through their other subjects. A significant minority of students follow an after-school 'community' course leading to accreditation for ICT (CLAIT). There has been no improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection.

42. Students can study up to ten GCSE subjects with two vocational subject choices in leisure and tourism and health and social care. Since the last inspection, the organisation of the curriculum for lower attainers has improved. When a strictly academic route is not appropriate for individual students, Certificate of Achievement courses in English, mathematics and science are helpfully offered. A small number of students can reduce their GCSE courses and take supported individual studies (SIS). The SIS course focuses on literacy and study skills to give students better access to their work in other subjects. The time allocations for subjects are sufficient except for physical education. Time for the full GCSE course in religious education is found by reducing the time for physical education (core physical education), which affects about a quarter of students in Years 10 and 11. However, the teaching is good and students achieve well in this limited time. The opportunity to study a second modern language is now built into the option arrangements rather than, as previously, being taught outside school hours.

43. The college now makes good provision for a small number of students who find it difficult to follow the curriculum because of poor behaviour, poor attendance or previous permanent exclusion. These students are identified in consultation with partner high schools and receive extensive support and mentoring. A small number who find difficulty settling to education in school have alternative work-based provision or attend the local further education college for work-related courses.

44. There are suitable outline plans for the teaching of most subjects, but many still lack sufficient detail. Homework is an issue for parents, many feeling that students do not get the right amount of homework. The college recently abandoned the attempt to establish a centrally planned homework timetable because it often 'did not fit with individual teachers' work patterns'. The result is poor co-ordination and poor communication to parents and students of what is expected.

45. The last inspection found that students' attainment in Years 10 and 11 was adversely affected by inadequacies in timetabling. This weakness persists. A significant number of students have more than one teacher for the same subject. In French and German, the situation is made more difficult by the high number of part-time teachers. In geography, one class has three different teachers in a fortnight. The college is monitoring the incidence of these 'split classes', but the number remains unacceptably high; the monitoring has not been extended to judging any effect on standards. Access to the curriculum is unsatisfactory for those students affected. When combined with factors such as the two-week timetable, high levels of staff absence and students' poor attendance, the detrimental effects on students' learning are considerable.

Special educational needs

46. While specialist provision for students with special needs is good, provision is unsatisfactory overall because teachers do not know enough about the needs of these students. Work is not always matched to their special needs.

47. The college is making good progress towards implementing the new national arrangements for the identification and assessment of special needs. The co-ordinator has a good awareness of the new requirements and has made the relevant changes to documentation. All teachers have been informed but most have not begun to adjust their teaching to accommodate the new requirements. Students' special needs are identified through liaison with their high schools and from the results of assessments. Additional testing is undertaken when it is necessary. Good relationships are established with visiting specialists such as the educational psychologist.

Literacy and numeracy

48. Strategies for developing literacy and numeracy skills across subjects are unsatisfactory. There is no overall college policy, nor individual department policies, to ensure that all subjects contribute appropriately to developing students' literacy. Some efforts have been made to adopt a common spelling policy and to encourage subjects to display technical words to help students use and spell them correctly. However, no-one has responsibility for monitoring what is happening or for planning future developments. There is no school numeracy policy. Only in physical education do teachers take every opportunity to ensure that numeracy skills are fully used in students' coursework. Nonetheless, students' application of their mathematical knowledge and skills is adequate for their work across all subjects.

Extra-curricular activities

49. Provision is good with about half the students, over 800, participating regularly in extra-curricular activities. The range includes extensive sports provision, orchestra and other

music activities, Duke of Edinburgh Award, drama club and trips, youth theatre, youth club, youth exchange, computer course and revision clubs.

Personal, social and health education

50. The guidance programme for personal, social and health education, which includes sex education, drugs awareness and careers guidance, is unsatisfactory. A new programme is being phased in year by year, from which students in Year 10 and 11 currently benefit. Students participate in a range of activities to increase their understanding of issues that face them in the society of today. In consultation with the student council, good activities and guidance notes have been drawn up by the newly appointed guidance manager. However, the programme is reliant on the confidence and ability of staff to deliver the sessions. Consequently, the quality of the programme as presented to students is patchy and results in unequal access to information for students.

Links with the community and partner institutions

51. The contribution of the community to students' education is satisfactory. Excellent links are established through music and sporting events through which the college has achieved recognition at a national level. Through the local youth service, there is a very active Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and a youth exchange programme. The college is host to student teachers who find their association with the school rewarding. Students participate in variety of courses provided through the community education programme. However, although links with business through work experience are satisfactory, those for vocational courses are unsatisfactory.

52. Links with the high schools are satisfactory overall. Staff visit the high schools to provide information and advice about the range of courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Liaison is good in history and being developed in mathematics with a programme bridging the transition from Year 9 to Year 10. Music links with primary schools are very good. Physical education has excellent links resulting in detailed knowledge about the students when they enter the school. However, this quality does not extend to all subjects.

Sixth Form

53. A satisfactory curriculum is provided for the sixth form. It builds effectively on the courses provided in Years 10 to 11. Very few students enter Year 12 from other schools. Students receive sound information about the range of courses on offer in the college and in other local post-16 institutions. The programme generally matches students' aspirations and requirements for the next stage of their education, a significant number going on to higher education each year. A-level courses are the main focus; the college offers 27 AS-level courses in Year 12, all of which can be followed through to A-level in Year 13. Psychology, sociology, law, and government and politics supplement the more usual subjects. A small number of students take vocational courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism. Not enough is done, however, to introduce students to the opportunities and expectations of sixth-form study when they enter Year 12. In the current year, this inappropriately low key start to sixth-form life was further exacerbated by the lack of a Year 12 timetable for the first week of term.

54. Most students study four subjects at AS-level including general studies, which all students on vocational courses follow as well. The majority of students take the examination at the end of this course. Nearly all proceed to take three courses at A-level plus general studies. The general studies course is well-organised, well-taught and makes a good contribution to students' personal development. A good feature is the religious education and language modules studied by all students. Planning for further enrichment of students' experiences is advanced following the recent appointment of a co-ordinator, and incorporates

key skills, community and charity work, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Young Enterprise activities. The application of key skills is being effectively developed in some subjects, for example numeracy in chemistry, but the use of ICT beyond word-processing is generally unsatisfactory.

55. Sessions of career advice are part of the guidance programme and generally taught well. Students are very critical of the provision for guidance. Their questionnaire responses and comments in discussions indicate that there is insufficient tutorial time as well as insufficient individual advice in follow-up. The college is aware of these shortcomings and is reviewing the programme. All students have equal access to the sixth-form curriculum and most have a satisfactory balance of taught sessions and individual study-time. However, facilities for private study are limited in the sixth-form building and many students have to use areas provided in subject bases. There are insufficient computers for students to use for individual research. Although to a lesser extent, the issue of 'split classes' affecting Years 10 and 11 is also present in the sixth form. Sometimes, as in geography, this works to the students' advantage as teachers can specialise on particular topics of work. In others, such as leisure and tourism, the course is too fragmented because of the number of staff teaching the course.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

56. The college's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. There is no college-wide or subject planning and no allocated responsibility for this aspect of the curriculum.

57. Provision for student's spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Students attend one year group assembly each week. At other times, the 'thought for the day', while intended to provide opportunities for reflection, is treated as a mere formality in most tutor groups. In religious education and in sixth-form general studies, students have opportunities to develop their own system of values and beliefs. On occasions in subjects, students' response shows something of awe and wonder, for example, about the high level of skills performance in physical education. Some work in geography and ICT gripped students' imagination. By contrast, the college environment offers few displays or features which might inspire awareness beyond the mundane.

58. For moral development, provision is satisfactory. Staff provide very good role models. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in most areas of college life, broken on occasion by the minority of students who show disaffection with college life. The code of conduct for students, reinforced by a home-school contract, sets a moral standard. This underpins the work of form tutors and house managers in establishing a clear understanding of right and wrong. In the guidance programme, religious education and sixth-form general studies students explore moral issues. Moral and ethical issues are discussed in sixth-form biology, design and technology, geography, religious education and health and social care. However, not all subjects contribute in any noticeable way to this area of students' development.

59. Satisfactory provision is made for students' social development overall. This is provided for well in the sixth form where the orderly but relatively relaxed social ethos encourages students to act in an adult and responsible manner. However, in Years 10 and 11, there are too few opportunities in lessons for students to develop skills in working collaboratively. In the sixth form, such opportunities are good in the Young Enterprise Scheme and through participation in an annual engineering project. For example, in the previous year, students worked with a local research institute to develop a test-bed for electric motors for cars. There are good opportunities for collaboration in the musical and sporting life of the college and through residential visits. However, opportunities for students to take responsibility and act under their own initiative are largely limited to the sixth form.

Through the student council, which includes representatives from all year groups, students operate within democratic procedures. Student presidents are elected. Council officers and house captains are, however, all in Year 13. In lessons, independent learning is not a strong feature although there are opportunities in sixth-form vocational courses. The activities of the well-supported Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme develop the independence of participants well. All sixth-form students are encouraged to contribute to an aspect of community service, for example through links with the town council. Houses support a wide range of charities, chosen by students. Citizenship is being introduced in the next academic year as part of the personal, social and health education programme.

60. Provision for students' cultural development is unsatisfactory. Students have opportunities to visit theatres and art galleries and to play in a variety of musical ensembles. There has been an artist in residence. Generally however, the development of students' cultural awareness and appreciation is unplanned, with for example, little high quality display of art works or textiles around the college. Students taking travel and tourism visit major tourist destinations in Europe such as Disneyland Paris, and there are sporting tours to countries as far away as Australia. There is an exchange scheme with a German town and a planned Internet link in modern languages. Despite the college's location midway between two large multicultural conurbations, little is done to prepare students for life in a multicultural society. There is little celebration of diverse cultural traditions in the arts, mathematics and science except in music and religious education.

61. These weaknesses in provision were reported at the last inspection. They persist.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

62. Arrangements overall for the care of students and their welfare are poor. Individual subject staff give good attention to health and safety, for example in design and technology and physical education. However, the college's monitoring of basic health and safety requirements is not carried out with sufficient rigour by the governing body and senior staff managers. Fire exit notices are not always suitably provided and do not take account of the needs of disabled students and those for whom English is an additional language; fire extinguishers are not replaced in appropriate locations after refilling; evacuation procedures are not tested appropriately and there is confusion over what procedures are expected; litter is inadequately controlled. Regular risk assessments are not carried out and recorded. This was a key issue reported at the last inspection and the weaknesses persist.

63. A school committee carries out regular checks of the premises and safety equipment is checked periodically. Records and minutes show that issues are not always identified or dealt with promptly. Development planning is insufficiently focused. Current procedures do not provide for regular checks by personnel experienced in identifying potential risks and trained in assessing the level of risk. Although any identified concerns identified are discussed by the committee, there is no record of action to be taken. The college does react appropriately to serious incidents, for example, during the inspection, finger guards were being fitted to doors considered to be 'high risk'. Procedures for reporting and recording accidents are efficient. However, although accident recording forms are completed, they often lack sufficient information to aid future monitoring.

64. Satisfactory progress overall has been made since the last inspection, particularly in the area of child protection. There is now one designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection although this person has yet to receive training for this role. Appropriate records relating to child protection issues are kept, although held in four locations around the college. The four house managers deal well with individual child protection issues, but the

potential for confusion, identified in the last inspection, persists. Guidance for permanent staff and for the high numbers of temporary staff is unsatisfactory.

65. Overall, students' progress and personal development are satisfactorily monitored, for example, in science and design and technology. However in modern languages and ICT, this monitoring is unsatisfactory. There is a satisfactory system for the central collection of data on students' assessment and results. However, the college has yet to make full use of the information available; for example, to set individual targets to raise attainment. Staff do not always share assessment information with students or adapt the planning of subsequent work appropriately. This concerns some parents.

66. Pastoral support and oversight are provided through four houses which operate as smaller school communities in their own right. Relationships are good. House managers ensure that guidance is available for all students, including those with special needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The guidance will be extended to gifted and talented students when the group has been identified. However, support frequently breaks down because of the high number of temporary staff. This is a factor in students' underachievement by Year 11. Monitoring and support are good for a small number of students in Years 10 and 11, identified by the college as needing additional mentoring related to academic progress, behaviour and attendance. The level of support is having a positive effect on these students' behaviour and attitudes in lessons. A slightly larger number of Year 10 students work with sixth form students taking the same subject, on a peer mentoring scheme. Wheelchair users travel to lessons early, before corridors and entrances become too crowded. However, they miss the end of lessons where valuable points are often made. Lesson-planning does not take account of this.

67. For those students who regularly come to the notice of staff, satisfactory systems are in place to monitor attitudes and behaviour. Conduct logs are readily available to the recently developed student support team whose staff have a clear vision of the direction they wish to take regarding matters of behaviour. Overall, however, students' behaviour is unsatisfactorily monitored; procedures for achieving good behaviour have been ineffective. Parents' concerns about the inconsistent approach to managing behaviour are confirmed by the inspection team. The discipline policy and its emphasis on sanctions are under review and there is evidence that things are changing. A variety of rewards is to be continued, which are appreciated by students but inconsistently applied by staff. There are no college-wide procedures; as a consequence, practice is unacceptably varied. The handling of poor behaviour is often left to the extensive experience of many long-serving members of staff. Whether or not this is effective on an individual basis, it contributes to the confusion experienced by students resulting from the inconsistent expectations of staff. It fails to take account of the needs of temporary staff, new staff and newly qualified teachers. There is, however, a noteworthy system in use whereby temporary staff are issued with photographs of students in their classes. It allows staff to identify students quickly by name and begin to build a rapport with them.

68. Both parents and students report that instances of bullying are quickly responded to when these are reported to some staff, but that this does not apply to all staff. The message given to students about bullying is clearly stated in the homework planner but inconsistently applied. Each incident is dealt with by staff on an individual basis, with reliance on staff experience rather than on clear college guidelines.

69. Regular attendance is expected but not rigorously sought. The registration system, while understood and adhered to by some staff, is ineffective. Because the data collected is inaccurate, the college is unable to identify reliably who is on the premises at any given moment. This is a major health and safety concern. For example, the practice of using older

students to mark registers, itself a breach of requirements, resulted in one student being marked absent when physically present in the class. Should evacuation procedures have taken place, the register did not ensure this student's safety. The room timetable is not up-to-date. There is no system for sixth form students to sign in and out.

70. The recent action with disaffected Year 10 students resulted in a significant improvement in attendance and punctuality. The group is mostly boys, some of whom were identified by their previous schools as having poor attendance. Overall, irregular attendance has a negative effect on the standard of students' work and lowers their achievement. No college-wide system is in place through which families are contacted immediately an absence is recorded, although this action is being taken for the 'at risk' group of 28 students. The trial of a commercial truancy call system was discontinued partly because of the difficulty of keeping records of emergency contact numbers up-to-date. Current follow-up to absence is taken by form tutors at the end of the week, or when students return, if an absence has not been formally notified. No action is taken on apparent afternoon truancy, although for example, a group's lower afternoon attendance rate from the morning rate has been noticed. Except for the 'at risk' group, there are no procedures and guidance to provide support for students' return after absence or exclusion in order to minimise the interruption to their work.

Students with special needs, gifted and talented students, those for whom English is an additional language

71. There are satisfactory systems to identify, assess, support and monitor students with special needs at an early stage which enable them to make steady progress. Students' individual plans and targets are used effectively to monitor progress in lessons taught by special needs staff but not across subject departments. Intervention programmes to support literacy and numeracy are effective in improving progress. Information about students identified as having learning difficulties are provided for all teachers. Special support is increased or decreased according to students' success in meeting their individual targets. During the current school year, these methods have been successful in removing the need for support for half of the students identified as having behavioural difficulties.

72. As required, students with statements of educational needs have their progress reviewed annually and their special needs assessed for the following year. Parents are invited to attend reviews and students contribute their own views about their progress. Reviews are attended by representatives of the careers service and in appropriate cases by representatives of other special support services as well as by parents. For the incoming Year 10 students, the special needs co-ordinator attends specific transition planning meetings held in the high schools. These helpfully ensure that planning is appropriate for students' needs when they enter the college, both in terms of their future education and their subsequent employment.

73. The college has begun to identify its most able and talented students. In history and physical education teachers are clear about who its most able students are, but generally there is a lack of awareness that this provision should be developed. This is unsatisfactory. The management arrangements for ensuring that provision meets the needs of the small number of students for whom English is an additional language are unsatisfactory. Planning lacks specific reference to their progress. Although none of these students is at an early stage of English fluency, their language needs for examination work are not being supported adequately. On occasion, this slows progress.

Assessment Years 10-11

74. The arrangements for assessment are satisfactory overall. College policy provides clear guidelines for subject departments and form tutors to ensure that assessment is well

co-ordinated and effective. However, there is no college-wide guidance specifying the criteria for marking students' work in order to ensure a consistent approach across subjects. The central database of students' achievements in tests and assessments, available electronically in some departments, is not used to identify any areas of underachievement. While there is analysis by gender, none is carried in relation to the gifted and talented, ethnic minority students, those with behavioural difficulties, excluded students and students with poor patterns of attendance. An analysis of the latter was carried out during the inspection. While satisfactory overall, the extent to which teachers use the information they have obtained from the results of assessments and tests to assist in planning varies across subjects. This is done well in English, history, music and physical education, but is a weakness in geography, ICT, modern languages and religious education. Where such information is not used, work is often inappropriately planned for students' levels of attainment, a factor in underachievement.

75. Overall, procedures for assessing, monitoring and reporting students' academic progress are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has made satisfactory progress in identifying and setting targets for students, a key issue reported then. Monitoring, including tracking progress and setting targets, is good in English, geography, history, physical education and religious education but weak in modern languages. In physical education, teachers gather additional information about students' attitudes to the subject through contact with local high schools. Generally, however, not enough is done to explore the reasons for any variations between students' performance and their target grades. This is a factor in students' underachievement.

Sixth form

Assessment

76. Overall, the procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. They are closely linked to the requirements of examinations and progress is monitored well in English, physical education, geography, history, and religious education. There is good information on individual students' previous achievements and this is used well by subject departments to set targets for attainment grades at the end of the sixth form. Target-setting was an issue arising from the last inspection and this has been dealt with satisfactorily in Year 13 by basing individual targets on students' prior performance, on expectations of how students perform nationally in each subject and on teachers' own knowledge of each student. As a result, students in Year 12 know their targets in English, physical education and religious education although it was only just prior to the inspection that they were told about their progress and teachers' views of the effort they have made. This good practice does not apply to all subjects. The college does not analyse sufficiently the variations in performance of different groups of students and the lack of a student agreement makes it difficult for teachers to place particular requirements on students about the quality of their work and the progress they are making.

