

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKMEEDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Burgess Hill

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126084

Headteacher: Mr Colin Taylor

Lead inspector: Mr Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 10 – 12 May 2004

Inspection number: 263874

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11-16
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1052

School address: Station Road
Burgess Hill
West Sussex
Postcode: RH15 9EA

Telephone number: 01444 241691
Fax number: 01444 235261

Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr. S. Hoyles

Date of previous inspection: February 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Oakmeeds Community College is a mixed community school for students aged 11 – 16, situated in Burgess Hill, West Sussex. Students are largely drawn from Burgess Hill and its surrounding villages. Attainment on entry is average, although some years are less good. Students of all abilities are represented. The socio-economic background from which most students are drawn is average. There are currently 1052 students on roll. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs is average, with 183 students having identified needs. Most have learning difficulties or dyslexia, but some have emotional and behavioural problems. Thirty-six students have statements of special educational needs. This is average. Students are mostly white British, but with small numbers from a range of other ethnic heritages. Fourteen students are from traveller families. There are six students who speak English as an additional language. The college has been awarded Sportsmark and the Eco School Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Lead inspector	
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector	
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	Roger Garrett	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
8361	Mac Burley	Team inspector	Science
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Art and design
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology
22843	Ron Catlow	Team inspector	Geography
30457	David Evans	Team inspector	History
33324	Joanna Fulwood	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
2032	Christopher Polybank	Team inspector	Music
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious Education, Citizenship
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
DT2 9PU

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **good school**, providing good value for money. The determined leadership of the headteacher is providing a strong and clear vision for the future. Standards in most subjects are above average, and most students achieve well as a result of good teaching.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the governors, headteacher and key staff is providing a strong sense of common purpose and direction.
- Good teaching and the positive attitudes of students ensure that most achieve well.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum are not high enough.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation procedures are not consistently effective.
- Good relationships within the college community help promote students' personal development.
- There are good opportunities to exercise responsibility and take part in enrichment activities.
- Productive and increasingly effective links with local businesses and the wider community help to promote achievement.
- Accommodation for some subjects is inadequate.
- Citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is not fully implemented.

Overall, the college has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection in 1998. Standards overall in Year 9 tests have improved faster than the national trend, and despite a dip in English in 2003. In GCSE examinations, improvement is more mixed, with variations in performance from year to year. Most key issues at the time of the last inspection have been tackled effectively, but improvements in ICT have been inadequate and the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is still not met. The headteacher has established management systems which are leading to good improvements in provision, but high levels of teacher turnover and staff absences have hindered progress.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good overall, given the students' attainment on entry in Year 7, and standards are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11 in most subjects. GCSE results in 2003 dipped. Although able students achieved well, there was underachievement amongst some students, particularly middle attaining boys. However, the school responded with a rigorous analysis of performance, and standards in the current Year 11 are higher and above average overall. Performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was in line with the national average in English, and above average in both mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average in all three subjects. Students' achievements are good in English, mathematics and science and in all other subjects throughout the college except art, where they are very good in all years, in design and technology, citizenship and religious education where they are satisfactory in Years 7-9, and ICT and history where they are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT in Years 7-9, and citizenship in Years 10 and 11.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Students have good attitudes to work, reflected in the above average and improving attendance figures. Behaviour is good overall, although a small number are