Advice, support and guidance

77. Care for sixth-form students is satisfactory. Relationships are good. Heads of year are available in the sixth-form centre to support students and informal monitoring of students is satisfactory. When students are confident and seek out help from teachers, this is willingly given. When they are not so confident, the tutorial system does not ensure that support is offered when needed. Responses to the questionnaire show students do not find that there is satisfactory support when they experience personal problems. The contact between tutors and students does not have sufficient importance so that they are really well known and any changes in demeanour quickly noticed. Most students receive satisfactory advice and guidance from their tutors and subject teachers through the sixth-form open evening and parents' evenings. Students find the majority of teachers approachable if they need further information about the subjects they are studying. Good subject advice is provided in English, mathematics and physical education. While the information about sixth-form courses has been well received, students' induction is unsatisfactory. Lack of awareness of the demands of the subject study in the sixth form and of new ways of learning have resulted in some students achieving below expectations. The sixth-form brochure is limited in scope and does not contain enough information for students and their parents about the aims and expectations of life in the sixth form. The college provides satisfactory advice to students as they plan for life after school. There are good plans to improve this provision further, particularly for those students looking to employment and further education. Advice and support for those applying to enter higher education are good and a significant proportion of students achieve places. A weakness in the guidance programme is the lack of clear communication with students about course elements and how they relate to each other. As a result, students may miss vital elements or do not recognise their importance and so feel that the advice they receive is not helpful.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

78. Those parents responding to the questionnaire, 19 per cent, and those attending the pre-inspection meeting, 1.5 per cent, hold the college in poor regard. Over fifty parents wrote comments for the inspection team, four out of five strongly critical of the college. Parents' responses show that they are highly critical of aspects of the college's leadership and management, and the attitudes and values the college promotes. Concerns also expressed during the meeting by the majority of those present were about the low standards students achieve in French, ICT and science. Two thirds of those present felt their children were not reaching their full potential. In contrast, a small number of this same group of parents expressed satisfaction with the standards attained but agreed it depended on which group their child was placed in. Parents also have concerns about students' safety. They have a clear view of where the college's strengths and weaknesses lie. Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, those attending the meeting showed that they are loyal to the school, many families having attended for generations. Students in the sixth form who completed their own questionnaire hold equally critical views. They show they are disenchanted with the establishment and feel they have been let down by a school they remain fiercely loyal to.

79. Links with parents are overall, unsatisfactory. The college has made efforts to involve a very limited number of parents in open discussion. Action has been taken upon their suggestions, for example the college now sends parents communications by post rather than relying on students to deliver them. Parental support is readily given, with good attendance at open evenings, sports fixtures and musical events. However, opportunities for parents to contribute more directly to their children's learning are mainly limited to these social activities. There is currently no active parents association in the college.

80. A concern of parents and students is the inconsistent provision of homework, which the inspection team finds justified. This was an area of concern at the time of the last inspection. Parents and students feel the timing of homework is erratic. The inspection finding support this view. Clashes often occur, with a disproportionate amount of homework given at the same time as coursework has to be submitted. The information available to parents about the content of coursework and prospective submission dates is insufficient to allow parents to help their children to plan time effectively. The extent to which students' planners are used by themselves, their parents and the staff varies unacceptably.

81. Information provided for parents about their children's progress is unsatisfactory. In end-of-year progress reports, which for Years 11 and 13 are given in February, the target grades are too general to help parents understand exactly how they can get involved and support their child's work. The practice does, however, differ between departments. For example, subject reports for mathematics clearly tell parents where their children's strengths and weaknesses lie and whether their progress is sufficient. They help parents to gain a clear idea of where support is needed. In other subjects, for example ICT, French, German and English, reports do not do this. The two interim reports given on students' progress show their individual target grades, with a general explanation of what they mean but with no indication of what students need to do to improve. Parents at the meeting expressed concern that these grades are inconsistent and they have no clear guidance as to how targets are set.

82. Opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress with staff are limited. An evening is held for parents of Year 10 students early in their first term. The next scheduled opportunity for parents to discuss progress with staff is during Year 11, some 15 months later. These arrangements do not respond adequately to the needs of those parents whose children may leave at the end of Year 11, as the majority of students do, staying in the college for two years only.

83. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are provided as required but in the current year the annual report to parents failed to reach all parents within the specified 14 days before the annual general meeting. Both documents are well-produced and attractive. They fail to meet the requirements fully because aspects of the required contents are omitted, some important ones. For example, the prospectus fails to inform parents about their right to withdraw their child from religious education lessons and daily worship; it omits data on the college's attendance rate and rate of unauthorised absence. The governors' annual report to parents does not include a full financial statement or information about the next election for parent governors.

84. Parents nevertheless feel confident about approaching the school when they have concerns and questions but not so confident in the action taken. Of the parents at the meeting, two thirds felt there was a problem with communications between school and home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The headteacher took up his post in the term following the last inspection. He inherited a management restructuring to which the previous report referred. It is clear from the evidence gained from discussions with the headteacher and many staff currently holding management responsibilities that this restructuring resulted in demotion and led to considerable staff disaffection. The consequent salary protection expires at the end of the current financial year. The disaffection is still evident.

86. Despite the evidence of ineffective management indicated by falling GCSE results, a falling attendance rate and an increasing rate of fixed-term exclusions since the 1998 inspection, no action has been taken by the governing body to rectify the situation. While minutes of the meetings of the full governing body and of its committees show high commitment in terms of the time given to the college, they also show a failure to determine strategic action to reverse the decline in performance. While they reflect attention to and discussion of the major issues of governance, they do not show a sharp understanding of the paucity of the college's performance or any sense of the urgency for action to make improvements. The governing body has not held the headteacher and his staff to account for this decline.

87. Improvement since the last inspection is poor. Responsibility for bringing about the required improvements rests with the governing body and the headteacher. During the academic year 2000-2001, in recognition of the worsening situation, the headteacher instigated a management review project involving the chair of governors and supported by the local education authority. The action plan from this project was produced during the autumn term 2001. While its format is entirely appropriate, its completion lacks rigour and focus, has many gaps, and for the monitoring section is weak. Much of this plan reads like an action plan from the last inspection because it deals with many of the issues reported then, but as though they had newly arisen. This recent work in development planning indicates that managers are moving forward, but the movement is too little, too late.

88. One of the targets in this plan is to achieve 90 per cent of lessons that are good or better by the next inspection. By contrast, the reality of the 85 per cent of lessons seen across the college that reached an adequate standard of teaching, or better, suggests poor judgement, and significantly indicates inadequate knowledge among senior managers of the quality of teaching in the college. Arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning are not in place although identified in the last report as a key feature for raising attainment. Action on this (to develop a teaching and learning policy and a development programme) is a current development target but one of those for which most planning points are incomplete. Curriculum team members (senior managers in the college) have in the previous term initiated visits to a lesson taught by each member of staff, the visits reported as generally lasting for ten minutes or so. In no sense could these be considered as a monitoring programme. Monitoring arrangements are satisfactory or better in eight subject departments; in five they are unsatisfactory. Overall however, this provision has been ineffective in improving teaching and learning. Yet, the signs that all might not be well in the teaching were flagged up in the finding of the 1998 inspection that students' GCSE points scores were remaining static while nationally GCSE points were rising. In effect, this amounted to a decline since attainment of the students joining Year 10 had not changed.

89. Most staff managers express a loss of confidence in the headteacher to achieve college improvement. None the less, the majority of staff when communicating these views to inspectors emphasised their appreciation of the headteacher as a person. Few staff express confidence in members of the leadership team (senior management team) to take the college forward. The views of the majority of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting and the 19 per cent of families responding to the questionnaire were equally critical, only 59 per cent of the latter recording a positive view of how well the college is led and managed. The questionnaire responses of students in the sixth form are extremely critical of the college's provision.

90. Two senior managers run the college, the headteacher and vice-principal. A second vice-principal post was discontinued following staff resignation on grounds of cost. In determining their respective roles and responsibilities, the headteacher has focused inappropriately on management style at the expense of management strategy. Current arrangements in this very large school fail to achieve a managed community and do not have the capacity to achieve this. On paper, job descriptions of senior staff suggest otherwise. However, there is no evidence of these job descriptions being put into practice effectively. The management structure itself is a major weakness. It holds no-one to account for the responsibilities they hold. As a consequence, the college largely operates through a number of small autonomous departments with no systems in place to determine college policy effectively and ensure it is put into practice equally well across subjects. In so doing it renders the college a non-inclusive institution because the 'equal deal' for students, which characterises good inclusive practice, is absent. The college does not know itself because it has not established rigorous systems for finding this out through observation, data analysis and accountability systems. Consequently, governors have a poor understanding of college strengths and weaknesses. The good arrangements being established for the curriculum committee to get to know the work of subject departments are not as effective as they might be because of the general absence of procedures for evaluation.

91. Leadership and management of the specialist provision for special needs are good. However, liaison and co-ordination of provision across subjects are unsatisfactory. Currently departments do not have designated members of staff responsible for liaison with the co-ordinator and there is a failure to respond to the needs of students with special needs at departmental level. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The unit has been closed and students are now integrated into the main school. Documentation to support the work of the department is helpful and is starting to accommodate the requirements of the

revised Code of Practice. Formal reviews of students with statements of educational need now take place in Year 11.

92. Both in the curriculum and as a management tool for evaluating the work of the college, the use of new technology is unsatisfactory. Computer provision is currently poor, although shortly to be improved. The college does not meet statutory requirements for the ICT curriculum, a weakness persisting from the last inspection where it was reported as a key issue for improvement. While the college has begun to establish useful records of data on students' assessment and results, these are not being interrogated rigorously enough to gain insight into weaknesses in performance or provide a springboard for strategic planning, for example, about the effect of attendance on examination performance.

93. In recognition that the college budget has been out of control, an independent financial analyst has been employed on short-term contract by the college. Since the last inspection, the college has moved into deficit, some of the contributing circumstances being beyond its control – a fall in student numbers, a high-cost staff with salary protection until 2002, and costs incurred by high staff absence and long-term staff sickness. There are sound book-keeping systems, as recorded in an audit report in 2000, but no post with responsibility for budget management. A deficit figure of £250,000 and repayment schedule were agreed with the Local Education Authority in 2000. Following, first, a reduction in the deficit and subsequently an increase, in response to governors' request, the local education authority agreed a revised deficit figure of £200,000 for 2001-02. Recent projections for 2001-02 indicated that the repayment schedule is on course. The governing body has failed to secure efficient and effective management of the college budget and value for money is poor. The application of best value principles is poor. While the college takes part in meetings of a local group of schools to look at how results and expenditure compare, there is a lack of attention to the comparison of college results with national figures. The challenges of halting the decline in performance from Year 9 to Year 11 and ensuring efficient use of financial resources have not been taken up effectively. There is little evidence that the question 'Is the college doing as well as it should?' has been asked in relation to all areas of provision, although there has been consultation with parents through questionnaires and a survey, with regular meetings recently set up for discussing issues with the headteacher and chair of governors.

Staffing, accommodation, learning resources

94. The staffing for Years 10 and 11 is poor. Over the last year, there has been long-term staff absence in a large number of departments. The college has had difficulty in recruiting staff in the key areas of English, mathematics and science. In a number of subjects there are insufficient teachers with appropriate expertise to teach all the classes on the timetable. For example, in mathematics and ICT, the sustained use of temporary teachers and the need to schedule non-specialist teaching are factors in the declining standards in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality of technical support in science, design and technology and ICT is sound. The learning support assistants assigned to students with statements of special needs are effective. However, the college does not employ learning assistants to work with other students with special needs and this is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are satisfactory, but there is no specific programme for newly appointed subject leaders and this is unsatisfactory.

95. The college has followed the required procedures for performance management. It has arranged training based on the needs identified through this process for both teaching and non-teaching staff. Good training for teaching the new AS- and A-level examinations has enabled teachers to adapt well to the demands of the courses in the sixth form. However, overall, too little training has been provided to ensure that staff are up-to-date in the teaching of their subjects. This is a major contributory factor in the unsatisfactory teaching and

learning observed in a significant number of lessons. The college has not provided sufficient training on monitoring and evaluating subject performance for those staff who are responsible for subjects, whether in the role of subject leader or curriculum team manager. While appropriate training is provided for learning support assistants, no training has been provided for lunchtime supervisors. The college recognises that lunchtime supervisors should be trained in the procedures for dealing with bullying and child protection issues.

96. Overall, subject resources are sufficient for purpose. The learning resource centre, which includes the school library, is smaller than would normally be expected. It is open throughout the day and supervised at all times. It is used well by students who appreciate the good range of reference and other materials available in all media forms. The governors' premises committee has begun to implement planned programmes for energy conservation, exterior maintenance of buildings, interior repainting, refurbishment of science laboratories, replacement of desks and chairs, and completion of the programme for separating footpaths and traffic.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

97. Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. The structure of the college is such that the work of the sixth form is integrated into the wider provision for students aged 14 to 18. Within this structure, delegated responsibilities in the sixth form are spread widely and are attached to pastoral and personal development roles. A sixth form management group is the focus for decisions and development. The role of this group is unclear; it does not have a clear working brief for the systematic development of the sixth form. There is no overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form reflected in a development plan.

98. The college offers a very wide range of courses in the sixth form but is only just beginning to assemble and analyse data on the recruitment and retention of students. For example, little account is being taken of new or rapidly developing courses such as law, government and politics and psychology and the demands these will make on staffing and resources. The result is courses such as law are taught by five teachers; early in September not all classes had a teacher in some subjects for every lesson. The size of the sixth form enables it to sustain very small groups in French and German. As in the main school, monitoring of teaching is at an early stage. Quality is assured through the curriculum managers in the leadership team, but is in its infancy. Links between tutors and subjects are not sufficiently strong to ensure all students receive as much support as they need. The system reacts to students' needs rather than promoting the interests of all students. Day-to-day administration and organisation are generally satisfactory with the exception of procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance.

99. The management and leadership of the sixth form are unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in the management that mirror those of the main school. Lines of responsibility for planning the development and improvement of sixth-form provision are unclear. Communication and co-ordination within the sixth form, particularly with students, is fragmented. These weaknesses persist from the last inspection. The sixth form is however, cost-effective. It does not use funds received for other students in order to sustain the range of courses offered and despite the weaknesses in management and leadership, students achieve well. This is the result of hard work and commitment by students, together with good teaching. The below average results at GCSE are converted into above average results at A-level.

Resources

100. The effects of staffing problems are less in the sixth form than in the main school. However, the lack of specialist teachers in psychology is limiting the development of the subject, and there are no qualified specialist teachers for advanced level law. The accommodation and premises overall are generally in good order and fit for purpose. The sixth form study area is welcoming and comfortable, fully used and treated with respect by all students, but it is often overcrowded. Classrooms are usually spacious and always warm. There are sufficient text-books for use in lessons. The very small number of dedicated computers available within the centre is wholly insufficient to meet the heavy demand from Year 12 and 13 students, both for word-processing and for research facilities. Several departments have their own small study areas to supplement the limited central resource, but software is not standardised throughout the college. Many of the more powerful machines are located away from the sixth form, and so are not used as frequently as they might be.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. To reverse the declining trend in the college's performance, the governing body and leadership team should give immediate and concurrent attention to the following:

- (1) Implement a management structure fit for the size and character of the institution through:
 - Ensuring that the responsibilities of headship are fully taken up at a strategic level without dilution by lesser competing operational priorities
 - Establishing a sufficient complement of senior staff posts to which responsibility for college-wide operational management can be delegated
 - Ensuring that the areas for whose quality such senior posts should be responsible and accountable comprehensively cover all aspects of the college's performance and provision
 - Establishing an appropriate complement of management posts to which responsibility for the operational management of subjects/courses can be efficiently delegated
 - Ensuring that the areas for whose quality such subject posts are responsible and accountable are identified clearly and comprehensively, particularly in relation to standards and teaching quality
 - Implementing systems and procedures for management on a college-wide basis so that students benefit from an inclusive approach in all aspects of their life in the college.

(Paragraphs: 1, 5, 22, 55, 67, 68, 86-90, 93-95, 97-99, 124, 135, 155, 156, 170, 179, 180, 201, 211, 230, 240, 250, 251, 273, 289)

- (2) Ensure that the governing body's statutory duties are carried out in full for:
- Ensuring that the college provides an acceptable standard of education
 - Establishing a review and reporting cycle which will provide evidence that this is being achieved
 - Ensuring that responsibility for efficient budget management is taken at a suitably senior level with adequate administrative support
 - Exercising effective oversight of college finances
 - Ensuring that health and safety requirements are met in full through regular monitoring of systems and procedures
 - Ensuring that provision for ICT meets National Curriculum requirements
 - Implementing a training programme for the governing body to support its action on compliance.
- (Paragraphs: 41, 62, 83, 86, 92, 143, 144, 148, 149, 154, 155, 166, 171)
- (3) Improve teaching across the college through:
- Implementing a rigorous lesson monitoring programme using agreed college criteria for evaluation drawing on the findings of this inspection
 - Reporting regularly and frequently to all staff and governors on the (college) strengths and weaknesses identified through monitoring
 - Taking timely action to support improvement, for example, through training, target-setting, external visits, in-college consultancy, and to review improvement
 - Ensuring that college policy on behaviour management is consistently applied in all subjects
 - Providing training on behaviour management for all staff
 - Capitalising on the high quality teaching that exists in the college in order to make improvements.
- (Paragraphs: 16, 30-32, 34, 39, 45, 73, 88, 106, 107, 109, 120, 123, 124, 130, 131, 154, 155, 175, 176, 178, 180, 271, 272, 287, 296)
- (4) Ensure that students' standards on entry are at least maintained by the end of Year 11 through:
- Ensuring equally vigorous leadership and management across subjects
 - Substantially improving the quality of teaching
 - Ensuring that the work planned is suitably challenging for the different attainment levels within each class
 - Using college data on assessments effectively to ensure that students' individual targets are challenging enough
 - Implementing college-wide arrangements for homework which make the most of students' independent study
 - Establishing college-wide strategies for developing literacy and numeracy skills.
- (Paragraphs: 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 14, 44, 48, 65, 74, 75, 80, 88, 91, 94, 104, 116, 118, 121, 127, 129, 133, 135, 144, 150-152, 162, 164, 165, 173, 174, 177, 180, 197, 199)