less considerate of others, particularly when moving around the college. The college provides a strong moral, social and cultural framework for students' development, and they respond with increasing maturity and sense of responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **good. Teaching and learning are good** overall, although the quality varies from subject to subject. Teachers have a strong commitment to improving the strategies for learning. They are confident in their subject knowledge, and plan lessons and activities carefully. Most students know how well they are doing and how to improve, although assessment is not used consistently well to plan for improvements. The curriculum is good, preparing students appropriately for their future. It is enriched by a very good range of out-of-school clubs and activities. The school's tutorial arrangements for the support of students are good. Extensive links with the community and partner schools make a good contribution to students' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Strong leadership by the headteacher is giving the college a clear sense of purpose and direction. He is well supported by his deputy and senior team. Governors are astute, committed and confident in their role. However, governance cannot be judged satisfactory as statutory requirements in ICT in Years 10 and 11 and in relation to collective worship are not met. Management is satisfactory. The college is increasingly thoughtful and reflective in its approach, and management procedures for the monitoring and review of its work are in place. However, not all monitoring systems are implemented with consistent rigour.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The college's partnership with its parents is good. Parents are supportive and by and large, the college has their confidence. In particular they are pleased that their children are expected to do their best, that they make good progress as a result of good teaching, and that their children like coming. A minority of parents is critical of the information they receive about progress, and of the behaviour of some students. Inspectors largely agree with the views of parents, although they judge annual reports of progress to be satisfactory. Students are very loyal and express considerable support for the college. They enjoy the challenge of the teaching and participate in all activities with enthusiasm. The vast majority thinks the college is good. Whilst many students are critical of the behaviour of a minority, they feel that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards and achievement in ICT.
- Ensure a more consistent approach to the monitoring and self-evaluation of provision.
- Implement more fully the programme for citizenship in Years 10 and 11.
- Continue to work to improve aspects of the accommodation.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve the provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- Review the arrangements for providing a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work seen overall during the inspection are above average in both Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are good throughout the school. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls, although where there has been underachievement, this tends to be amongst boys.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science have been rising faster than the national trend.
- GCSE results in 2003 dipped and the college failed to reach its ambitious targets.
- Able students achieve well at GCSE and the percentage of students achieving the highest grades is above average in a number of subjects.

Commentary

1. The overall attainment on entry in Year 7 is broadly in line with the national average, although the profile of students does vary a little from year to year. The current Years 7 and 8, for example, have slightly lower than average cognitive ability scores than students in higher years.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the students' performance in mathematics and science was above average while in English, performance was average and lower than in recent years, where results have been more usually at least above average. Results in both mathematics and science have been improving strongly in recent years, although results in mathematics dipped slightly in 2003. In English, the trend has been more static, although results in 2003 were subject to a challenge by the college over the consistency of the marking. Results in all subjects overall have been rising faster than the national trend since 1999. In comparison with similar schools - that is, those with students who achieved similarly in Year 6 national tests - performance in all three subjects was well below average, suggesting underachievement by some students. Inspectors' observations indicate that standards are above average in all three subjects and strategies to improve attainment, particularly in English, have been effective. Inspectors found little evidence of underachievement, and for most students, their achievement in English, mathematics and science is good.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.8 (33.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.8 (35.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.1 (33.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 218 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Although girls did better than boys in all three subjects in 2003, taking the last three years' average boys do at least as well as girls in mathematics and science. In English, although girls achieve consistently higher results, the boys' performance is usually better than the performance of boys nationally. Able students and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well through Years 7 – 9. For example, the proportion of students attaining higher levels

in both mathematics and science in 2003 was above average and for some students represented very good achievement.

4. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C grades in 2003 was 53 per cent, in line with the national average and below the average for similar schools. The average GCSE points score per student of their best eight subjects in 2003 was 35.8, which was also in line with the national average and in line with the average of schools which performed similarly in Year 9 tests in 2001.
5. These results were well below the targets set and a considerable disappointment for the college, as results in 2002 had been higher at 61.3 percent. The college's own analysis indicates that there was some underachievement amongst this group of students, particularly of average ability boys, who just failed to achieve C grades in many of the subjects which they took at GCSE. However, able students did well and in a number of subjects, notably English (both language and literature), mathematics, science, art, geography and physical education, the percentage of students who gained the highest grades A or A* matched or exceeded the national figure. Overall 5 per cent of grades awarded were A* (3.7 per cent nationally) and 12 per cent were A grades (10.4 per cent nationally).
6. GCSE results in recent years have shown no clear trend and have by and large reflected the ability profile of the year group, except during 2003. Overall, however, the trend since 1999 has been below the improving national trend. In 2003 both boys' and girls' results were close to the national average. The rolling average of the last three years, however, shows that boys' performance is above average in comparison with boys' performance nationally, notwithstanding the relatively poor performance in 2003. Girls' results have been consistently close to the average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	53 (61)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.8 (37.8)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 207 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In 2003, performance in different subjects varied. There were strong performances in English and art, but weaknesses in German and business studies. Amongst minority subjects, students in music and statistics also performed well. Students in English, design and technology and art did significantly better than in their other subjects. Vocational qualifications were achieved by 95 per cent of students in ICT and 90 per cent of students in health and social care.
8. Students' achievement, that is, how high standards are in relation to their ability and prior attainment, is generally good throughout Years 7 – 11. In work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards were above average, higher than most results in 2003, but in line with test and examination results in earlier years. The key to this good achievement is the good quality of teaching and learning throughout the college.
9. Students with special educational needs make good progress, especially in those subjects where teachers match the work specifically to their needs. There are very few students with English as an additional language, and they achieve well. In the case of two Year 11 students,

achievement is very good – they will be taking up to six GCSE subjects (not including English) this year.