- (5) Improve the attendance rate in each year group, 10-13, through:
- Ensuring that registers and records are accurately completed
 - Giving priority to procedures for working with the families of all students whose attendance is below 90 per cent
 - Using immediate response systems such as first-day calling in tackling this issue
 - Establishing college-wide arrangements for supporting students' re-entry after absence to minimise the disruption to their learning
 - Improving the opportunities in lessons for students to participate actively in all stages of the session and be responsible for their own work
 - Ensuring sufficient occasions when students' successes are celebrated
 - Monitoring the incidence of cover or supply teaching experienced by each teaching group in order to identify any necessary reallocation of staff.
- (Paragraphs: 5, 25, 69, 70, 136, 164)
- (6) Meet health and safety requirements in full by:
- Using audit procedures to identify all areas where there is non-compliance
 - Adjusting as necessary staff job descriptions to take account of the findings
 - Establishing governing body procedures for regular health and safety review and annual review of policy as required
 - Ensuring that staff guidance is clear, regularly updated and that temporary staff are suitably briefed before they start teaching
 - Ensuring that the staff member responsible for child protection issues is trained.
- (Paragraphs: 62-64)
- (7) Improve communication with students by:
- Providing timely and accurate information about staff absence, timetable changes and college events
 - Extending opportunities for students to play a part in decisions about college arrangements and developments from the beginning of Year 10
 - Arranging for discussion and consultation with students as a regular feature of college life in all year groups.
- (Paragraphs: 24, 27)
- (8) Strengthen substantially the partnership with parents through:
- Strengthening parents' involvement in induction activities for new Year 10 students
 - Establishing students' planners as a regular and efficient means of communication between home and college
 - Further developing the meetings for parents with the headteacher and chair of governors
 - Ensuring that students' reports and the marking of their work provide enough information to enable their parents to support their children in making improvements
 - Keeping parents fully informed about staffing and resources problems which affect their children.
- (Paragraphs: 78, 79, 81-84)
- (9) Improve provision in mathematics, science, geography, ICT and modern languages, through attention to the areas of action above.
- (Paragraph: 2)

Sixth form

- (1) Implement a strategic plan for the sixth form through:
 - Establishing a management structure with clear lines of staff accountability
 - Confirming the specific aims and purposes of the sixth form
 - Using existing data to identify changes in subject demand and the resulting short- and long-term effects on staffing and resources
 - Showing how weaknesses will be tackled, identifying lead staff, target dates, the criteria for judging success and how the process will be monitored by staff and governors.(Paragraphs: 39, 97-99, 231)

- (2) Implement procedures for managing student guidance to ensure that:
 - Overall provision is planned and co-ordinated
 - Clear and comprehensive information is provided for students through the induction programme and throughout the course.(Paragraphs: 53, 77, 288, 303)

- (3) Use data and information from assessment to set targets for improving standards through:
 - Implementing the plans for students' guidance sessions and the enrichment programme
 - Monitoring the effectiveness of these new programmes and students' understanding of their targets
 - Providing training for subject leaders and staff on using data
 - Analysing students' success in meeting their targets when reviewing subject performance.(Paragraphs: 11, 65, 74-76, 98, 245, 267, 268, 273, 283)

- (4) Define clearly the role and responsibilities of form tutors through:
 - Identifying how they should monitor students' personal and academic development and progress
 - Providing training for tutors.(Paragraphs: 55, 65, 77)

- (5) Improve sixth form attendance at college and in lessons by:
 - Ensuring students' presence or absence each day is recorded for morning and afternoon sessions
 - Ensuring students sign in and out if they leave the site during the day
 - Monitoring attendance at lessons, including guidance sessions.(Paragraphs: 29, 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 10 – 11	141
	Sixth form	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		108

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 10 – 11							
Number	1	15	53	44	25	3	0
Percentage	1	11	38	31	18	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	13	26	15	1	1	0
Percentage	2	23	46	26	2	2	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1122	444
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	57	N/A

Special educational needs	Y10 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	42	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	228	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
National comparative data	N/A

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	298	273	571

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	94	243	285
	Girls	126	246	266
	Total	220	489	551
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (43)	86 (85)	96 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32.8 (34.1)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2001	84	103	187

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.2	20.2	19.3 (18.8)	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	16.9	17.9	17.4 (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	8
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	8
White	1508
Any other minority ethnic group	24

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	320	1
Other minority ethnic groups	15	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 - Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	83.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

Education support staff: Y10 - Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	290

Deployment of teachers: Y10 - Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.2
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Average teaching group size: Y10 - Y11

Key Stage 4	23.6
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4 055 096
Total expenditure	4 421 127
Expenditure per pupil	2 823
Balance brought forward from previous year	(250 047)
Balance carried forward to next year	(115 624)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	4.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1566
Number of questionnaires returned	300

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	56	12	6	1
My child is making good progress in school.	26	55	13	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	8	49	17	12	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	54	22	9	2
The teaching is good.	6	55	19	8	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	47	21	14	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	29	51	12	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	52	9	5	5
The school works closely with parents.	9	40	30	15	5
The school is well led and managed.	8	43	22	13	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	13	58	17	6	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	47	7	5	16

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Staff working well together to improve standards
- Good assessment means students know how to improve
- Teachers know their subject well
- Good provision for moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Poor examination results
- Unsatisfactory progress from entry to the college, now improving
- Unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection, though much being achieved in the current year
- Not enough use of ICT.

102. Severe problems of staff absence adversely affected standards in the previous year. Students were often taught by two different teachers, causing problems of continuity. The situation is much better in the current year, but not wholly resolved. This means that students have not had equal access to English provision.

103. Standards in the work seen in Year 11 are below average. Although some boys show very high standards, the attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. Information about the relative attainment on entry of boys and girls is not available. Higher attainers write well-structured, technically accurate essays and can do so under examination conditions. They speak fluently and work well in small groups, for example constructing a series of stories which link closely together. Response to literature is good. Students understand what motivates characters, for example in 'The Crucible'. Analyses of the language used in Blake's 'London' and Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', show good use of quotation embedded in the text. Middle attainers write with reasonable accuracy and interest, for example about their work experience, although some make errors in spelling and punctuation. They are less good at literature, where analysis often lacks sufficient detail, but can find suitable quotations to support their ideas when pressed by the teacher. Some students do not always adapt their language to suit the situation when expressing opinions, nor discuss in groups readily. Lower attainers work at a high level when given support in structuring their responses and extending their ideas. Many write accurately and have a reasonable vocabulary. They read with understanding of plot and character and use quotation appropriately. When studying 'Twelfth Night', they recognise Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony and appreciate the way audiences would react to the behaviour of Malvolio. However, they struggle to extend their responses in discussion, but answer aptly and sensibly.

104. Achievement, while often satisfactory or better within individual lessons, is unsatisfactory overall. This applies to students with special needs and students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Students enter Year 10 with above average standards but do not sustain these standards. Where teaching is good, achievement is good, but there are areas of underachievement, especially in the middle attaining teaching groups. The main reason for this is the lack of sufficiently challenging work. There are still students underachieving as a

result of staffing problems. Both standards and achievement, however, are now improving steadily. This is because management has brought in several new strategies which are having beneficial effect. For example, most coursework for Year 11 examinations has been completed and assessed, leaving time for thorough preparation for the examinations. It is planned for all coursework to be completed in Year 10 in future. Gifted and talented students are not identified by the college, nor are students who speak English as an additional language, therefore no judgement can be made on their progress. Students with special needs are known by teachers, but their individual needs are not always taken into account in the planning of the lesson.

105. In 2001, GCSE results were below average in English and well below average in English literature. In both examinations results were worse than in most other subjects. In English, results over the past five years have fluctuated, but have been mostly below the national average. In English literature, results have deteriorated over the last five years. The college now enters a higher proportion of students for literature. The reasons for this underachievement have been identified. Sensible actions are being taken to rectify problems, but they have not as yet had the opportunity to have an impact on results. Boys were less successful than girls, more so than is usual by national standards. A review of the reasons for this has led to more boys being entered for literature, and the greater use of techniques designed to help boys write in a more structured and detailed way.

106. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. When teaching is good, students are highly motivated, keen to join in discussion and work hard at their tasks. Year 10 students listened keenly and politely to each other when giving talks about their invented characters. When teaching is satisfactory or on occasion less than satisfactory, students usually behave reasonably well, but lack enthusiasm for their tasks. Sometimes, students can be cheeky and behave poorly. For example, in another Year 10 class, students did very little work when their usual teacher was absent, paying no attention at all.

107. The evidence is of unsatisfactory teaching overall, as shown by the standards achieved in the work seen and the examination results. These variations in quality are now being monitored and measures being introduced to raise the standards of both. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen are satisfactory overall; on occasion they are good, and even very good, but on occasion they are unsatisfactory, and even poor. The introduction of a common scheme of work has already begun to have a positive influence on standards and achievement. Assessment is good through teachers' skilful questioning and work is regularly and thoroughly marked. Helpful comments give praise as appropriate and identify areas for improvement. Students know their own strengths and weaknesses and are motivated by regular reminders of their examination target grades so that they take a hand in raising their own attainment levels. Teachers use ICT successfully to keep good records of students' development. The subject knowledge of regular teachers is good. Tasks and learning targets are explained clearly so students set to work immediately. The department makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. For example, texts from different cultures are chosen for study. Students in Year 10 studied with interest four examples of the way different societies explain the wonder of creation. Where teaching is good, relationships are good and students enjoy their English, working hard and extending their knowledge. On rare occasions, discipline is too lax and students do not concentrate on their work. In the best lessons, expectations are high and students are challenged well. They respond to this positively, making good progress. Year 11 students exceeded their target grades in the study of 'Twelfth Night' because the teacher was confident that they could. However, on other occasions students do not learn as well as they might because expectations are not high enough; tasks are too easy; the pace too slow, or the teacher does too much talking and does not encourage students to find things out for themselves. This is the area of greatest weakness in the teaching. Sound attention is paid to the development of

literacy. Students have opportunities to talk and spellings are corrected and sometimes taught; a range of writing is covered and important words are displayed. Numeracy skills are not promoted sufficiently. ICT is not used enough, nor do all students have equal opportunity to use computers. Some work is done on the computer, much improving presentation and accuracy. For example, in Year 11, an excellent children's story about 'green wellies' was produced, good enough to be published. The department currently has few computers; plans to extend this aspect of its work are planned. Current provision is unsatisfactory. Homework is set appropriately, but only as the teacher sees fit. There is no college timetable for this and the management of this aspect of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

108. Leadership and management are good, the current appointments only in place a few months. There is a clear vision for the future. Much has been done to identify the reasons for the present underachievement and staff are working well together to put into place carefully thought out strategies for improvement. Standards are already rising as a result.

109. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen and the quality of teaching has declined. However, weaknesses such as a shortage of group work and inconsistencies in Year 10 marking have been put right. Much improvement has taken place in the current year. The energy, enthusiasm and management skills now evident in the department bode well for the future.

Literacy

110. Students enter the school with above average standards of literacy and cope with the reading and writing demands of their subjects, but insufficient provision is made to build on this strength. No analysis is available of the relative standards of boys and girls on entry. Some subjects such as history, health and social care and English make good provision for students to develop their ideas through discussion, but such opportunities are not given in all subjects. Students give presentations in physical education which strengthen skills in speaking. Opportunities for students to extend their reading are limited, and reading is done mostly by the teacher. Students lack planned opportunities to cover a wide range of writing. Insufficient thought has been given to how subjects such as science and geography can teach a variety of kinds of writing for different purposes.

Drama

111. Standards in the work seen are above average. Students develop ideas together in groups and pairs very well and help each other. They improve on their own performances by being self-critical. Boys in Year 11 improved their performance greatly between one lesson and the next when, after careful revision, they emphasised the theme of outsider/insider more effectively. Students maintain role convincingly in improvisation. Girls gave moving performances showing different reactions to learning about an unwanted pregnancy. Students develop their responses independently with minimal intervention from the teacher. They use a variety of dramatic techniques successfully, and are especially effective in their use of space and lighting. They analyse each others' performances and criticise strengths and weaknesses. Students achieve well, both boys and girls. Students with special needs join in keenly, especially in the small group activities. They gain greatly in self-confidence. The school does not identify students for whom English is an additional language or the gifted and talented. There are many opportunities for students to take on extra drama commitments in the college and in the community, and many do so.

112. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were above average. They have been above average for the last three years, an improvement on those reported at the last inspection which were average.

113. Drama is a popular option choice and students achieve well from their standard on entry. They have a wide range of experiences of drama before they come to John Cleveland College, and develop their dramatic techniques progressively from different starting points. Very good attitudes help to keep standards high. Students are mature and conscientious, giving of their best because they enjoy the lessons. Relationships are very positive.

114. Teaching and learning are good. Subject knowledge is good, showing in clear explanation and good feeding-in of ideas to push students on. Appropriate methods are used, with focused group work which maintain students' interest. A Year 10 group made good progress in learning about the use of gesture because teacher and students worked hard in their groups. The good liaison between teachers ensures that, although there are 'split' classes, momentum is maintained. Because expectations are high, all join in, behave appropriately and work hard. However, not all teaching draws out students' own analyses as well as it might.

115. The subject is led and managed well, with sensible ideas for how it can develop further. As yet, drama is not used as a vehicle for teaching in other subject areas. Good monitoring and support ensures that non-specialist teaching is developing well. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and good progress has been made.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good relationships in the majority of lessons
- Good use of resources, including ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Department not fully staffed
- Unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Some groups not taught well enough.

116. Standards of work seen are average. However, since students enter Year 10 with above average standards, this is not good enough. Their achievement is unsatisfactory. This can be attributed partly to staffing difficulties and partly to students' attitudes and behaviour. By Year 11, most students can use and interpret distance-time graphs, multiply and divide by powers of 10 and use their knowledge of the sum of the angles in a polygon to solve problems. Higher attainers correctly predict the shape and position of the graph of a quadratic function from its equation, calculate percentage increases and decreases accurately and apply trigonometrical ratios to calculate the required angles or lengths in a triangle. Lower attainers correctly evaluate algebraic formulae by substituting positive values for the letters, but make errors using negative numbers. They can calculate the circumference and area of a circle and draw diagrams to represent bearings.

117. In 2001, GCSE results were average. Boys did better than girls which is the opposite of the national picture; there is no information available on the relative performance of boys and girls on entry. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades was below average and was very low compared to schools with a similar intake of students. There was a sharp drop in 2001 although previously, results had been rising each year. The proportion of students obtaining a pass grade fluctuates from year to year. Students' results in mathematics were slightly below the average of their other subjects, but this is not significant compared to national figures.

118. Students with special needs in Years 10 and 11 study the same topics as other students, and like them, do not build sufficiently on their previous learning so that their progress is unsatisfactory. They are supported by the class teacher and on occasion by a learning support assistant. No work was seen from students for whom English is an additional language, nor from students from ethnic minorities. No students has been identified as gifted and talented. The standard of presentation of students' work varies, about half being very neat and methodical and about one third being untidy, with poor handwriting and spelling. Some technical words are incorrectly spelt although correctly used.

119. Standards of numeracy are average overall although students in the lower teaching groups show some inaccurate knowledge of tables and some hesitancy in deciding the appropriate operations required to solve a problem. Standards of literacy and ICT are average. Some students need help with reading the questions, but teachers are aware of this and give the necessary support. ICT is used well as a tool to assist learning; students use spreadsheets confidently, for example to calculate measures of spread when comparing sets of data. The library has a reasonable selection of text books covering all years and some interest books on, for example, problem-solving, randomness and curves. However, many have not been borrowed for some time, and there are far too few for a college of this size.

120. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory; in about one third of the lessons they are good. In most lessons, good working relationships provide an atmosphere in which the teacher can teach effectively and students can listen, question or discuss their work and know that they are making progress. Students get on well together, supporting each other in their work and co-operating with each other when, for example, using a computer. They are encouraged to listen to each other when answering or asking questions. There is a direct link between the quality of teaching and students' attitudes to the subject. Students respond well to lessons that are well-planned and interesting and in which they are given firm and fair direction by the teacher; they know what is expected of them. Behaviour is unsatisfactory in lessons where the teacher fails to plan a good sequence of instruction and activity that will lead students to make confident steps in their learning, and where the teacher does not, or cannot, establish a disciplined working environment.

121. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall but there are some good features. For example, clear targets are set for all lessons and in most lessons these were explained at the beginning. In some lessons, targets were discussed at the end, a good strategy for reinforcing learning. In a lesson on geometrical transformations, students were asked to think carefully and to predict the position of a curve by inspecting the numerical values in its equation; they then drew the graph to check their predictions thus getting feedback on their level of success. Many teachers make very good use of both the time in lessons and the learning resources. For example in one lesson, while students were logging on to the computers, they reminded each other of four geometry facts to refresh their memories. In another, an overhead projector was used very effectively in conjunction with a graphical calculator to produce clear drawings of curves quickly and efficiently. However additional work to provide support or extension was given to students in only a few lessons.

122. In some of the best lessons, teachers showed a sound knowledge of students' diverse needs and matched these with additional resources as well as well-targeted support for the lower attainers. Other teachers used probing questions and demanded accurate responses which helped students to refine their understanding of the topic.

123. Teaching was unsatisfactory where the teacher's knowledge of mathematics was insecure, where the teacher was unable to talk to the class without interruption and where students were allowed to gossip and waste time. Where learning was unsatisfactory, teachers, possibly because of their lack of experience of mathematics teaching,

underestimated the difficulties involved in getting students to understand the topic. In some lessons, teachers did not provide sufficiently convincing mathematical explanations which resulted in students losing interest so that the standard of behaviour deteriorated. Learning was poor when, in one lesson, students called out and argued with a teacher who was not mathematically confident. Poor management of behaviour in this lesson resulted in half the time being totally unproductive.

124. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of department offers good leadership and provides a good role model in his own teaching. Good use is made of ICT to support learning. Resources are used well, students' academic progress is tracked through assessments linked to GCSE grades, and the priorities for development are appropriate. The department has had staffing difficulties over the last year and currently there are insufficient permanent teachers to cover the demands of the curriculum. Teaching groups have been restructured in an attempt to cover the classes of staff who, despite advertising, could not be replaced. Lessons are covered by college staff and temporary teachers. This arrangement was not satisfactory in the previous year and the continuity of students' learning was affected. The adverse effect on standards persists. The head of department is doing his best to manage the situation by monitoring lessons and offering advice but this has not been entirely successful. The structure in the department is such that with the core of good, committed and enthusiastic teachers, there is the capacity for improvements to be made. However, there is a need for the college to support the head of department in achieving the appointment of a permanent mathematics teacher and in monitoring the effectiveness of coverage of mathematics lessons by non-specialist teachers. Not all teaching groups have access to good teaching.

125. Improvement since last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards remain below average and there is a shortage of mathematics specialists which is affecting the quality of some students' learning. However some improvements have been made. For example, students' response to teaching is satisfactory in all but a small number of lessons; students with special needs are now taught in mainstream classes and their work is properly monitored.

Numeracy

126. In Years 10 and 11, questionnaires and graphs are used in health studies, in coursework in geography and in design and technology. Measurements of time and length are made to the high standard demanded by teachers in physical education. Students make accurate measurements in design and technology and in one lesson converted data given in yards to metres with the help of the teacher. Students have the opportunity to practise and extend their algebraic skills when using spreadsheets in ICT.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good lesson preparation
- Teachers' good subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement
- Unsatisfactory management of science provision at college level has an adverse effect on management at subject level
- Insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- Lack of integration of the three departments and lack of common policies
- Work not adapted for students of different levels of attainment and special needs.