10. Amongst other groups, the small number of travellers tend to underachieve. The college has supported these students well and works closely with the local authority support service to ensure they are given equal access to the curriculum.
11. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were above average in both Years 9 and 11. Given their attainment on entry, students achieve well throughout. Speaking skills and the students' creative writing are particularly well developed. In mathematics, standards were above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and students' achievements are good overall. Most students accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and are confident in performing mental calculations. Standards in science are above average in Years 9 and 11. Students' achievements are good throughout the college. Most students have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
12. One area of weakness is the standard of students' work in information and communication technology (ICT), which is below average across the curriculum in all years. Students taking the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, however, are reaching average standards. Despite a significant investment in ICT resources in recent years, students' achievements are unsatisfactory. Improving standards was a key issue for improvement at the time of the last inspection in 1998. Since then staffing difficulties have hindered progress and this remains a key priority for improvement.
13. In other subjects in Years 7-9, students' achievements are very good in art, good in history, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education, and satisfactory in design and technology, religious education and citizenship. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievements continue to be very good in art, and are good in geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. They are satisfactory in history, but unsatisfactory in citizenship, because the programme for this subject has yet to be fully implemented.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' good attendance, attitudes and behaviour all contribute to their good achievement. Students' personal development is also good, fostered by good opportunities for social, moral, and cultural development. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. Students contribute to the college and community with pride and behave with increasing maturity as they move through the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' personal development, and particularly their moral, social and cultural development, is strong overall, but opportunities are missed to prepare students for living in a culturally diverse and multi-faith society.
- Attendance is good, but some students arrive late for lessons.
- A small number of students are inconsiderate of others, particularly when moving around the college.

Commentary

14. The majority of students enjoy coming to school and most display good attitudes. They listen well, demonstrate high levels of commitment to their work and are keen to learn. Most enthusiastically answer questions and tackle work with commitment. Good attitudes are confirmed by the above average and improving attendance of students. Unauthorised absence is also below the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.3
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the last complete reporting year (2002-3).

- The great majority of students display good standards of behaviour in and around the school, reflecting the very good relationships that characterise the community at Oakmeeds. Students work together constructively and form good friendships. In a few lessons, a minority of less motivated students distracts the attention of others and this can have a negative impact on learning. Although students acknowledge that bullying occurs, they point out that the college deals quickly and effectively with any reported instances. Whilst behaviour is good overall, a small number of students are less considerate of others, particularly at lunchtime and while moving between lessons. This sometimes affects punctuality to lessons.
- The number of exclusions is broadly average overall for a school of this size, although the number of permanent exclusions is below average. The college's inclusive approach ensures that this sanction is only used when absolutely necessary.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	616	55	1
White – Irish	4	2	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	10	0	0
Information not obtained	389	25	0

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

- Students' personal development is good and a strength of the college. There are many opportunities for students to show initiative and responsibility. A number of older students, for example, work as peer counsellors, supporting younger students who encounter bullying. This work gives them real responsibility and helps develop their sense of citizenship and understanding of others. They take these responsibilities seriously and wear their peer counsellor badge with pride.