127. By Year 11, standards are below average, but improving. Higher attainers and many average attainers show a sound understanding in each of the three science disciplines. However, students' achievement is unsatisfactory; a large number of students are not reaching the levels expected by their prior attainment. They know for example about the relationship between acids, bases and salts and use this information in a practical exercise to produce copper sulphate from sulphuric acid. Higher attainers extend this knowledge to the production of other salts by a variety of methods. Lower attainers however are unable to recall the names of many acids or bases and cannot express their understanding in the form of an equation. Students in a group containing a range of attainment levels were able to wire a three-pin plug with confidence and another group knew about the importance of conductors and insulators in its construction. Lower attainers however had difficulty explaining clearly the purpose of a fuse. In a small number of groups there is a difference in the response and consequently in the attainment of boys and girls, but teachers usually ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all. Lower attainers lack motivation and unless they are continually challenged with material which is both interesting and appropriate to their level of attainment, they fail to make progress.

128. The 2001 GCSE results in double award science were broadly average; for boys they were above average and for girls below average. The results were average for the proportion of students gaining higher grades. A much smaller group of students took single award science where results overall were below average; a quarter failed to gain a grade and the proportion gaining higher grades was well below average. Overall, the proportion of students gaining higher grades was lower than in English and mathematics and low in comparison with similar schools. There is a downward trend in results over the past three years.

129. Students with special needs are not always identified. Where they are, their progress is unsatisfactory, reflecting the general underachievement. There is no specific provision for teaching students for whom English is an additional language or for those who are gifted and talented; these students are not identified. Many higher attainers produce work, which is neatly presented with correct spelling and punctuation. Far too many however, do not organise their work well enough to be able to use their books for easy reference. Students' mathematical skills are sufficient for them to access the National Curriculum. Many can use simple formulae. For example, a middle attaining Year 10 group was observed working out voltages using the formula for the relationship between voltage, current and resistance. Students are encouraged to use the Internet for research and word-process their projects, but the use of ICT is too limited.

130. Students' attitudes to work are sound, because classes are usually managed well by the teachers. Students are motivated and follow instructions. They both enjoy and benefit from the chance to work independently, but opportunities to do this are infrequent. Students generally behave well in lessons. In a small number of groups, a minority attempts to disrupt the lesson and where management is poor, the progress of the whole group is hindered. On occasion, a small minority of students talked intermittently throughout the lesson and the teacher had to talk above them in order to communicate with the remainder. Progress was slow.

131. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory, and often good or very good. However, the evidence over time in students' work and in their results shows unsatisfactory teaching and learning overall. In the two lessons seen where teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers were unable to teach effectively because of the disturbance created by some of the students. The problems of classroom management were created partly by the teachers' use of unsuitable material and partly by the lack of experience of temporary staff. Students' work and discussion with students indicate that over the past year, teaching has not been sufficiently challenging, especially for lower attainers. Students are not always made to complete their work and are not encouraged to answer questions in depth. This contributes to poor achievement and below average attainment.

132. Lessons are usually planned well with appropriate learning targets, but these are not always communicated clearly enough to the students. Consequently students are unable to set themselves targets and chart their own progress, a factor in underachievement. Humour is often used to good effect, as is praise that raises students self-esteem. Practical work is carried out competently and usually with due regard to safety. However, it is usually presented in a prescriptive way and teachers seldom introduce the essential skills of prediction, evaluation and the consideration of variables. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of activities to maintain interest and have high expectations. Some lessons, although satisfactory, rely too heavily on teachers asking questions that require only a brief response and on students copying notes. Students respond to exciting teaching where they are introduced to new ideas and can take some responsibility for their own learning.

133. All but a small number of teachers mark work regularly according to the department marking plan. However, marking rarely explains to students what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. As a consequence, students do not know how well they are progressing and are unable to set themselves targets. Teachers are often unaware of the identity of students in their group who have special needs and there is a lack of teaching material which has been adapted for different levels of attainment. There is no policy for meeting the needs of the gifted and talented and no strategies were observed for extending the work of the highest attainers.

134. The subject manager for chemistry acts as co-ordinator for science in Years 10 and 11. However this task is difficult because the separate departments of physics, chemistry and biology are largely autonomous and one is geographically separated from the other two. Management within each department is satisfactory, although the leaders do not spend enough time monitoring the teaching and the quality of marking. Because of the constraints on co-ordination, management overall is unsatisfactory. The college has failed to deal with this problem which was an issue identified by the last inspection. Teachers in each department work well together and there are some links between departments. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and many are very experienced, but there is a lack of opportunities to share good practice across all three subjects and develop new, more challenging teaching strategies. Students are not given sufficient opportunity to transfer skills between the science specialisms. Teaching is supported well by four laboratory technicians. College and national assessment data are used well to set targets for students and advise

them of their progress, but this is done largely within individual departments rather than across the subject. As a consequence, no-one takes overall responsibility for tracking the progress of each student through the whole science curriculum.

135. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work have been revised and the three departments present them in a similar format. However, departments have still not achieved a close enough level of co-operation to generate a common ethos for the subject. Learning targets are used more but are still not clearly enough explained. Several laboratories have been refurbished and the quality of the accommodation is now adequate. Standards since the last inspection have declined. Average and higher attainers reach levels which are close to or above the national average but there is insufficient challenge for lower attainers and the material presented to them lacks stimulation.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching, sound subject knowledge and interesting tasks and challenges for students
- Good co-operative working between teachers and students
- Students' positive response and good relationships with their classmates.

Areas for improvement

- ICT not used as a tool in art work or as a resource for research
- Boys' standards and achievement not high enough.
- Very few boys studying the subject to examination level.

136. Standards of work are average by Year 11. Year 10 students accurately observe and record in line and tone as a result of good demonstration and instruction by teachers although at the beginning of the year, most show a very limited understanding of basic art and design skills. They use colour sensitively, have an awareness of various surface textures and make use of them in their two- and three-dimensional studies, many working at an average standard by the end of the year. In Year 11, a growing number of students show a developing understanding of creative processes in painting and drawing, printmaking and three-dimensional project work. Some aspects of studies undertaken in Year 10 are effectively re-worked in Year 11 and serve to modify and extend what has been achieved earlier. This is a good feature of the teaching and learning. Where there is good quality work, students' portfolios contain some high quality images and show a successful integration of artistic influences and their own interpretations. The positive approach to individual development enables students with special needs to make sound progress. However, the work of a small but significant proportion of students in Year 11 is limited by repeated absence which undermines their coursework development. These students lack confidence and experience in using basic subject skills and their work is limited in technique, lacks accuracy in scale and proportion and is not always completed. Overall, achievement from students' below average standards when they join the college is good.

137. The 2001 GCSE results were below average, although showing an improvement in passes at the higher grades. Only a small number of boys take the subject and their performance was not as good as that of the girls. No information is available about the relative attainment of boys and girls at the beginning of Year 10 to show whether this difference is as expected for students' standards on entry.

138. Students' attitudes are satisfactory, showing in sensible behaviour and safe working practice. In the best lessons, students take responsibility for their studies and engage in both independent and co-operative working. They can concentrate well, work hard and are attentive when required to be so. Most enjoy their time in art and design, they respond to creative challenges and generally feel that their work is valued by their teachers. Students make good use of the facilities at lunchtimes

139. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a comprehensive knowledge of their subject and this is employed with clarity and enthusiasm. Planning is thorough and expectations of students are clear, intelligible and cater for a range of abilities. Teachers place valuable emphasis on all students having the means to acquire artistic skills and they employ a variety of methods to achieve this. There is effective use of resource materials and exemplar pieces of work to stimulate students' interest. Lessons have a good pace, students are involved in making decisions and there is useful discussion, with encouragement to make use of the language of art, which they often successfully do. Teachers make positive use of questioning and as a result lesson-time is used well and productively. They control and manage students well, achieving this in a non-confrontational way that encourages them to make progress.

140. Teachers ensure that students develop practical skills and apply them to their studies in a safe and appropriate manner. There are helpful individual discussions, taking a tutorial approach, about the development of coursework. More detailed recording of the outcomes of these discussions with clearly defined targets for students to achieve would assist overall progress. Homework is regularly set; it supports students' studio work and is clearly focused on developing their appreciation and application of artistic skills. Although it is marked regularly, comments on how to improve the work further are not consistently made across the department and there are no guidelines about this.

141. Students' learning is satisfactory. They work purposefully and productively and usually do so independently, making efficient use of the resources needed. They generally set themselves a reasonable pace, although a small number works rather slowly.

142. There is satisfactory leadership and management. The department has a clear sense of purpose, teachers work well together and support each other effectively. There is solid provision for all students, including those with special needs. The absence of technical support requires staff to undertake routine preparatory tasks, thus limiting the time they can devote to curriculum development in the subject area. The facilities provided for the subject are adequate and there are attractive and useful displays of students' work throughout the teaching areas, although not throughout the college.

143. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, although the use of ICT is still very limited, as is the take-up of the subject by boys.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Above average achievement of A* grades at GCSE
- Good monitoring of students' performance
- Staff co-operation and teamwork.

Areas for improvement

- Risk assessment records not complete
- Boys' underachievement
- Lack of planning for literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Lack of provision for electronics, control technology and systems and control.

144. By Year 11, the overall standard of students' work is average. The breadth of coverage of the design process is good, although there is some inconsistency across the different specialisms. Standards in practical work are average, with some examples of skilful manipulation of tools and materials. The department does not carry out baseline assessment of students when they join Year 10. However, work from the beginning of the autumn term shows an average standard in both designing and making. Students' achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory overall. It results from teaching which is satisfactory or better and good use of the resources available. Students' good attitudes are a contributory factor. However, work is not often set for different abilities within teaching groups and the department does not clearly identify or provide challenge for gifted and talented students. The achievement of lower attaining boys is unsatisfactory. The department has rightly identified the need to provide further support, additional monitoring and more structured guidance, in particular for their project work. Despite the fact that students with special needs, other than those with the highest need, are infrequently identified and insufficiently supported, they make satisfactory progress. Students work safely to develop a good range of traditional and more modern skills with a wide range of materials and processes. However, there is limited opportunity to incorporate CAD-CAM (computer aided design and computer aided manufacture) and other ICT resources into their work. Students do not consistently apply graphic skills and sketching techniques to aid the clear communication of ideas and designs across all specialisms. They make slower progress with their designing when they fail to identify the needs of the user first. Overall, however, they organise project folios well. This is the result of clear guidance and improved monitoring. Boys and girls are encouraged to consider all Year 10 options within design and technology and are equally well supported in each.

145. The standards seen reflect the 2001 GCSE results which are close to the national average. In recent years the proportion of students achieving higher grades has risen steadily and the achievement of A* grades is a strength. However, standards vary between subject specialisms; they are above average in food and textiles, but below average in resistant materials, where there is a higher proportion of lower attaining boys. Boys' results are significantly lower than the national average and those for girls are above average. Short course results are lower than those for the full course. Overall, students do as well in the subject as they do in their other subjects, although boys under-perform.

146. By Year 11, students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Students are interested in what they do and enjoy their time in the workshops. They concentrate on their work and succeed because they persevere. Good relationships between students help them to co-operate and share ideas. Equally good relationships with teachers often improve progress in

lessons and enable the relaxed atmosphere in lessons to be respected. Students of all abilities have generally mature attitudes and many are becoming independent learners, particularly when they research and utilise ICT outside the department.

147. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and some teaching is good, particularly in Year 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise, and the contribution of non-specialist teachers is good. However, some 'split' teaching adversely affects the clarity of planning for the classes involved. Teachers provide students with good support and helpful guidance booklets about how to structure and manage their project work. Lower attainers and the gifted and talented are not given enough support, however. Expectations are sometimes too low, for example for the finish of some painted wooden products and in the standard of some graphics work accepted by teachers. Teachers' questioning is skilful and learning is strengthened when teachers use examples of products and resources to clarify ideas and when students compare products with their own. On occasions, learning is limited when time is taken to copy up factual notes. Display is used to good effect to stimulate ideas. Good attention is paid to health and safety in lessons. There are some good individual examples of literacy and numeracy development, but no department strategy across the specialisms.

148. Leadership and management are good. The new subject leader, who took an acting role through a recent period of uncertainty over staffing, has identified clear objectives for subject development and made the best strategic use of the resources currently available. Although some staffing is supplied by another department, mainly from art and design, these teachers are supported well and contribute effectively to students' achievement, particularly in textiles. Monitoring of students' progress has developed considerably over the past year. Students now have a clear understanding of their predicted grades and what they need to do to improve. They are usually given verbal targets, but are less often given written ones relating to work in hand. The lack of available funding for ICT facilities has prevented the full integration of ICT as a day-to-day tool for all students' work. There is limited CAD-CAM equipment and limited ICT resources in classrooms. Although access to a computer suite is sometimes planned, work is often improved because students have access to computer facilities at home. There is a similar lack of equipment to provide full support for the systems and control course which has been withdrawn as an option. Although members of staff have recently received ICT training, a decision has been made to suspend the training programme because of the lack of ICT facilities in the department. The department does not have an up-to-date risk assessment file fully integrated into schemes of work. Good use is made of technician support to support teaching and health and safety in the workshops. There is an inclusive approach in the department. Wheelchair users have full access to the curriculum. However, students are not always able to take their first option choice and group sizes in Year 11 are high. Liaison between the high schools and the college is in need of strengthening, although the department helpfully carries out a bridging activity between Year 9 and the start of Year 10.

149. Since the last inspection there has been good progress. Standards overall have continued to improve to a point where they approach national averages. Students are no longer passive in lessons, generally focus on their work which they enjoy, and are now more independent as learners. Teachers monitor work regularly, giving feedback and setting targets, and this is improving students' achievement. Links with industry have improved. However, students still have very restricted access to CAD-CAM and ICT facilities in the department base. The department makes a positive contribution to the college's behaviour policy and the development of positive attitudes.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' good relationships with students
- Students good response to good teaching
- Good achievement by higher attaining students.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards overall
- Students' unsatisfactory literacy skills
- Tasks not matched to the range of students' attainment
- Ineffective monitoring of teaching
- Not enough use of ICT
- Students' progress not adequately tracked.

150. Standards of work by Year 11 are below average and lower than those reported at the last inspection. Achievement is satisfactory overall although higher attainers achieve well in comparison to their standards on entry. These students can give plausible explanations for the relationships between physical and human processes, for example how the shape of the land might be an influence on the distribution of dairy farming, and indicate how these might change. Standards are below average overall due mainly to unsatisfactory teaching. Lower attainers can begin to describe human or physical processes and how these might cause changes in places but have not developed the knowledge or understanding to understand their significance. The coursework produced by the most able is of an appropriately high standard, showing a good use of a range of techniques to identify the changing relationships between land use and aspects of physical geography in the local town.

151. GCSE results have been a little below average over the past four years although they are improving.

152. Students with special needs make unsatisfactory progress because the work is not well matched to their needs. However, when there is help and guidance from a learning support assistant, they make satisfactory progress; on occasion, good teaching enables some students with special needs to achieve well. Only when there is the help and guidance from a learning support assistant do they make satisfactory progress. Girls' achievement is better than that of boys, although girls are more passive in class and less likely to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. Teachers' explanations are often too brief to support the development of students' literacy skills, both oral and written. There is not enough use or display of geographical terms. Too often, students are asked to copy from textbooks and other written materials and so do not acquire the skills and techniques necessary to do well in examinations. However, their numeracy skills are better than those reported at the last inspection. There are good opportunities to develop an understanding of statistical relationships through coursework and through the use of data to produce graphs and tables. The best GCSE coursework is often presented well with good use of ICT, but there are too few opportunities for students to use ICT for research and test ideas and to use computers to present information drawn from a variety of sources.

153. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. In many lessons, the students show an enjoyment and interest in their work that is reflected in the high numbers choosing to take the subject. The majority behave well in lessons although, because teachers often talk too much, there are not enough opportunities for discussion and debate. As a result, students lose concentration. Students of all abilities respond well to good teaching. In one lesson, this helped the majority of boys with behaviour difficulties to make good progress. However, some unsatisfactory behaviour results from weaknesses in classroom management skills. The students generally relate well to each other although very few lessons encourage the development of collaborative and investigative skills through group work. This limits the opportunities for students to test out their ideas and improve their thinking skills. In some lessons, students engage in far too much 'off-task' talk.

154. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. There is a wide variation in quality, with both good and poor teaching. Students generally enjoy the subject because all their teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed and caring. Students learn well when there are high expectations and the lesson is conducted at a brisk pace with a variety of activities to engage their interest. For example, a carefully prepared Year 10 lesson challenged students to complete a sequence of tasks leading to an appreciation of how different human and physical factors influence the distribution of farming. As the result of the teacher's well-targeted questioning of individuals, and through use of atlases and maps, the students rapidly applied their prior knowledge of these factors at a local level to understanding those at a national level. In doing so all students improved their regional knowledge of places and were able to relate their learning to current issues about farming in the news. However, in other lessons, gifted and talented students fail to make the progress they should because of poor planning and tasks that are far too easy. The range of teaching styles is limited, seldom involving students in investigations, decision-making or applying what they know to new contexts. Expectations are sometimes too low, students spending far too long on repetitive tasks which do not extend their knowledge and skills, for example, copying the shading on a world map. Not enough use is made of ICT although some students have good ICT skills. Where planning is not co-ordinated well enough, learning is adversely affected by 'split' classes; students have difficulty remembering the previous work because of the fortnight's gap between lessons with each teacher. There are no department arrangements for homework; the provision is dependent on the efficiency of the teacher. The work set is often to finish tasks begun in class rather undertake a separate activity or preparation for the next lesson. Marking is mostly up-to-date and often includes encouraging comments and commendations but the rigour with which it is carried out is also dependent on individual teachers. However, marking is not used to help students to improve their work. Systems for tracking the progress of students are unsatisfactory and individual targets are too general and not specifically linked to the assessment criteria in the syllabus.

155. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The effectiveness of links with senior staff has deteriorated since the last inspection. The role of subject leader is now shared between two experienced teachers. While there is good communication between them and other members of the department, the division of responsibility is unclear. As a consequence, progress on many of the issues raised at the last inspection has not begun. Few policies provide a department context for those developed by the college. Schemes of work in Year 10 are not fully completed and those for Year 11 lack detail about progression and teaching methods, both weaknesses reported at the last inspection. There is a lack of fieldwork. There is both formal and informal monitoring of the curriculum but it has not been effective in raising standards of teaching. Standards are monitored, although there is no use of ICT to track students' progress and targets for individual improvement are not fully in place. The department action plan lacks strategic direction and there is no focus on raising standards.

156. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have not improved and while higher attainers achieve well, generally, achievement is no better than satisfactory. There has been little or no progress on issues raised in the last report. The contribution to issues for the whole college is unsatisfactory, although the subject is now fully taught by specialists.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching
- Good examination results
- Very good levels of student motivation and behaviour
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- No policies for raising standards of the most and least able
- Not enough done to develop spiritual and cultural awareness in students.

157. In the work seen, standards by Year 11 are above average. Both boys and girls achieve well. The highest attaining students make very good progress. No student with special needs is currently studying the subject. Those students selecting the subject are mostly of above average ability in Year 9. Targets are set for them on the basis of the teacher assessments in that year as well as a diagnostic test at the start of Year 10. In 2001, nine out of ten students achieved or exceeded their targets.