18. The college is firmly committed to ensuring that the provision for moral and social development is given a high priority. It deals effectively with the increasing number of students with special educational needs who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. This strong moral framework places a strong emphasis on valuing each individual, and most students respond well, developing a mature and thoughtful appreciation of moral values. College staff provide very good role models, seeking to create a positive environment in which all members of the community are treated with respect. Students' social development is also good, and the college places a strong emphasis on community involvement. The work of the college council reinforces social development and there is a strong involvement with a number of charities. Students' cultural development is good, encouraged by a number of subjects such as art, English and music, which draw material from a wide range of cultural influences. Issues such as racism and bullying are dealt with successfully in the school's provision for personal and social education, and one sociology lesson was observed in Year 10, which dealt effectively with racism. However, opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity and prepare students for living within contemporary Britain are missed elsewhere, particularly in the citizenship programme, but also in other subjects such as religious education. Students' spiritual development is satisfactory but there are missed opportunities to promote this aspect. Not all subjects have mapped out what contribution their subject can make to spiritual development, with the result that opportunities for reflection and an exploration of the spiritual dimension to life are missed. Assemblies do not always provide opportunities for reflection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. In particular, the good quality of teaching, the breadth of the well-planned curriculum, the pastoral support given by tutors and heads of house, and the effective links with parents, partner schools and the community are ensuring that most students feel cared for and motivated to succeed.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall and in around one quarter of lessons the quality is even better. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory and is being increasingly used to inform planning and the students themselves on how they might improve, but inconsistencies remain.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is characterised by high expectations and levels of challenge.
- The commitment of teachers is valued by the students.
- Relationships are good and, as a result, students grow in confidence.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and the use teachers make of assessment to inform planning.

Commentary

19. Around 88 per cent of students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider that they are well taught. Most parents also judge the quality of teaching to be good. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, to be good. It is very good in art and design, but unsatisfactory in ICT.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 125 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (0.8%)	30 (24.0%)	55 (44.0%)	32 (25.6%)	5 (4.0%)	2 (1.6%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.

20. The college has recently had a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors agree with the college that raising the overall quality of teaching and learning and ensuring more consistently very good teaching is its most important priority. While much good and better teaching was observed, there is still much to be done to bring all teaching up to this standard.
21. A staff conference in 2003 has been followed by the establishment of cross-curricular working groups, each with a different focus. These have covered aspects such as literacy, numeracy, the use of ICT, assessment and the effective use of 'starters and plenaries'. All teachers are involved and meetings observed during the inspection were well managed, allowing teachers to share their experience and expertise, and gave teachers thought provoking and confidence-building ideas. As a consequence, teachers are increasing their understanding of how best to plan their teaching and maximise learning for the students. This focus on how to ensure effective learning is having an impact on the quality of teaching, although much good practice has still to be disseminated and embedded across all subjects. However, with around one in four lessons judged very good or better, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
22. Where teaching is most effective, it is led by the teachers with enthusiasm and commitment. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an awareness of how to present their subject in an interesting and motivating way. They explain difficult ideas simply, enabling the students to build on their understanding. Good relationships between students and teachers ensure that lessons are purposeful and productive. Many teachers are particularly good at offering encouragement and building confidence in the students' ability to learn. Above all, it is the good levels of challenge which ensure that good progress is made.
23. In an excellent French lesson on the weather, a group of able Year 8 students achieved very well because of the high expectations and rapid pace of learning. Very good relationships and a sense of humour enabled the students to enjoy their learning and participate with a growing confidence. All were actively encouraged to join in and volunteered readily to contribute in French. This was a well structured lesson in which all the students made outstanding gains in their learning.
24. In a very good art lesson, Year 10 students were developing their drawing skills based on their personal response to a range of masks and fabrics from around the world. Although students of a wide ability range were present, the teacher skilfully engaged them all, enabling them to tackle a difficult subject with confidence. The students made very good progress as a result of the commitment and care with which the teacher challenged and extended each individual. Work was assessed carefully and precisely, ensuring that each student knew what they had achieved and what they needed to do to make their work even better.
25. The school has introduced the national Key Stage 3 Strategy well. Good use is made of the three-part lesson structure, ensuring that a lively introduction is followed by opportunities for active participation by all students and further opportunities to consolidate learning at the end through a well-managed summary. In a Year 11 drama lesson, the teacher effectively summed up the key points and moved the pace of the lesson on well, sharpening the action and consequently raising quality. However, on occasions, poor time management means there is insufficient time for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate what they have achieved. Activities are often well planned to interest and motivate students, particularly boys. In many lessons, active participation by the students ensures that learning is based on relevant experience.
26. In discussion with students, they felt that they were challenged in lessons to do their best, confirmation of the questionnaire results, where 97 per cent of students thought that teachers expected them to work hard and do their best. Students also said how much they liked the positive atmosphere in lessons and the approachability of teachers when they were stuck with a

problem in their work. In a number of subjects, but especially so in music, physical education and drama, the commitment of teachers to provide a wide range of additional enrichment activities is much appreciated by the students.

27. Where lessons are less effective, it is usually because a fast pace of learning is not sustained, or students do not actively participate in their learning. For instance, in a Year 7 English lesson, the pace of learning dropped because the teacher did not push things on fast enough and some students drifted off task. Although the learning was satisfactory overall during this lesson, the short attention span of a number of students was not effectively addressed by the teacher.
28. A small number of students are difficult to motivate and sometimes present difficult behaviour challenges for teachers. In the overwhelming majority of lessons, good relationships and very secure classroom management strategies ensure that all students co-operate fully and are engaged productively in their learning. In the small number of lessons which were judged unsatisfactory or poor, this is not the case. This is usually because inexperienced or supply teachers have not established sufficiently effective strategies for dealing with these students.
29. Planning of lessons is thorough and usually effective in meeting the needs of all students, but where the learning is less effective, it is often because teachers have not planned sufficiently well to meet the wide range of learning needs in the class. The special needs co-ordinator distributes a wide range of information and useful strategies to all teachers for helping students with special educational needs. The quality of individual education plans is a strength of the special needs provision. Most teachers use this information well to support the students. However, a few examples were observed where the teacher failed to use this effectively in their own planning. The result was that students with special educational needs failed to make the progress they should. Teaching assistants work effectively alongside students, questioning, advising and asking for explanations, enabling them to complete tasks successfully. However there is no system for building up subject specific support materials and teachers and their assistants rely on the informal sharing of information about individual students. The role of the subject representative for special educational needs is under-developed in this respect.
30. Teaching within the special educational needs department, where students are withdrawn from mainstream lessons, is satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, there is pace and a variety of activities well matched to each student's needs. Learning is characterised by very good relationships, and sensitive handling of students with behavioural difficulties.
31. The teaching of students with English as an additional language is friendly, enthusiastic and focused on adding to students' vocabulary, forming correct structures and usage, and giving them confidence in communicating with others. As a result all students learn well and their achievement is at least good. Careful records are kept of work and progress, and good links maintained with subject teachers. Students themselves testify to the quality and effectiveness of the support they receive. The college supports the work of the teaching assistants well, with appropriate funding of time and resources.
32. Overall, the assessment of students' work and progress is satisfactory. Marking varies in quality, confirming the students' responses to the pre inspection questionnaire, where around one in four students commented that their work is not always assessed helpfully so that they can see how to improve it. Comments on what students have achieved and what he or she needs to do to improve are not consistently given. Written comments are often bland. The use of National Curriculum levels to measure performance is sometimes effective in ensuring the students have a good idea of their progress, as in music, but once again, this is not consistent. The monitoring of marking by heads of faculty and senior managers is insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently high standards.
33. The college now has comprehensive and thorough assessment systems but these have only recently been introduced and as yet are not fully embedded in the practice of all faculties and individual teachers. In 2003, for example, the underachievement of middle attaining boys at

GCSE was not picked up early enough to ensure that effective support was given. More systematic and comprehensive tracking procedures are now in place and the college is able to monitor students carefully and identify potential underachievement. Similarly, the use of assessment data to identify less effective teaching strategies and modify approaches to learning is in its infancy. Within subjects, there are pockets of good practice. In design and technology, art and music, assessment is used well, and self assessment procedures in design and technology are particularly effective. Target setting is used by a number of subjects to challenge students to achieve beyond their predicted grades. However, this is also inconsistent across the college.

The curriculum

The school provides good learning opportunities across Years 7 to 11. The curriculum is broad, and ensures progression for students of all abilities. Extensive extra-curricular opportunities are a very strong feature. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff absences and changes have affected learning in some subjects.
- The provision for ICT and citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended and appreciated by the students.
- The accommodation for some subjects is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