158. GCSE results in recent years have been well above average. The number of students achieving the highest grades has increased. In 2001, four out of five students entered for the examination achieved at least a grade C. Almost one fifth of them achieved an A* grade, a proportion four times higher than in any previous year.

159. Students have very good attitudes to their work. They show high levels of motivation and self-discipline, behave very well in lessons and complete homework conscientiously. Students enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and respond well to the expertise and professional care they receive. There is no evidence of any racist, sexist or inappropriate behaviour towards other students. Boys and girls work well together and are equally motivated to do well.

160. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learning targets are shared with students who benefit from the thorough planning for each. A range of tasks and exercises is set which require students to think and write carefully. For example, Year 11 students were asked to analyse two cartoons about the 1962 Cuban Crisis and to demonstrate how useful each was to a historian writing about that event. Teachers often show excellent knowledge of the subject and a thorough understanding of examination requirements. Occasionally they talk for too long and limit opportunities for discussion. Students receive full answers to their questions. Year 11 students benefit from detailed comments on their draft coursework, which enable them to improve the final version. Reports to parents contain much valuable advice. The pace of lessons is rigorous and very little time is wasted. When timed tasks are set, students show high levels of concentration. Higher attainers are given additional tasks if they finish an exercise quickly. Homework is set to consolidate or extend knowledge and teachers ensure that all students complete it. The main textbook used demands good reading skills and an ability to analyse historical sources. Higher attainers cope with it well, although some

weaker Year 10 students found it rather difficult when studying the peace terms at the end of the First World War. The progress of students who are taught by two teachers is not adversely affected because their teachers work closely together.

161. The teaching of literacy is good and teachers encourage students to improve their writing and speaking skills by providing a range of challenging tasks, including presentations to their groups. However, there is little evidence of measures to improve numerical skills. ICT is used for research activities and some word-processed work is on display. Overall, ICT provision is satisfactory.

162. Very good leadership and management are evident in this department. There is a shared determination to ensure that students succeed. One example is the revision booklets produced for Year 11 students, which benefit from the expertise of the subject leader who is an examiner. The length of time that the team of teachers has worked together has fostered a strong sense of unity of purpose. The ethos of the department is extremely positive. Appropriate professional development is undertaken and is used to improve further the quality of teaching. Learning resources are good, although there is a need for computers to be sited in the teaching rooms to give students access within lessons to CD-ROMs and the internet. One area of weakness is the absence of guidance to enable the highest and lowest attaining students to reach higher standards.

163. The previous report contained very few areas for improvement. Since 1998, standards have risen. Partly because of the excellent results of the last two years, numbers choosing to study history have increased substantially. Behaviour and levels of motivation are now even higher than reported at the previous inspection, as is the quality of the teaching of the permanent members of staff. The criticism about the limited use of ICT has been largely dealt with. This department both expects and achieves academic results that are well above average and therefore make a valuable contribution to the work of the college. One area for development is the creation of greater opportunities to develop the spiritual and cultural awareness of students. Overall, improvement is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Improved teaching and learning
- Good relationships between teachers and students
- Helpful information sheets to focus students' studies.

Areas for improvement

- Poor co-ordination and management of ICT across all subjects
- Results well below average in recent years
- Statutory requirements not met.

164. In the work seen, standards by Year 11 are below average, but improving. This is because of improvements in staffing so that students are now taught regularly by the same teachers. The below average standards are the result of gaps in students' learning in previous years. This means that teachers are having to provide work for topics at a lower starting point than expected. For example, students have insufficient knowledge of the current topics about control and ways of presenting information. There is evidence of good progress being made in helping students to catch up. Students use computers confidently and know how to use the Internet to research topics. Their keyboard skills are adequate and they use spreadsheets and databases to model costs and store and retrieve information, for example, linked to a football club. The majority of students are boys. The small proportion of girls are integrated well in classes and there are no significant differences between their standards and those of the boys. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the course. Students have sound opportunities to develop these further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects and calculations for which they use spreadsheets. They cope well.

165. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory. Currently, students are reaching higher standards at this stage of the course than they were previously. Coursework folders are now organised well in Year 11 as are the examples of work seen in Year 10. Students enter Year 10 with a wide range of skills and experience. They make satisfactory, often good progress because the quality of teaching is good and there is now reliable provision. In Year 11, students achieved significantly below what would be expected by their attainment in Year 10, but are now making much better progress so that they show satisfactory understanding of the topics they are currently studying. Students with special needs make similar progress in ICT to others because they are provided with appropriately challenging work. However, since the targets in education plans are not well-known to teachers, the help they provide is not as specific as it should be.

166. Students are entered for short GCSE courses. They achieved lower standards in ICT than in other subjects for which they were entered.

167. Most students have positive attitudes and are making a good effort to improve their skills. They are responding well to the regular and structured teaching being provided. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Occasionally, the immature behaviour of a few restricts their progress.

168. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with a significant proportion of good teaching and a small proportion that is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers prepare challenging tasks, such as slide presentations about topics which interest students, and lessons are organised effectively. Students are managed well and teachers' good subject knowledge is successfully communicated. In unsatisfactory lessons, too much time is spent on controlling behaviour, partly because group sizes are large and there is insufficient equipment. Students with known behaviour difficulties disrupt the progress in some lessons and there is insufficient classroom support to help them to moderate their behaviour. Teachers are highly aware of the gaps in students' experience resulting from previous staffing difficulties. The methods they are using to compensate for this are having a positive effect on raising standards. Relationships between teachers and students are good and most students respond well to the expectations of good work and behaviour. The quality of marking is good and students are given good feedback about what they need to do to improve.

169. Leadership and management of ICT as a specialist subject are satisfactory. The subject leader knows what needs to be done to improve standards. Now that staffing is becoming more stable, there are positive signs of improvement. There is a good spirit of co-

operation between teachers and the subject leader provides effective support for the newly appointed teacher. Appropriate records of students' attainment are kept. Although there are long-term targets set for students there is insufficient monitoring of progress to help students understand how well they are doing.

170. The quality of leadership and management of college-wide provision is poor. There is no co-ordinator and no monitoring of students' ICT achievement in the different subjects. A small number of subjects are making an effective contribution to students' ICT development, for example English, modern languages, religious education and business studies. However, attainment in the National Curriculum for ICT is not evaluated and a significant proportion of students have very little experience of the subject. Resources are unsatisfactory. The number of computers in the school is below average which restricts opportunities for students to practise and extend their skills and knowledge. Computers in the ICT department are of a lower standard than elsewhere in the school which means that students are unable to continue to continue their coursework using other equipment round the college. The library resource centre is well-equipped with sufficient up-to-date computers and software.

171. There has been poor progress since the previous inspection and issues of compliance have not been resolved. The school still does not provide appropriately for all students and the subject fails to meet statutory requirements. There has been some improvement to staffing but currently there is no co-ordinator for the subject. Parents are properly concerned about provision. However, significantly improved staffing is now in place to provide stability for students' learning, but across the college, provision continues to be unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The vision of the new subject leader for French and her understanding of the problems facing the department

Areas for improvement

- Well below average standards in Years 10 and 11
- Unsatisfactory teaching and learning
- Marking and the use of assessment
- Leadership in German
- Timetable arrangements to eliminate the need to split classes between teachers
- Lack of subject specialist teaching in German
- Unsatisfactory resources for learning and computer provision

172. In Years 10 and 11, students generally continue with the language they studied at high school. The college provides a special course for lower attainers who have difficulties with literacy and these students do not study a modern language. Three groups of students have chosen to study French with business studies and spend around half their time in this course on French. A very small number of students begins a second language instead of studying a design and technology subject.

173. By Year 11, standards of work seen are well below average overall in both French and German. Only the highest attainers can produce extended writing using a variety of tenses. Most pupils can only copy correctly and write simple answers to questions in French and German. In speaking, the majority can take part in simple role-play exercises with support from textbooks, but not deal with the unexpected or talk at length in the language they are learning. Standards have been adversely affected by staff absence, but also reflect unsatisfactory teaching and learning, and many students' poor attitudes to languages. In general, the teaching methods used do not motivate and interest the students and do not provide activities to involve them in practising and using new language to ensure that they learn it. Too often, for example, teachers read new vocabulary and structures to the class and use English to explain the meaning. Students then copy the new words in their books, add the English and are then expected to learn them for homework. Attainment is better in reading and listening than in speaking and writing. Students are given too few opportunities to practise speaking in lessons. They are not set the kinds of writing tasks required by GCSE examinations frequently enough. Teachers' marking of written work is generally unsatisfactory. Students are given no indication of the quality of their work, nor how it might be improved.

174. GCSE results in French, after steadily improving to above the average, fell slightly in 2000, but in 2001 dropped to well below average. German results have varied from year to year, but have been around, and at times above the national average. In 2001 they fell to well below average. In both languages there were fewer passes at the higher grades than usual. Students' results in 2001 were lower in languages than in their other subjects and boys' performance was worse than girls' by more than the national average. This represents poor achievement given students' levels of attainment on entry to the college. There is no provision for gifted and talented students so they do not make as much progress as might be expected. The few students from ethnic minorities are integrated well into classes and make similar progress to that of their peers. Students with special needs generally do not study languages. The department makes no planned contribution to the teaching of basic skills.

175. In most classes in Years 10 and 11 there are some students with good attitudes to French and German. In many, however, a significant minority, and in some a majority of students, have negative attitudes. Some clearly have poor attitudes and feelings of failure when they join the college, but a significant minority who previously enjoyed their work in the language do not do so now. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, but in some lessons students lack concentration, talk when the teacher is talking and work slowly in writing tasks. Behaviour is good in some lessons in French. Relationships are good on the whole, but at times this is at the expense of good order in the lessons. Students are given few opportunities to use their initiative and to take responsibility for organising their own work. For a minority, poor attendance has a negative effect on learning.

176. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in both French and German. In French, teachers have good subject knowledge. In German, there are insufficient teachers who are suitably qualified in the language and this is affecting standards adversely. In both French and German, teachers do not use the language systematically throughout lessons and students rarely speak to each other, or to the teacher, in the language they are learning. Many opportunities for the practice of listening and speaking skills are missed. On occasion in the better lessons, teachers set students clear learning targets and plan a variety of activities to achieve this, but in the majority of lessons this is a significant weakness. Students complete the exercises set, but many do this only half-heartedly so that few learn effectively. The work set is often unsuitable for both lower and higher attainers. In the better lessons in French, teachers use methods which enthuse and challenge students through involving them actively and enabling them to use the language for themselves. In these lessons, they manage students well, insist on good behaviour and ensure that students work hard by setting time

limits for activities and moving swiftly from one activity to another. In general, however, classroom control is a weakness. Teachers do not insist that all students work hard and much time is wasted, with a negative effect on learning. Assessment of work is unsatisfactory. Marking does not give students sufficient information about how well they are doing or what they should do to improve. Teachers do not routinely keep a record of the work done in lessons and for homework to aid planning. Homework is not generally used effectively. Too often students are set to learn vocabulary and structures that they have not understood or used sufficiently in lessons.

177. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. French and German have separate subject leaders and there is no overall head of modern languages as is found in most schools. A member of senior staff has oversight of both subjects and responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning in each. To date, the observation of lessons has been ineffective in improving the quality of teaching. No teacher has been observed for more than a short time in any lesson, and there are no written records of the findings to help raise the standard of teaching. Although valuable personal support has been given to the newly appointed subject leader in French, neither subject leader has been expected to explain the poor examination results in 2001. No strategies have been put in place to raise the attainment of boys.

178. Strategies are being developed in French to give clear direction to the work of the department, improve teaching and learning and raise standards. A useful start has been made on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, but the subject leader has received no training in this from the college. The departmental development plan lacks criteria for evaluating improvements and there is insufficient emphasis on improving teaching and learning. The development plan for German is unsatisfactory. The targets for development do not give due consideration to improving teaching and learning and, as in French, the criteria for the evaluation of success are not sharp enough. There has been no monitoring and evaluation of the teaching in German or of the work in students' books. In both languages, there is insufficient use of ICT in lessons, for preparing resources and for recording and analysis of assessment data. This is due in part to problems of access to ICT rooms and access to computers in general.

179. There are sufficient well-qualified teachers for French, but not for German. The timetable is poorly organised so that many classes are taught by two different teachers. Teachers have received too little training focused on improving teaching and learning, although that provided for the teaching of the new examination courses in the sixth form has been good. The assistants for French and German both provide a useful resource. They give students helpful insights into life in French- and German-speaking countries. An exchange is being set up with a school in France, but no visits or exchanges have taken place recently. Accommodation for languages is unsatisfactory. In some rooms, work is displayed and there are useful prompts to help students remember language structures. This is patchily done and nothing is displayed in corridors to add to students' enthusiasm for languages. One of the reasons for this is that some lessons are taught in rooms designated for other subjects. There are insufficient books for students in Years 10 and 11 to take home for reference and revision, although resources in the library are adequate. Insufficient use is made of assessment to plan future lessons or to analyse the effects of teaching with a view to making improvements.

180. Overall, there has been deterioration since the last inspection. Unsatisfactory improvement has been made on the areas identified for action. In particular, liaison with the four high schools from which most students are drawn remains unsatisfactory. Relationships are poor and there is no co-ordination of the curriculum between Years 9 and 10. Many aspects of the departments' work that were found to be satisfactory at the last inspection are

now unsatisfactory. This includes standards of work, examination results, teaching and learning and leadership and management. Many of these weaknesses are only now being identified in French.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good quality of teaching and learning
- Well above average standards
- Very good attitudes and behaviour
- Good leadership and management
- Rich and varied musical opportunities for students.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough detail in schemes of work
- Insufficiently clear marking of homework and coursework.

181. Standards by Year 11 are well above average. By Year 11 students improvise and compose with a sense of purpose, showing a good sense of musical shape. They differentiate between musical texture and instrumentation. Year 10 students can understand the difference between scales, diatonic and pentatonic, and modes. They use appropriate systems of notation with confidence and accuracy. They understand the similarities and differences between different musical styles and genres. Their achievement is very good.

182. In recent years, the proportion of students gaining higher grades at GCSE has been significantly above average and was again in 2001. Good numbers take music as an examination subject and receive instrumental lessons. While more girls than boys choose the subject, this reflects national patterns.

183. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students respond positively to the high expectations made of them in terms of their learning and their careful use of the music rooms and resources in lesson and in activities at lunchtime and after school. They are keen to come to lessons and show interest in their learning, becoming involved in the range of activities provided. Students are courteous to the staff and to each other. Relationships are strong and are based on mutual respect. As a result the quality of learning is improved.

184. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are prepared well, with clear targets that are shared with students. Students concentrate well and respond positively to questioning. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 prepares appropriately for the requirements of students embarking on an AS-level course in Year 12 and beyond. Expectations are high and teaching is challenging, always moves at a good pace and takes account of the full range of students' attainment. Good support is given to individuals and students are managed very well. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and explain technical information clearly. For example, Year 11 students were guided through two different versions of the same song, the teacher pointing out the subtleties of rhythmic and instrumental difference. Good use is made of the range of resources, notably of both acoustic and electronic instruments. Homework is set regularly and forms an integral part of students' learning. On occasion, the marking of homework is not as full as it should be and lacks explanation as to how improvements can be made. The development of students' literacy skills is encouraged well in both specialist and non-specialist language and vocabulary. Numeracy skills are supported through the students' understanding of metre and pulse, and of how rhythms can be constructed. The GCSE course includes units on a range of musical traditions: a good feature.

185. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the subject and of its importance in the lives of students. Documentation both for administration and teaching is organised very efficiently and effectively. Good use is made of resources and accommodation, despite the mixture of different sized teaching-rooms, close together but not adjoining. There is a range of different storage areas for instruments and teaching resources. Resources for ICT are adequate and are gradually increasing to support the development of the A-level music technology course.

186. A very large number of students is involved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many students attained high performing standards, for example, to Grade VIII Associated Board standard, and they provide good role models for younger, less experienced students. The orchestra is of a very high standard, well above what might be expected. It includes a full range of orchestral instruments and has performed at national festivals and venues. It provides performing opportunities that are in themselves rich and outside students' normal experience. Other instrumental groups, for example jazz group, flute choir and clarinet choir, are of a similar standard, offering repertoire and musical direction that is challenging. The choir performs regularly in concerts while also being involved in external projects, for example, in a performance of Verdi's Requiem with other schools in the county. Students are proud of their achievements and Year 10 and Year 11 students cite recent performances at the National Festival for Youth Music at the Royal Festival Hall as evidence of this. Those who are especially talented are able to develop finer performance skills through senior positions in the various college music groups, for example, as principal woodwind, and sustain their interest and development beyond Year 11.

187. There are good links with the high schools which ensure ease of transfer between Year 9 and Year 10 through professional dialogue between school and college staff and the continuity of instrumental teaching. Students perform in the high schools as well as in the primary schools.

188. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department has maintained and built on the standards reported then, showing improvements in teaching, learning, attainment, attitudes and behaviour. Accommodation has improved and is now good, especially in terms of the needs of music technology and storage.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average standards
- Very good teaching
- Students' good attitudes in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of documentation to record and support the maintenance of good practice
- The lack of an aesthetic dimension to the curriculum.

189. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. In relation to students' average standards on entry to the school at age 14, achievement is good. There are variations in the quality of performance, and in the level of understanding of the principles of games play. Higher attainers achieve very significant success both in teams and individually, gaining regional, national and international honours, particularly in rugby union for both boys and girls. They can select appropriate techniques, can execute them properly, and can apply them to very good effect in game situations. In all lessons, students demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in the full range of sporting activities. They have a good understanding of health related fitness, and of the effects of exercise on the body. They know how and why to warm up before strenuous activity. They are confident and willing to express their views when asked. Students have ample opportunities to contribute to discussions which secure learning objectives. They know how to analyse and evaluate sporting performance, but they could be offered more opportunities to observe and analyse their own and others' work, and to comment on performance against specific criteria. There are no noticeable differences in the rates of progress of boys and girls in the core provision.

190. Results in GCSE in both 2000 and 2001 were above the national average for the subject, and above the school average for all subjects. At both higher grades and overall, the performance of girls exceeds that of boys. The results reflect the consistent work of all students and the standards reached by the large majority in both core physical education and the GCSE course.

191. Attitudes to learning are very good and there is a high level of enthusiasm for all activities in the subject. In all lessons, students work hard to develop their knowledge, skill and understanding of different aspects of the subject. They respond well to the stimulating and purposeful approach within the department. They are enthusiastic and well turned out for all activities and show real enjoyment of the subject. There is a positive buzz in lessons. Students are well-behaved and work in a co-operative and supportive manner. They respond positively to the high expectations of their teachers, and their capacity to sustain concentration is good. They respect each others' views and abilities. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. In all lessons, students are encouraged to work both independently and collaboratively, and opportunities for them to take responsibility in different roles are a common feature of all lessons.

192. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is very good or better in well over half of the lessons, and one excellent lesson was seen. All teachers have secure knowledge of the subject, pay due regard to all aspects of health and safety, and are enthusiastic in their approach. Students' levels of understanding are high due to the consistent use of technical terminology and the high quality required in all written work. Teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of work rate, attitude and commitment. They give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations, and work effectively to raise students' self-esteem. The

use of shared learning objectives, brisk pace and high levels of challenge ensure that class management is uniformly good. Assessments are carried out regularly, and used to help improve lesson planning. Teaching staff have generated a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all students, based on challenge, support and mutual respect.

193. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. The subject leader has a vision of continuous improvement and a notable sense of purpose. Staff are energetic and complementary in their skills. They have a shared belief in high standards, and are deployed well to meet the demands of the current curriculum. Their extensive involvement in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities gives a strong message to students of the values of personal commitment and endeavour. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching ensures that best practice is shared and implemented. There are no opportunities for students to experience an aesthetic dimension to physical activity. Assessments relate directly to the schemes of work, which are up-to-date, but lacking in detail. Development planning lacks precision. Policy statements for dealing with statutory and other requirements and recommendations are absent. Evidence showing how decisions were made to determine which activities would give the best outcomes for all students is thin. These weaknesses have been allowed to pass without comment by senior managers. Accommodation is good: the large sports hall, swimming pool, and gymnasium provide for a wide range of indoor activities. There are extensive and well-looked-after grassed areas. The subject is well-resourced so that every students can be fully involved in all activities. There is unlimited access to transport for school fixtures. The department generates significant amounts of cash from within the community to support rugby for both boys and girls. For a minority of students in Years 10 and 11, the time allocated to the subject is below that usually found in most schools although no adverse effects on standard are evident. It is insufficient to ensure that these students can make the expected progress. An extremely extensive range of extra-curricular activities, inter-house competitions, and fixtures with other schools in a great range of competitive sport, provides many opportunities for students to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.

194. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Areas identified for attention in the last report have been tackled and strengths have been maintained. The department is well placed to make significant progress. The subject contributes strongly to the ethos of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very good relationships between staff and students resulting in very good behaviour
- Very high proportion of students gaining grades in the GCSE examination
- Enthusiastic and committed team of teachers

Areas for improvement

- The balance of activities in lessons
- Unsatisfactory use of homework.
- Marking lacks sufficient information about how students can improve
- Higher attainers not reaching the depth of understanding they could.

195. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is average. Most students have a factual knowledge of Islam and higher attainers can explain the significance for Muslims of their religious experiences such as the pilgrimage to Mecca. They appreciate that there are different points of view about moral issues such as abortion and euthanasia and can distinguish between those held by people of different faiths and Christian denominations. Most can understand the reasons for these differences and higher attainers can express their opinions and relate such views to their own life decisions. The majority use language grammatically and some use specialist vocabulary with confidence. Higher attainers produce extended original writing in their course work. Lower attainers and those with special needs who sometimes have difficulty with abstract ideas can confidently talk about issues such as the dangers of drugs and the reasons for their use and can describe observable features of religions such as the key areas of a church or mosque. Students of all attainments and those with special needs are confident in their use of the Internet and can use a range of programs to research and present their work.

196. In 2001, nearly 200 students were entered for the full GCSE course examination. Results were slightly below average and not as high as in the previous year's examination. The results at grades A*-C were significantly below average and fell from the previous year. Well over half the year group sat the short GCSE course examination. Results were below average, but showed substantial improvement on the 2000 results. In both examinations the proportion of students achieving the highest grades (A* and A) was below the national average. In both, while girls achieved better than boys, the difference was less than the difference nationally. In both examinations the proportion of students achieving a pass grade was above average.

197. When students enter the college their attainment is average. By Year 11, they maintain an average standard and their achievement is satisfactory. Students with special needs make progress similar to others but the achievement of the highest attainers is unsatisfactory because they are insufficiently challenged in some of their work. The standard in the content and presentation in girls' work is better than in boys' and insufficient attention is given in the marking to remedying this. There is insufficient evidence to judge the progress of the small number of students who speak English as an additional language.

198. Students' attitude to the subject is good and their behaviour in all classes very good. Most appear to enjoy the subject and arrive at lessons keen to work and to participate in activities. Many ask questions and join in discussion. Most bring their books to lessons and present their work with care. They listen attentively to teachers and show respect for the views of others. They settle to work quickly and maintain their interest without undue

pressure from teachers. Because of this, lessons are enjoyable and productive and students feel secure in sharing their opinions and beliefs. These features apply to all classes, including those containing a high proportion of students with special needs. Students with physical impairment receive care and consideration from their class-mates. Because many lessons are built round the teacher's presentation, most students are heavily dependent on teachers and many are not developing their ability to find out information for themselves. When asked to do so during the inspection they collaborated effectively.

199. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject and communicated this to students. Most have good subject knowledge which enables them to handle questions with confidence. In the small number of lessons taught by non-specialists, teaching is sometimes restricted to the information contained in text books and work sheets. All teachers have a very good relationship with students and exercise very good class management. This results in orderly lessons in which students work with confidence. Lessons have clear learning targets and well planned programmes of activities which make full use of the time available. The pace of learning is maintained because there are smooth changes between activities and the necessary learning resources are available. However, homework is not consistently used and too often fails to extend students' learning. Well focused questions help students to build up a sound body of knowledge and understanding, but are not demanding enough for the highest attainers. Together with insufficiently demanding homework tasks, this is a contributory factor in the lack of the highest grades in GCSE results.

200. In the best lessons, a range of activities and learning tasks is well matched to the attainment of individual students. Among the most effective learning activities seen were the use of ICT to explore the features of a mosque, and role play to draw the distinction between prejudice and discrimination. There are examples of very effective teaching of students with very low attainment. However, planning does not always ensure that work is well-matched to individual needs and too great a proportion of the lesson-time is taken up by teacher talk. Although the talk is interesting and engages students' attention, it limits opportunities for learning through activities and reflection. There is insufficient planning for developing students' literacy skills and marking of work does not give students sufficient help about how to raise their standards. The subject makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the consideration of a range of moral issues and the study of Christianity and Islam. However, some opportunities are missed for students to develop their own system of values and beliefs because this provision is not systematically planned.

201. Leadership and management are good, showing a clear commitment to achieving high standards and to regaining the high level of GCSE results achieved prior to 2001. This positive leadership ensures that the subject is managed well despite some deficiencies in the direction and decision-making by the school's senior management. The subject leader has recognised the value of external validation and has organised the provision so that over 90 per cent of students now sit a GCSE examination. To ensure that this is done properly, the necessary resources of time and materials have been obtained and staff have been trained in the requirements of the syllabuses. The initial short course results were carefully evaluated and changes made which resulted in the significant improvement in results. Staff are supported well and teaching is satisfactorily monitored. Resources for the subject are well chosen and efficiently deployed. Especially notable is the provision and use of suitable programs to enhance the teaching using ICT. The library stock is good. Data about student attainment is used to set and monitor targets but insufficient use is made of the information to match work more closely to individual students' needs.

202. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and varies less. Most students are now entered for GCSE examinations. Because of this change in entry policy it is not possible to compare the results with those reported on the last occasion. The work of the subject is now fully documented and the subject leader shows a clear commitment to raising and maintaining standards.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the sixth form, 15 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 2001.

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	42	83	87	40	43	5.8	5.8
Biology	51	88	88	24	34	4.9	5.3
Chemistry	38	92	90	45	43	5.9	5.9
Business Education	38	100	92	42	32	6.5	5.5
Computer Studies	2	100	86	50	23	7.0	4.6
Physical Education	22	91	92	23	25	5.2	5.1
Health and Social Care AVCE	6	-	-	-	0	11.0	10.8
Art and Design	18	100	92	50	46	6.2	6.6
Music	9	100	93	100	35	6.4	5.7
Geography	45	64	92	7	38	2.8	5.7
Religious Studies	9	78	92	44	38	5.3	5.8
Psychology	52	83	87	19	34	4.1	5.3
English Language	37	95	92	41	30	6.1	5.3
English Literature	15	100	95	47	37	6.8	5.9
French	4	100	89	25	38	4.5	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry; a lesson in physics was also sampled. Results in A-level physics have declined to below average over the last three years. Male students perform better than female students. The Year 12 teaching and learning seen were satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. The progress of some students is helped by their good mathematical skills.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Positive response by students
- Well-organised course and well-planned lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Declining results at the higher grades
- Increasing number of students who are not gaining a graded pass.

203. Standards of work in Year 13 are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. The small sample of work seen showed orderly files containing comprehensive notes, worked exercises of a good standard and marked test papers. Students can apply vectors to solve problems in geometry and analyse horizontal and vertical circular motion; they show competence in different methods of proof. Some work is of a very good standard. Students are confident that they are making good progress because their assessment grades are good. They think that the course is well-structured, that the teaching is good, and that if they encounter problems they can always obtain help. Year 12 students are achieving appropriately in the second term of their course. They can manipulate indices and surds, solve problems in co-ordinate geometry, differentiate functions, for example to obtain the gradient at a given point, and analyse the motion of two connected particles. Teachers' marking is particularly helpful where students find difficulty with more challenging questions.

204. A-level results in 2001 were average. Over a third of the students gained higher grades, a fall on the previous year, and approximately one in five was not awarded a pass grade. However, the four students entered for further mathematics did extremely well, all gaining the highest grade. At AS-level, just over half the students gained higher grades while about one in seven was not awarded a pass grade. Male students did better than female students, reflecting their prior attainment. Overall, the gain from GCSE to the 2001 A-level results is satisfactory.

205. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are subject specialists with a sound knowledge of the syllabus. Lessons are planned and timed well, and homework is set regularly to give students sufficient practice in applying their learning. Teachers use probing questions to make students think and encourage the use of precise mathematical language. Relationships between students and staff are good. Students know that they have to work hard to succeed and their independent study skills are good. The long gap between lessons in weeks 1 and 2 of the timetable encourages them to be self-reliant and to seek help in the intervening days, if needed.

206. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader ensures that the courses are staffed by good specialists and organised well. Students' academic progress is tracked effectively using the results of module tests and examinations. The paradoxical fact about mathematics in the sixth form is that even though all students receive consistently good teaching and even though students are well-motivated, there is a falling trend in examination results. The inspection revealed no reason for this; the lack of access to Year 13 lessons and to the full range of students' work limiting the evidence available.

207. Since the last inspection, improvement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is now consistently good and students' response in lessons is very good. Standards in the work

seen have been maintained, although the proportion of students gaining higher grades at A-level has fallen.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and range of teaching skills
- Very good relationships with students
- Teaching adapted to meet the needs of students of all levels of attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory quality of resources, particularly the quality of materials for self-study
- Not enough use of ICT
- Staffing not complete because of recruitment and retention difficulties
- Limited range of teaching strategies involving active student participation.

208. Standards of work in Year 13 are average overall. Students' written work is generally well-presented, their extended pieces often showing mature, well thought out writing. Numeracy skills are satisfactory but limited use is made of ICT other than for word-processing. A project on the transfer of energy through an ecosystem shows that students can carry out research and produce a study in depth. Standards of work by Year 12 are average overall, but above average in students' self-study units. Work shows that students use a range of resources for their research, including the Internet. For example, studies of the genetic control of protein synthesis show that, at an early stage in the course, they have already understood well some difficult ideas about the nature and function of DNA and RNA. However, for many average and lower attainers, knowledge of the names and functions of the vessels leading to and from the heart is not secure, revealing poor recall of earlier work at GCSE.

209. A-level results in 2001 were average. They show a downward trend over the last three years. About a tenth of those entered failed to gain a grade. While the performance of female students was better than that of male students, the grades gained are similar to those predicted by students' previous performance. The performance of these students in the modules taken in Year 12 was above average, although not recorded as AS-level examination grades. Achievement is satisfactory overall; for some students it is good.

210. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have an excellent rapport with their students. Their knowledge of the subject is good and they convey their love of it to the students. In a lesson on the transport systems, students discussed why the body needs such a system. They experimented with modelling clay to find out which shapes would provide the largest surface area for the exchange of gases. They discussed the nature of the human circulatory system and examined the structure of the mammalian heart. A well-planned and well-timed lesson, incorporating a range of activities, provided good challenge and resulted in all students making sound progress. Higher attainers extended their discussion to related topics such as homeostasis. In both these lessons the range of activities allowed students of all levels of attainment, both male and female, to increase their knowledge and understanding. Opportunities for students to make presentations and engage in challenging debate are infrequent. Conversations with students indicate that the quality of teaching overall has suffered over time due to the long-term absence of a science teacher.

211. Leadership and management are good. Five teachers share the teaching of the subject under the effective guidance of the subject leader. Staff illness and problems of

recruitment have resulted in a lack of continuity and the potential for a negative effect on standards. However, ably supported by the laboratory technicians, the staff work well together to prevent this, and are committed to raising standards. Classes are large and there is a lack of resources available for self-study, especially books. The management of the subject by senior managers has failed to develop strategies for dealing with the increased popularity of the subject.

212. The last inspection did not report separately on A-level biology. Since then, standards have fallen.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, well-planned lessons with good pace and challenge
- Teachers' rapport and enthusiasm shared with students
- Good marking.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use of ICT
- Few opportunities for staff to observe good practice
- Students' limited opportunities for active participation in lesson activities and discussion.

213. By Year 13, the standard of work is above average. Achievement is satisfactory. Students show a sound understanding of the basic chemistry of hydrocarbons. They can name and draw the structural formulae of fuels and write about their properties. Higher attainers are familiar with isomeric forms of fuels and understand about enthalpy cycles and Hess's Law. Work is generally well-presented and students use the correct terminology effectively. Those students who study mathematics encounter few difficulties with numeracy, but others, particularly lower attainers, have difficulty with some of the number work required in a chemistry course. Although students word-process some of their work, the use of ICT is too limited. Standards of work by Year 12 are average overall, and often above average. Most students already have a sound knowledge of basic concepts such as the mole and redox reactions and a good understanding of atomic structure and chemical bonding. Higher attainers can explain clearly the reasons for the various processes in the laboratory extraction of, for example, copper from its sulphide. Lower attainers in the same group have some difficulty in recalling from their GCSE course the significance of the transition metals.

214. A-level results have shown an upward trend over the past three years. The 2001 results were average. Less than a tenth of those entered failed to obtain a grade. The performance of male students was better than that of female students, but for both, similar to that predicted by their GCSE results.

215. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers share their enthusiasm for the subject with the students. Rapport is very good and staff provide good role models in the way they interact with students. Lessons are prepared well and conducted with good pace, so that no time is wasted. For example, in a Year 12 practical session, the teacher ensured that all the apparatus and material was available for students to carry out an acid base titration using an unfamiliar indicator. The importance of each procedure was emphasised and the teacher ensured that students carried out each correctly. In an investigation related to the extraction of copper from one of its ores which had to be carried out in phases with time intervals in between, the teacher skilfully arranged other activities so that no time was

wasted. Good use of ICT through a PowerPoint presentation provided added interest and contributed to the good progress in the lesson. Teachers provide sufficient challenge in the work, but students get little opportunity to engage in debate and challenge ideas for themselves. Students are helped by good marking; students' own notes are regularly collected in so that the teacher can give advice. Groups are of mixed gender and of varied attainment; staff ensure that all are included in all aspects of the course

216. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Under the effective guidance of the subject leader, four teachers share the teaching of the subject. They are ably supported by two laboratory technicians. Teachers demonstrate a range of skills but lack opportunities to observe good practice. All are committed to raising standards.

217. The last inspection did not report separately on A-level chemistry. Standards since then have risen.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on product design; the food, textiles and graphical communication courses were sampled. Relatively few students opt for design and technology courses. In textiles, A-level results were broadly average; in graphical communication, they were above average, all students gaining a pass grade at A-level, but none a higher grade. Students' results in these subjects are similar to their predicted grades. Teaching is good overall and work is monitored regularly.

Product design

Overall, the quality of provision in product design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Above average results in 2001
- Good teaching with good subject expertise
- Students' project folio work structured well
- Improved monitoring of students' performance leading to better standards
- Students' understanding helped by using products as exemplars for analysis.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use of CAD-CAM and appropriate software facilities
- Insufficient opportunities for students to discuss issues, for example, relating to industrialisation
- Too slow a pace in some lessons
- Gifted and talented students not identified; not enough support for lower attainers.

218. Standards in product design are average by Year 13. Work by both male and female students shows an appropriate level of manipulative skills so that their designs are suitably realised in the making. Students are not scared of attempting difficult processes such as laminating in order to achieve high quality results. Literacy and numeracy skills are applied well, although there is no planning for numeracy skills. Basic ICT desk-top publishing skills are applied well, despite the lack of computer provision. Year 12 project work is organised and structured effectively, the result of regular monitoring, good guidance and helpful support materials. Using a combination of ICT and their own presentation techniques, students (an all male group) communicate their ideas effectively. They research well and utilise what is learnt to influence their designs, although these are not targeted at possible clients. Students' achievement is satisfactory.

219. 2001 was the first year that students were entered for the product design examination. Results at A-level show an improvement compared with the results gained in the full design course previously offered, although the numbers entering are too small for comparisons with national results to be made. The number achieving higher grades was good, although no student achieved grade A. Higher attaining students mostly gained their predicted grades but lower attainers under-performed. A high number of students did not continue the course after Year 12. The department's open-door policy for entry to sixth-form options was a major contributory factor in this and requires review.

220. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. All enjoy the subject and, although concerned about the work load, do not regret their option choice. They are reluctant to respond in lessons, but welcome opportunities to work and research independently, which they do in a responsible manner. When students work on computers outside the classroom they do not always receive enough support. Positive relationships between students and with staff help students to apply themselves to their learning, for example when they discuss and refine their ideas with colleagues. All students feel well-supported by the staff and confident about their progress in designing and making.

221. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' knowledge and expertise are a strong feature. Good text books are provided. Students use a wide range of materials and techniques with some skill because teachers make the best use of the facilities. The range of teaching methods supports learning well, for example, the use of commercial products to illustrate ideas, particularly effective when related to industrial visits. The pace of lessons benefits from teachers' summaries of what has been learnt on visits, but suffers where students are asked to make notes on information that is readily available in books. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for debate and discussion, for example on environmental issues or on the apparent conflict between form and function.

222. The lack of facilities such as CAD-CAM for modelling and product development and the lack of basic ICT provision hinder some students' progress. However, most are adept at locating the ICT provision they require to improve the presentation of their work. Suitable design software is not in everyday use. Students have a good knowledge of how well they are doing because their work is monitored frequently and their progress recorded. They are given good advice and feedback about their progress, with verbal, sometimes written targets for improving their work. Using the information from assessment, teachers help students to overcome any skill deficiencies, for example when sketching techniques are revisited or when students extend or redraft their work.

223. Leadership and management are good. While the new course is being developed well, it is being held back by the lack of ICT and CAD-CAM facilities, for example for modelling or making design prototypes. Steps are being taken to remedy this situation. The subject leader has a clear sense of direction for the subject and has identified priorities to tackle its limitations. New assessment and monitoring procedures, utilising performance data, are having a positive effect on the achievement of most students. However, much clearer targets are needed for the lower attainers who currently under-achieve. Good strategic use is made of technician support. There are no formal procedures for identifying and supporting gifted and talented students.