34. The college's curriculum meets statutory requirements except in relation to the teaching of ICT and citizenship in Years 10-11. In nearly all other subjects the curriculum is good, and the content of courses is well planned to enable all students, including those with special educational needs, to make progress. The structure of the timetable and classes means that all students have equal access to a suitable curriculum and programmes of study. Students with special gifts or talents are identified and activities and extension work are well considered. As a result, able students achieve as well as other students. It is possible to take GCSE early and some students also begin advanced courses in mathematics in Year 9.
35. Students in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to take examinations in a good number of subjects, including creative and expressive arts, sport, and vocational subjects. Those students who find the full range of GCSE courses difficult take a work-related option, provided in conjunction with the local further education college. In physical education, students may study for a junior sports leader award as well as a GCSE course. In modern languages, students are offered German, French or Spanish at GCSE. The curriculum for expressive arts enables students to experience a very good range of music, dance, art and crafts whilst exploring different cultures around the world. The curriculum is under constant review to take account of demand, national initiatives and the success or otherwise of particular projects. For example, the work-related programme is being modified to ensure the more active and positive involvement of students.
36. The ICT curriculum has failed to improve sufficiently since the previous inspection to enable the college to keep up with the expectation that ICT plays an integral part in learning across all subjects. However, ICT is used very effectively in design and technology, with GCSE graphics done entirely using computers, and Year 8 students creating African designs using computer-numerical-control. Students in English and music also have good opportunities to use computers. The GCSE ICT and business courses in Years 10 and 11 provide some opportunities for students following these courses, but overall ICT skills are not systematically developed. In some subjects, ICT is almost completely absent.

37. The provision for students with special educational needs is good. As well as withdrawing some students from lessons for help in small groups, the special educational needs department runs a variety of effective activities during assembly and tutorial time. Students get help at these times with reading or with difficulties associated with dyslexia. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is appropriate for students with special educational needs, with a choice of some vocational courses, a modular course in mathematics and alternative examinations in modern foreign languages.
38. Provision for the six students who are at a relatively early stage of learning English is good. They are withdrawn from different lessons as far as possible and taught by two trained teaching assistants for four hours per week each. The aim for the younger students in Years 7 and 8 is to be sufficiently proficient to attempt national tests at the end of Year 9.
39. The provision for personal and social education (PSE) is good. The college is currently attempting to provide the citizenship curriculum through the PSE and religious education programmes. This works adequately for Years 7 to 9, although the religious education curriculum is somewhat curtailed, but in Years 10 to 11 planning is insufficient to ensure that students receive their full entitlement to citizenship.
40. The induction arrangements for new students and those moving into Year 7 from partner schools are good. Students receive good advice and information about opportunities when moving from Year 9 into Year 10 and when planning their move from Year 11 into further education or employment.
41. The school has a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities. There are over 50 clubs and societies, meeting regularly and generally enjoying a good participation by the students. The 'activities week' for students in Years 7-9 encompasses camping, outdoor activities, residential courses, and visiting artists, craft workers, poets, dancers and storytellers. The range of different cultures explored is exciting and imaginative and enriches the students' understanding of the arts. On the other hand, the college does not prepare students well for life in culturally diverse modern Britain by promoting understanding of the different ethnic groups within the UK.
42. The college now has sufficient, well-qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the curriculum, having come through a period of difficulty and instability. Staff absences and changes have created difficulties in ensuring continuity in ICT, English, science and modern foreign languages in particular. There is now a good match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum.
43. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Rooms within most subjects are well grouped and good quality displays of students' work enhance the learning environment. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in some subjects. In modern foreign languages, rooms are scattered, lack blinds and are not soundproofed; three science laboratories are in need of urgent refurbishment and music areas are in a poor decorative state. Drama accommodation and that for resistant materials in design and technology is unsatisfactory. The condition of much of the school's fabric is poor, and does not create a welcoming learning environment.
44. The proportion of the school budget allocated to resources remains below the national average. Resources are satisfactory in a number of subjects, but they are unsatisfactory in ICT in particular, and as a result a number of subjects have limited access to computers. The library has improved since the last inspection, but remains a limited resource for independent study. A number of subjects make effective use of outside resources to enhance students' learning. These include language residentials in France and Germany and visits to art galleries, theatres, museums and battlefields. Students are also involved in field trips, whole year camps and an activity week.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for students' care, welfare and health and safety is satisfactory. The provision of support, advice and guidance given to students is satisfactory. The college student council works well and students feel their views are acknowledged and listened to.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college's pastoral system ensures that students are known well and develop trusting relationships with their form tutors and heads of house.
- Peer counselling is very effective in supporting students.
- Carefully managed induction arrangements for students transferring in Year 7 ensure students settle in quickly and easily.
- The quality of tutorial advice and guidance is inconsistent.
- The college council provides a good framework for allowing students to make their views known.
- Child protection arrangements for reporting incidents do not meet guidelines.