224. Since the last inspection, results (comparing similar examinations) have improved and a much higher proportion of students, above the national average, now achieves higher grades. Resources are still inadequate for CAD-CAM with insufficient opportunities to model or prototype designs. Links with industry have improved as have students' attitudes to their

work. Students feel supported and confident about their course. Numbers choosing the course remain small in relation to those on courses in Years 10 and 11.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was business education; A-level economics was also sampled. The numbers of students choosing this subject are increasing. Results in 2000 were average, all students gaining a pass grade. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff have good subject knowledge which, with the good attitudes of students, ensures that progress is satisfactory.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Well above average results reflecting students' good attitudes
- Students' understanding deepened by good visits and placements.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of performance data in planning the curriculum and reporting to parents
- Not enough use of ICT applications for business processes to accelerate learning.

225. In the work seen, standards by the end of Year 13 are average. By this stage, students are aware of the subtleties of business ethics and develop an overview of the operation of business enterprise. Their analytical skills and confidence in deducing principles from contemporary business documents are developed well. Their achievement is satisfactory.

226. Middle attainers in Year 12 do not always progress as well as they should for example, in work on external influences on business. Numeracy skills are satisfactory overall, although some female students are less confident with financial aspects. Year 12 students lack practice in case-study exercises, although elements of this are planned, for example in the study 'Frobisher Engineering'.

227. In 2001, the results at A-level were well above average. The proportion gaining grades A and B in 2001 was much higher than the national figure. Differences between the performance of male and female students are reducing and female students' results at higher grades are improving. Results have improved steadily over the last three years.

228. Attitudes to learning are good and students are keen to do well, many wishing to take the subject further when they leave. A significant proportion pursues business related courses in higher education. Students have a positive view of the course programme and the support given by teachers, both within and outside lessons. They show interest and enthusiasm, for example in a Year 12 lesson dealing with motivation in the workplace. They co-operate well and show respect for the opinions of others. They are prepared to rise to the challenge of putting into their own words concepts such as those dealing with competitive advantage.

229. Teaching and learning are good overall. Schemes of work help to accelerate learning, although they do not require enough application of ICT, for example in the analysis of aggregate data and statistics. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Expectations are clearly set and there is a sharp focus on external examination requirements. There are good opportunities for visits and involvement in business simulations such as Young Enterprise. Topics, such as the relevance of investing in training, are generally explored well, with careful

questioning by teachers. The pace of learning is sometimes slow and there are limited opportunities for students to work in groups. There is too much emphasis in Year 12 on concepts and note-taking skills and not enough consideration given to developing and testing analytical skills. Teachers work hard to mark work promptly and this is appreciated by students. Students do not always have written targets and are not always clear about how to improve their work. However, they commented favourably on the feedback they receive at the end of modules.

230. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are clear policies and a vision for the further development of the subject. However, budget arrangements are far from clear which makes planning difficult. Reporting to parents and students is adequate. Induction arrangements need strengthening. Some small teaching rooms limit the range of teaching methods, particularly those involving independent learning skills. Rooms are drab and wall displays are not used to present exemplars of annotated work. Students make little use of learning materials other than those provided in lessons.

231. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The department is beginning to identify where there is underachievement. Schemes of work are good and take due account of students' needs and external accreditation requirements. The development plan is not sufficiently rigorous in identifying when and how targets will be achieved, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning quality. The views of students about their learning and progress are not taken sufficiently into account when reviewing provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on A-level computing.

Computer studies

Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good achievement resulting from good teaching and learning
- Teachers' good guidance
- Helpful information sheets to focus studies.

Areas for improvement

- Limited range of courses in relation to students' abilities
- Lack of up-to-date resources.

232. Increasing numbers of students are choosing to study computing. These are mostly male students. A high proportion continues the subject to A-level.

233. Standards in work seen are average overall. The increased numbers of students taking the subject have widened the range of attainment. Since the beginning of their course, Year 12 students have adapted well to the demands of study at this level. They make effective use of electronic and printed text for research purposes. Written work shows a good grasp of the concepts. Students organise their coursework logically; their research tasks show confident expression of personal opinion and not merely repetition of published text. Higher attainers show good understanding and use of databases, for example on customer information for businesses. Year 13 students have a good grasp of programming and information systems. They use a good range of software and have a good knowledge of their applications.

234. Students' literacy levels are at least adequate for extended writing tasks and their knowledge of mathematical concepts is sufficient to undertake programming tasks. Students take part in discussions in a mature manner, listening to the opinions of others and learning from them. They are well-organised and have an appreciation of project management which leads them to observe deadlines. They make good use of the Internet without resorting to plagiarism.

235. Achievement is good. Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of experience, many having reached only modest standards in ICT. From this base, they make good progress in consolidating and extending their knowledge and understanding of basic applications, for example the use of databases and spreadsheets. They confidently move on to more advanced work involving programming and understanding of operating systems. Because students are required to think for themselves from the outset, they tackle problem-solving confidently. Relationships are such that students feel secure about offering ideas for solutions, knowing that even if they are wrong, their contribution will be respected and that they will learn from the experience.

236. Although numbers taking the subject in recent years have been too small for national comparison, most students have achieved the higher grades of A and B in AS- and A-level examinations.

237. Students' attitudes are very good. They respond in a mature way in discussion, contribute confidently and co-operate effectively.

238. Teaching and learning are good, sometimes very good. New work is very clearly explained in well-structured lessons. Difficult concepts are explained in contexts that are relevant to the coursework projects. For example, number systems are taught in relation to the programming tasks for developing a computer game. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables them to communicate information clearly so that students learn effectively. In theory-based lessons, active involvement through short tasks and questioning leads to improved understanding. In all lessons, students are expected to contribute actively. The quality of their response helps them to develop independence and maturity as learners. Because of effective teaching, students learn well so that they gain examination results which at least match the expectation based on earlier assessments of their attainment. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the examination syllabus requirements and ensure that students understand what is expected of them and how marks are allocated. Coursework is carefully monitored with very good feedback to students, guiding them towards further improvement. Teachers have adapted well to the wider range of ability and experience of students now taking sixth-form courses and this is resulting in good achievement.

239. Leadership and management are good and there is a strong commitment to maintaining high standards.

240. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory with appropriate standards being maintained. Numbers of students have increased. However, although resources are adequate for most aspects of the course, software is not sufficiently up-to-date to enable students to use machines round the school to extend their skills.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was A-level physical education; two other courses were sampled during the inspection. The AS-level vocational course in leisure and recreation (AVCE) is being offered for the first time in the current year; there are 13 students. The college also offers the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), leisure and tourism at Intermediate level where there are 11 students, most of whom are male.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Good teaching
- Students' good achievement
- Very good relationships, with good collaborative working.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of an aesthetics element in course provision
- Lack of documentation to support the maintenance of good practice.

241. Standards in the work seen by Year 13 are above average. Achievement is satisfactory. In Year 12 lessons, students meet the challenges set by well-planned and demanding teaching. Drawing on their knowledge and understanding of human anatomy and physiology, they are able to debate and exchange different views. All students are able to analyse and evaluate physical performances, suggest improvements and predict final outcomes. They have a good understanding of the technical vocabulary of the subject. Students are beginning to grasp the complex interactions taking place within the human body when under exercise stress. They show good knowledge and an understanding of the theoretical aspects; their performance skills are of a high standard. Students take an active part in discussions and show good skills as independent learners when carrying out individual research. A good feature of the research is their use of ICT which ensures a uniformly high standard of presentation.

242. In 2001, results at both A-level and AS-level fell from the usual above average level to average. There is clear evidence to explain these results from the long-term absence through ill-health of an experienced specialist teacher. The department has now recovered its full staffing complement. Well-founded predictions suggest that results in 2002 will return to the previously high levels.

243. Students have a very good attitude to their work and respond well to challenges set by the teachers. They are enthusiastic about their involvement in physical education. Relationships between the students themselves, and between the students and their teachers are excellent. They respect each other's views and give mutual support and encouragement when working in groups. Most are fully committed to representing the school in competitive sporting fixtures, both in team and individual competition. Several have gained representative honours at regional and national level in a range of activities. In most aspects of the course, which has a strong games focus, male students outperform female students. Students are happy with their choice of courses, and feel able to gain valuable support from

teachers when needed. They appreciate the value of the different teaching styles used, and feel that they are treated as adults within the subject. They have a very strong feeling of group identity.

244. Teaching and learning are very good. The best teaching is characterised by clear learning targets which consolidate and extend previous work, and by the challenges for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in their questioning and exposition. They have high expectations of students in terms of work rate and quality of performance, both physical and mental. The students respond with confidence and trust to the demands of their teachers. However, the lack of an aesthetic dimension to the curriculum narrows the range of learning opportunities available.

245. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has brought renewed energy and commitment to the post, as well as a strong determination to raise standards. He is supported well by hard-working colleagues in the staff team. Assessments are regular and give students a clear picture of their progress within the subject. However, information from assessment is insufficiently used for tracking progress and for the purposes of curriculum development. Good accommodation and resources, particularly for the practical aspects, support the effectiveness of well-planned and well-organised lessons.

246. Since the last inspection improvement is good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus of the inspection was the health and social care foundation course and the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE).

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students helped to develop their own interests by the course
- Above average standards in the AVCE
- Students' competence in independent study, research and detailed presentation of portfolios
- Students' confident skills in ICT, communications and use of technical language
- Staff qualifications and experience
- Enthusiastic teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Students' approach to preparing portfolios not evaluative enough
- Limited induction and monitoring of new staff by senior managers
- Lack of sufficiently detailed forward planning
- Limited feedback for students on their previous achievement.

247. Overall standards are average. Given that students' GCSE grades are average or below on entry, they achieve well. This is shown by their oral contributions in class and the detailed materials collected in portfolios of evidence. Both lower and average attainers talk with confidence about their work. Students in the second year of their course understand the fundamental concepts of health and care. In 2000, results were above average, students gaining three distinctions and one merit among the six that started the course. In 2001,

results were average. Completion rates are good and most students go on to further or higher education. Others enter occupations involving care.

248. Attitudes are good. Students are lively and the consultative style of teaching encourages them to contribute. Students show respect, support each other and there is good rapport with teachers. Students are happy to be in the sixth form where, they suggested, only those who want to learn attend. Students from Year 12, with the help of a teacher, decorated the teaching base for the subject. Attendance is satisfactory and explanations for absence are reported.

249. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Given the small numbers, personal attention can be paid to each individual's work. Schemes of work and lessons illustrate the detailed planning and adequate subject knowledge of the teachers. A variety of teaching methods is used and students are encouraged to develop independent skills, particularly in relation to ICT. Students make good use of ICT, for example, obtaining extensive information from different websites. Subject and key skills are clearly in evidence and used when students operate as a team or, where necessary, work individually. The subject leader's enthusiasm and pastoral care create a positive climate for learning. Statistics and graphs are used to good effect. Students appreciate this, especially those who are retaking GCSE mathematics. Handouts are prepared well and students make adequate use of textbooks. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory and focus on research, preparation and collation of information. Visits to health and social care settings form part of the curriculum so that students appreciate the values by which the range of provision operates.

250. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The health and social care course is successful because of the individual guidance, support and teaching students receive. The curriculum has been modified to meet the changing requirements of the examination board. However, rapid growth has overtaken the provision of staffing and resources and in this situation, senior managers have not developed strategies to deal with long-term growth. While subject leadership is good, the skills of management need strengthening. The increasing numbers taking these courses led to the appointment of a second member of staff, but a month before the inspection the department had to find a further replacement. A new part-time appointment has subsequently been made. Staff changes have had a negative effect on the continuity of students' learning. The pressure on staff timetables resulting from their responsibilities in other areas of the college's work, reduces the opportunities for meeting and sharing information.

251. The course has been developed since the last inspection. There is still little co-ordination of vocational courses, with each course being responsible to a specified subject department. The status and value of vocational work has yet to be established in the college.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on A-level art and design and A-level music.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, with good subject knowledge and high expectations
- Students' positive response and good skills and knowledge, applied creatively
- Designated work studios.

Areas for improvement

- ICT rarely used as a creative tool because of limited access to computers
- Students' opinions and judgements not expressed in their writing
- Not enough formal recording of assessments
- Not enough attention to key skills
- Students' limited experience of a broad range of world art.

252. Standards of work seen are above average overall. Students achieve well because of good teaching which firmly establishes and demands high standards in craft skills. In the Year 12, students make good progress from an average baseline and demonstrate clear strengths in formal observational analytical drawing and painting by both girls and boys. These studies demonstrate accurate use of line and tone to record sophisticated organic shape and texture and, frequently, a sensitive use of colour in delicate wash or heavy impasto painting. Individual flair is beginning to show and the confidence gained in initial exercises is applied to experimental and imaginative creative work. However, students do not use their logbooks to review or assess their work, which is limiting their development of critical judgement. The small number of students who did not previously follow a GCSE art course learn well, make good progress and are achieving comparable standards to those who did. This is exceptional, and due to the good individual guidance given by teachers.

253. In Year 13, students build on their well-established skills and develop good individual creative abilities in a wide range of media. Study visits to a local zoo are utilised effectively with students taking advantage of the greater opportunities for personal expression. Annotation is successfully used in work in sketchbooks, for example, jotting down ideas for different surface textural representation or brainstorming ideas. Some painting is of an exceptional quality, such as initial studies of wild birds reinterpreted into powerful representation of the rhythms of flight, and reflects standards associated with a study at a higher level. Influences found from students' study of established artists such as Francis Bacon, are successfully used to convey human emotions. While predominantly two-dimensional drawing, painting and printmaking in a variety of scales, work also includes good three-dimensional figurative carving and new experimental mixed-media where a clear understanding of spatial awareness is demonstrated.

254. The majority of art considered is European or contemporary American, with the result that few students have a broad enough understanding of the art of different cultures or incorporate different styles into their work. In both years, students have inadequate access to computer facilities to enable them to generate creative artwork, being restricted in the main to home resources for word-processing. Students know how to use the Internet to research a chosen artist or art movement from their frequent homework tasks, but the material they find is generally merely copied or paraphrased; they have not yet moved on to analysing what

they find to form or support opinion and judgement. They do not use ICT as a creative tool. Key words are identified to promote an appropriate art vocabulary but are not displayed or incorporated in individual logbooks which limits their regular use. Sketchbooks are used effectively for independent learning, to experiment with new ideas and to develop creatively work of a good quantity and quality.

255. In 2001, the first year of the new AS-level examination, the majority of students achieved the higher grades and the course had a good pass rate. The current cohort, predominantly girls, shows every indication of improving on these results. In 2000, A-level results were well below average but by 2001 the results were average, with improved results at the higher grades. Current work gives every indication of even better future results.

256. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teaching of essential craft skills is a strength of the department. Teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, high levels of challenge and expectation and purposeful lesson-planning. Group demonstration introduces students to new techniques, such as how to use a compressor and airbrush, and subsequent individual guidance ensures that students' understanding of the process informs their usage. Students set themselves a good pace for their work and put good creative effort into it. However, there is over-reliance by teachers on giving informal verbal feedback during individual tutorials with students. Students are not provided with a written record of strengths and areas for development, or specific targets for improvement to move standards on. Consequently their understanding of how well they are doing is only satisfactory although other aspects of their learning are good.

257. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new course has been introduced successfully and examination results raised, despite the lack of clear budget planning, a reliance on donated materials, and an inconsistent managerial requirement to keep records of the regular departmental planning meetings. Information available from previous examination results is not yet used to assist planning. Communication skills are inadequately planned for and rely on students occasionally presenting their work to the group. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

258. Access to designated studio work space outside of the timetable enables students to rehearse and develop the good skills they are acquiring.

259. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. As well as informal visits to galleries, there is a continuing programme of visits to the Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art in New York, enabling students to see significant original works that they were only familiar with from reproductions. A departmental initiative of working with an artist-in-residency on an intensive life-drawing project has broadened students' awareness of how practising illustrators explore the aesthetic of the human form.

Music

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

Strengths

- 2001 results all A and B grades
- Students' very good attitudes
- Very good teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

None

260. Standards in the work seen are well above average. Students show very high aural skills and very good understanding of the process of harmonising in four parts. Their standard of analytical skills is high and they use music technology with a high level of competence. They build well on their above average standards at GCSE, deepening their understanding and extending their skills, particularly in the use of music technology. Achievement is good.

261. A very large number of students is involved in a wide range of music activities. Many students attain high performing standards, for example, Grade VIII in the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations, and they provide good role models for younger, less experienced students. The orchestra is of a very high standard, well above what one might expect, offering a full range of orchestral instruments. It has performed at national festivals and venues, thereby providing performing opportunities that are in themselves rich and outside students' normal school experience. Other instrumental groups, for example jazz group, flute choir and clarinet choir, are of a similar standard, offering repertoire and musical direction that is challenging. The choir performs regularly in concerts while also being involved in external projects: for example, participation in a performance of Verdi's Requiem with other, similar schools in the county. Students are proud of their achievements. A significant number continue their musical studies in higher education, both at national conservatoires and universities.

262. In 2001, results were above average. None of the students entered for A-level achieved less than a grade B. While more girls than boys enrol on AS- and A-level courses, this reflects the national picture as does the proportion of students receiving instrumental lessons. All students in the sixth form have equal access to the musical experiences offered.

263. The attitudes of students are very good, and sometimes excellent. Students respond positively to their responsibilities and to the high expectations made of them in terms of their learning, their use of the accommodation and care for resources. They are enthusiastic about lessons and show interest in their learning. They are courteous to staff, to each other and to visitors. Relationships are strong, based on mutual respect and have a positive effect on the quality of learning. As in Years 10 to 11, there is a strong sense of community among the students within the department. Students use the departmental base for socialising and informal music-making, with or without a staff presence.

264. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Lessons are prepared well, with clear learning targets that are shared with students. There are high expectations and teaching is challenging, always moving on at a good pace. Teaching staff have good specialist knowledge and are able to explain complex technical material clearly. Good use is made of resources and the management of lessons is always very good. Students respond positively to questioning and show a clear understanding of the relevant subject material. They concentrate well and make clear progress; for example, Year 12 students quickly showed a

developing grasp of four-part harmony, absorbing the necessary technical skills. The course content is broad, while also having sufficient depth. As a consequence, students study a wide range of music, from different styles, genres and periods of musical history. Homework is set regularly and forms an integral part of students' studies.

265. Leadership and management are very good. Course planning and its delivery show good management, as do the arrangements for the very good programme of instrumental tuition. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and of its importance in the lives of students. Documentation is organised efficiently and effectively. Good use is made of resources and accommodation, even though the latter is spread over different parts of the building.

266. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The department has maintained the standards reported then, and shows improvements in teaching, learning, attainment, attitudes and behaviour. Accommodation and resources are now good, especially in relation to the needs of music technology and storage.

HUMANITIES

Geography, religious education and psychology were inspected in detail at A-level. Lessons were sampled in history and law. History is a high-achieving department. Targets are carefully set and most students do well in relation to their results in other subjects. Numbers have increased since the introduction of the AS-level course. Students justifiably consider the quality of teaching to be high. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for the subject to their students. Students took the A-level examination in law for the first time in 2001. Numbers were too small for comparison with national results, but are growing. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, the teaching is lively and students willingly take part in constructive discussion.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Above average standards in coursework
- Students' good attitudes
- Access for students without GCSE geography.

Areas for improvement

- Below average results
- Unsatisfactory achievement of gifted and talented students
- Unsatisfactory literacy skills of average and lower attainers
- Poor attitudes of some students towards attendance and homework deadlines
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management.

267. The small amount of work seen showed below average standards by Year 13. One coursework project was incomplete and another file consisted solely of notes and photocopies from a variety of textbooks. Achievement is unsatisfactory in relation to students' GCSE grades at the end of Year 11.

268. The A-level results in 2001 were well below average and show a decline from the results in 2000. A number of higher attaining students failed to gain results other than at the lowest grades at A-level. The unsatisfactory achievement may be partly attributed to the type

of examination which required the students to have good essay-writing skills; and partly to the high levels of absenteeism from lessons among some students. However, in 2001, overall results in the AS-level examination at the end of Year 12, were slightly above the national average for both male and female students.

269. Attitudes to the subject are good. In those lessons where teaching is good, students respond well and show good rapport with their teacher. The majority are well-motivated, for example, Year 13 students on study leave attended a tutorial about planning their coursework. However, generally, students show a lack of confidence when debating issues that would help develop their thinking skills. The quality of a good lesson was jeopardised because a small minority failed to prepare appropriately and those who had been absent did not have the initiative to find out what the homework was. These students made less progress than otherwise would have been achieved.

270. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Among some teachers there is considerable skill in imparting knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. In a lesson where students were being introduced to the reasons why weather changes with the passage of a depression, the teacher made good reference to the immediate weather patterns outside the classroom. Throughout the lesson, the teacher stressed the relevance of what they were learning, encouraging the students to look at the television weather forecast and drawing on examples of previous learning, including work they had done for GCSE and the way questions about the topic in the examination might be presented. There are good opportunities for the students to develop their creative thinking skills through the independent coursework activity, which is well-managed with appropriate and accessible support for students. Coursework could be further improved through the introduction of fieldwork.

271. There is some poor teaching however, which is recognised by the students as demotivating and they make poor progress. In lessons where the time to complete tasks is too long, or the activities could be completed outside, gifted and talented and other higher attaining students make less progress than expected. Progress is also restricted when some teachers spend too long talking to the whole class or use lessons for note-taking. In such lessons, opportunities for students to use their initiative and develop their independent learning skills are limited.

272. Average and lower attaining students have below average literacy skills as the result of insufficient challenge from their teachers in lessons. Both male and female students offer answers that, although too brief, are accepted by their teachers; students are not required to expand on them in order to develop their oral skills and their ability to reason and think clearly. Teachers' questions are usually addressed to the class and seldom used to test individual students' understanding. In those lessons that included short question and answer sessions between tasks, there was a noticeable increase in the pace of learning and a corresponding increased interest from the students. Students use of ICT for research and for presentation is of variable quality; they do not use ICT to widen their own knowledge of places beyond those in the text book and in information provided in class. Marking of assignments is conscientious and homework is set regularly, usually as a separate activity and not just to complete work that was unfinished in lessons.

273. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Communications between senior managers and the department are weak, resulting in poor strategic planning that does not tackle the key issues of raising standards and improving the attainment of particular groups of students. The dual leadership of the department has not enabled it to make sufficient progress on a range of issues identified at the last inspection. The 'split' classes taught by two teachers, referred to in the last report, are of benefit to the quality of teaching at AS- and

A-level because they bring a balance of specialist knowledge to each class. However, students' learning still does not benefit from the use of the large central humanities area to provide an academic identity for the subject, an issue persisting from the last inspection, although students have benefited from the investment in good quality new text books to support the new courses. There is both formal and informal monitoring of teaching, but it lacks rigour and its effect on raising standards has been slight. New technology is not being used sufficiently in the department to track student progress and to set short-term targets related to the assessment criteria in the syllabus. Because of this, students are unclear about their progress. End-of-course targets for some higher attaining students do not take enough account of their attainment at the end of Year 11 and are insufficiently challenging.

274. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Standards at A-level have fallen and schemes of work remain unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved and is now satisfactory overall.

Religious education

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Above average results.

Areas for improvement

- Students' over-dependence on teachers
- The lack of breadth in students' reading.

275. Religious education is provided for the majority of students through a well-designed general studies course.

276. The standard of work seen is average by Year 13. Students' files are organised well, and include their own notes, printed handouts and essays. Essays show steady improvements in knowledge and understanding and students' ability to make appropriate references to sources when presenting their argument. In Year 12, the range of authorities quoted is largely limited to those found in the resources provided by teachers and there is little evidence of students' own, wider reading. However, in the work of a number of Year 13 students, there is evidence that they are reading more widely and using the Internet to access up-to-date work in their chosen topic. Year 12 students have an understanding of the philosophy of religion and the background to the beliefs of the world's major faiths and philosophies. In Year 13, students are developing an introductory knowledge of ethics. Over time, students' achievement is satisfactory and students with special needs make satisfactory progress.

277. An average of eight students have been entered for A-level examinations in religious education in each of the last three years. While the results have varied, the standard was below average in 1999 and 2000. In 2001, results were average, a good proportion of candidates gaining higher grades. In both AS- and A-level examinations, the performance of male and female students was similar and in both they demonstrated good gains compared with their attainment at the start of the course. The majority of students complete the course.

278. Year 13 students place great value on the course, both in intellectual terms and in their own personal development. They appreciate the teaching they receive but are concerned about the number of cancelled lessons. Students in Year 12 show interest in their work. They fully use the lesson-time available. Relationships are good. Students are enjoying

the course and feel that it is enabling them to appreciate views and opinions which differ from their own and to realise that different viewpoints on issues can be equally valid.

279. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic and their enthusiasm communicates itself to students. A range of teaching styles and student activities is used. Teachers have good subject knowledge and adapt their teaching styles to the needs of individual students effectively. Although they are willing to answer questions, and some will challenge positions taken up by teachers or in texts, students are still heavily dependent on teachers and have not yet realised that to achieve high grades they will need to do more independent reading and research. While well-designed learning resources are provided, teachers do not expect sufficiently wide reading on the part of students. Insufficient attention is given to the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Essays are carefully marked with helpful guidance about how improvements can be made. Teaching makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

280. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has allocated the teaching to two recently appointed, well-qualified staff who are establishing excellent relationships with students and who are confident enough in their teaching to use a variety of strategies. These new staff are supported well. Relevant statistical data is used to set suitable targets for students and to check on their progress.

281. Since the last inspection, improvement is satisfactory, so that there is now less variation in the standards of teaching and student progress.

Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' learning supported by their good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards
- Leadership and management ineffective in raising standards
- Not enough use of psychological studies to raise standards.

282. Psychology is a popular subject at AS-level, chosen by many more female students than male students, the national pattern. In 2001, a substantial proportion of students entered the examination who had gained a lower GCSE grade than C.

283. Standards in the work seen are below average. However, students' achievement is satisfactory when compared with their attainment on entry to the sixth form. There are no significant gender differences in attainment. Higher attaining students acquire understanding and knowledge of key concepts, for example in the module dealing with cognitive development. Middle and lower attainers do not develop comprehensive enough views of topics, for example in the module looking at individual differences. The acquisition of basic skills is satisfactory although there is limited evidence in written work of the development of numeracy skills other than in the statistical understanding required for the module dealing with research and experimental design. Students show limited comprehension of the relative significance of research findings, for example those dealing with psychological disorders.

284. The numbers taking the subject at A-level in 2001 were too small for comparisons with national results to be made. The trend in the previous two years is well below the national trend, although the results improved in 2001.

285. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. Their progress is good despite the management difficulties in the department. Students work well in groups when required to do so but such opportunities are reported as infrequent. They are prepared to collaborate, for example in work on differing perspectives on psychological disorders, and respond well to timed challenges. They seek out sources of information and have made effective searches of the Internet in areas such as physiology. However, they seldom explore journals or other media in the learning resource centre, although guided to do so. The 'route maps' published by the department give a helpful indication of course expectations and are appreciated by students.

286. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lesson targets are usually clearly stated at the beginning. However, not enough time is given to explaining the ground to be covered with some negative effects on the quality and clarity of students' note-taking. Students are encouraged to develop knowledge and understanding of appropriate vocabulary and concepts, for example 'acoustic' and 'semantic' in a lesson dealing with memory. While discussions are generally managed effectively, not enough use is made of concluding plenary discussions to help crystallise the principal points learned. A good feature is the strong links between key concepts and studies which are central to the understanding of the topic, for example on cognitive development. As a result, students grasp the dynamic nature of the debates which characterise the study of psychology such as the relative contributions of psycho-dynamic and biomedical models to understanding the causes of anorexia nervosa. Such lessons give students a clear framework of the requirements of external assessment.

287. Teachers' planning is not always effective and the stated learning targets are not always achieved in the time available. Assessment is used in only a rudimentary way to plot student progress, particularly within subject modules. It is not clearly linked to curriculum development or to sustained strategies for raising standards, especially for lower attaining students. Limited opportunities for learning outside the classroom restrict students' understanding of the applied and vocational areas addressed by psychology.

288. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. In recent years, despite recruiting large numbers of students, staffing difficulties and absence have contributed to the failure to raise standards beyond an average level. There is a basic development plan for the subject, some 'route maps' for the course, but appropriate schemes of work are not in place. There are no mechanisms in place to ensure that planning meets the learning needs of students of middle and lower attainment. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. There is some over-reliance on end-of-module assessments so that students' awareness of where they need to improve and the opportunities for them to make improvements are limited. Not enough attention has been given to the arrangements for subject entry and induction.

289. The subject was not reported separately at the last inspection. Despite its popularity, there is no clear strategic direction from senior managers for its future support and development. Despite the fact that there are no subject–specialist teachers to support the delivery of psychology, there have been insufficient professional development opportunities for staff, partly because they have other conflicting responsibilities. Senior managers have made insufficient effort to improve standards and monitor the effectiveness of provision in this area of the curriculum.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on A-level English and French; German was also sampled. Only small numbers of students have studied German in the sixth form in recent years. There were no candidates for A-level 2001. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from recent results but it is apparent that the language has become less popular with students and attainment at A-level has fallen. At AS-level in 2001, students' grades were low given their attainment when they began the course. One lesson of German was observed in which students were mainly practising speaking. The good teaching resulted in good learning and very good attitudes from the students.

English

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

Strengths

- Above average standards
- Students interested by good teaching
- Students' good attitudes
- Good assessment of students' work
- Good contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient opportunities for discussion in some lessons
- New technical terms not always introduced clearly enough.

290. Staff absence caused difficulties in the previous academic year and these have not been completely overcome. A small proportion of students feel they suffered as a result.

291. Standards in the work seen in Years 12 and 13 are above average. By Year 13, higher attainers use technical terms fluently and have a good awareness of how language works. They can analyse their own work as well as that of published authors. Middle attainers know the set texts well and are able to work under timed conditions successfully. Discussion with lower attainers shows that some are struggling to understand their work, but coursework folders show a reasonable knowledge of texts and use of technical vocabulary. In Year 12, higher attainers can analyse fluently a text such as Martin Luther King's speech 'I have a Dream', with appropriate reference to detail. They understand the dramatic irony in 'The Miller's Tale'. Some are avid readers and enjoy visits to the theatre. Middle attainers find texts such as 'Beloved', difficult, but have read it and are beginning to see how the text works. Lower attainers do not read around their texts sufficiently, though all have read several Chaucer tales about love. They see how Chaucer evokes humour in 'The Miller's Tale'. When analysing different kinds of writing, they appreciate how language varies according to purpose.

292. In 2001, A-level results in English language were average and in English literature were above average. Over the past three years, results have been mostly above average. The department moved to entering students for a single English examination in 2000, and the results for AS-level in 2001 were above average; almost all the 81 students entered gained grades A to E and almost a third, the higher grades A and B.

293. In relation to their level of attainment on entry to the sixth form, students achieve well. Over the two years, their achievement is good and examination results are above expectations. This is confirmed by the progress seen in Year 12 lessons and Year 13 folders. Although gifted and talented students are not identified by the college, challenging work is provided which gives higher attainers appropriate opportunities to develop. These students have attended courses for the most able. No students with special needs or for whom English is an additional language were observed during the inspection. There is little difference between the achievement of male and female students; far more female students than male choose the subject.

294. Standards of literacy are above average. Sometimes new words, such as 'polyphonic', are introduced clearly and displayed on the board, but this does not always happen. For example, the terms needed for analysing purpose and audience in a variety of texts were not made clear, so that students' ideas were not as clearly expressed as they might have been. Many students use ICT to present their work and to do research. There is no evidence that teachers plan to develop students' numeracy skills.

295. Students show good attitudes to their studies, although these vary from very good to satisfactory. Most work conscientiously and produce copious amounts of careful work. They join in discussion with interest and usually enjoy lessons. When encouraged to do so, they think independently. Often relationships are very good and fruitful discussion ensues, for example on the attitudes of the white people towards Sethe in 'Beloved'. When students show less enthusiasm, it is because teaching does not inspire them sufficiently. Some students in Year 13 are concerned that they do not get sufficient help in their studies and that staff absence hinders their progress. However, revision sessions were put on for the examinations although the opportunity to attend was not always taken up. Problems arising from staff absence are not totally resolved, but work is set for absent colleagues and the clearly organised syllabus for Year 12 helps to minimise any adverse effects. English is a popular subject and few students fail to complete the course.

296. Teaching and learning are good overall; some teaching is very good and some is satisfactory. Work is marked thoroughly with guidance for students on how to improve. Students know their strengths and weaknesses well and are aware of their target grades. They work with effort and independently to good effect. Teachers use ICT well to record attainment and monitor achievement and absence. Their good subject knowledge leads to students feeling confident to ask questions, so furthering and consolidating their understanding. The department makes a good contribution to the development of students' social, moral and cultural awareness. Texts from different cultures are chosen so that students experience a wide range of cultures and traditions. Where teaching is very good, skilful questioning assesses understanding and moves students' knowledge forward briskly through a series of activities. On occasion, this quality is not so strong, showing particularly in a lack of pace and skill at drawing out students' ideas in discussion. In the best teaching, effective methods are used to make sure that students think for themselves, but sometimes teachers talk too much, rather than encouraging students to participate.

297. Leadership and management are good. Reorganisation within the department has allocated specific responsibilities for the development of the sixth form. Detailed work programmes are being prepared and teachers are collaborating effectively in preparing and

sharing resources in order to raise standards further. The decision to move to one combined course rather than two separate ones has strengthened co-operation within the department.

298. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection. The department has maintained its high standards and the good quality of teaching.

French

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge
- Students' interest in and enjoyment of their work – they complete the course
- Good results
- Teachers' use of a good range of resources
- Teachers' good use of French as a means of communication
- Students' good understanding of spoken and written French.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient accuracy and fluency in students' writing and speaking in French
- Insufficient use of French by students as a means of communication
- Not enough attention to students' individual needs
- Insufficient use of ICT by students and teachers
- Insufficiently detailed reports on students' progress.

299. Standards by Year 13 are average. Higher attaining students perform well in all skill areas. Lower attainers have difficulties in writing and speaking accurately, although they have good levels of understanding of the spoken and written language. Gifted and talented students are given some excellent opportunities, for example to extend their study of French literature through a residential course organised and funded externally. Standards are average overall by Year 12. Overall, reading and listening skills are better than speaking and writing skills. Higher attainers are developing their skills in writing at a high standard, with a high degree of accuracy and breadth of vocabulary. Speaking is the weakest skill. For many students, their current attainment is not higher than would be expected of good GCSE candidates. This can largely be accounted for by the lack of appropriate practice in speaking in Years 10 and 11. In the main, however, students are achieving as expected from their GCSE results.

300. The numbers taking A-level French are too small to make valid annual comparisons with national averages. Over the last five years, results have been good. They were good overall in 2001 and generally as expected by students' prior attainment.

301. Students have good attitudes to their work overall. They are interested in the topics studied and many are keen to express their opinions. They are supportive of one another and work well together. In discussion, they listen with respect to others' points of view. Year 13 students have benefited from the opportunity to study in greater depth an area of a syllabus topic which particularly interested them. This has given them valuable practice in individual research, an important skill in higher education. Students say they are enjoying the course and almost all have good records of attendance. However, in Year 12, a significant number of students show a lack of commitment to learning vocabulary.

302. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and speak French throughout the lesson. However, they still do not encourage

students to use the language as much as they should for routine communication. Teachers use a wide range of interesting resources which both encourage students to think about the topics they are studying and give them access to the vocabulary and structures they need to express their own ideas and opinions. At times however, students are not given sufficient practice in using the language they need in order to be able to express their views effectively. For example, Year 12 students had difficulty responding to open-ended questions (inviting exploration of ideas) because they lacked confidence in using the new structures and vocabulary needed. In a lesson in which the teaching was otherwise good, the teacher did not pay sufficient attention to the learning needs of the highest and lowest attaining students in the group so that their progress was restricted. Teachers now give valuable commentaries on how well students are achieving and suggest better ways of expressing what they want to say. Students in Year 13, in particular, have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

303. The teacher with responsibility for French in the sixth form provides some valuable leadership, especially in terms of ensuring that colleagues understand the requirements of the new courses. However, she is not responsible for monitoring and evaluating provision, and currently this important aspect of the department's work is not carried out as it should be. Target-setting is based on a national system of data analysis which is not used to its potential, nor are results carefully analysed to help improve teaching and learning. Assessment is carried out more effectively in the sixth form than in Years 10 and 11. Students commented that it has improved of late. Reports are addressed to students, a good feature. However, they are unsatisfactory because they do not give sufficiently clear information on strengths and weaknesses in the different language skills in order that students and their parents can gain a clear idea of what areas need attention.

304. Teachers make good use of resources from the Internet, but overall both students and teachers make too little use of ICT. Teaching is shared by two teachers in Year 13 and three in Year 12. This works well in Year 13, but in Year 12, results in some teaching of grammar out of context. The programme is planned well to revise what should have been learned for GCSE and to allow students to progress to AS- and A-level. However, the students find concentration on this kind of work difficult, especially as the lessons are inappropriately timed in the two-week timetable, taking place on consecutive days.

305. The French assistant is a valuable resource, used to give students extra lessons to develop their skills in speaking. She is given good guidance from the teacher with responsibility for sixth form teaching. She provides a vital contact with France. Students are offered the possibility of undertaking work experience in a French-speaking country through an outside agency, but currently no students have chosen to do this. The college does not offer any other opportunities for visiting France, although the new subject leader has begun to plan an exchange.

306. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The department has responded well to teaching the new courses.