Commentary

45. The college makes satisfactory arrangements overall for the care and welfare of its students. Health and safety and risk assessment procedures are embedded in college practices and governors are involved as necessary. Child protection procedures are in place, but not all staff have received adequate training. Although individuals are aware of the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of the students in their care, college procedures do not consistently meet with the reporting requirements prescribed by social services.
46. Whilst all reported incidents of racism are investigated and appropriate action taken, not all are recorded, and the college is unable to quantify racist behaviour. The college's monitoring procedures are insufficiently robust to ensure its policy on race equality is consistently applied.
47. Teachers know their students well and provide them with good levels of pastoral support, through the house and tutorial system. They are sensitive to the needs of individual students, and develop trusting and long standing relationships with them. The family ethos of mixed age tutor groups is appreciated by both students and their parents. A small number of students gain significant personal support and benefit from the school counsellor employed on a part time basis by the college. The great majority of students report that they value the advice and support they receive from teachers. However, the quality of tutorial advice is not consistently high. Academic support and guidance is inconsistent and while some teachers are beginning to make good use of assessment data to track students' progress and set targets, this is not always the case. The use of assembly time to give individual support to small groups of students on a regular basis is an imaginative idea, but the time is not always used to maximum effect. The college has already recognised this issue and has begun to monitor the use of tutorial time. It is also planning to develop the role of the tutor through a more coherent tutorial programme.
48. Each student with special educational needs has a clear Individual Education Plan, with appropriate targets which are reviewed twice a year. Parents and students are involved in the annual reviews of statemented students. All students receive at least the provision that is in their statements. There are good links between the special educational needs department and the pastoral system, so that students with behavioural difficulties are given support.
49. Careers guidance is good, and the programme is well planned ensuring that all students have good access to information and advice, enabling them to make informed choices about their next stage of education.

50. Good induction procedures ensure new students and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. Effective curriculum links have been established in English, drama, music and physical education. Parents commented that they particularly value the sensitive and careful planning of their child's transition to Oakmeeds school.
51. Students' views are respected and valued. Consultation is well developed through the college council and a number of its good ideas have been implemented by the school. It spends its resources responsibly on things like picnic benches and bicycle racks. Students have made strong contributions to whole school initiatives such as the Eco School Committee. Student counsellors speak positively about the support they receive from staff and their involvement in setting up and developing the work of peer counsellors. The college is right to celebrate the positive influence of the council on improving college facilities and the students' learning environment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Most parents speak favourably about the work of the college, they are regularly consulted, feel valued and their partnership with staff is good. The college enjoys a constructive relationship with the wider community which is reinforced by its effective work with partner schools and other educational establishments. These constructive arrangements support students' achievement and personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents are pleased with the education provided by the college.
- The college has developed an active and successful partnership with the wider community.

Commentary

52. Most parents are very supportive of the college's work. They particularly value the approachability of staff, the sensitive manner in which their children were helped to settle in when they joined and the high expectations of teachers. Minorities have concerns about the behaviour and bullying of some students, and information about their child's progress. Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. Standards of behaviour are good overall, although there are a small number of students whose behaviour is thoughtless and insensitive. Incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively, and the work of peer counsellors in particular is much valued. The college issues an annual report to parents on their child's progress. In response to parental views, expressed through the parents' Think Tank, the format has recently been changed to include a more accurate description of the progress made in each subject. Inspectors judge reports to be satisfactory and they give a clear indication of progress. Parents of statemented students are informed of the details of their child's support and are involved in annual reviews. The college is also thorough in contacting parents of students experiencing difficulties and in following up matters such as absence.
53. Communication with parents is good and they are consulted on key issues. Regular newsletters provide information on school activities and events. Parents are considered part of a partnership which works together to promote achievement.
54. The college values its links with the wider community and has developed and sustained effective partnerships with a number of local businesses. It has significant levels of support for its application for business and enterprise specialist status, and has won a number of awards for its business and community links. These are helping to give students an awareness of the world outside and relevance to the curriculum. Work experience arrangements are well managed. A number of subjects also enjoy productive links. In physical education there are very good links with a variety of sports providers and other subjects such as art, music, modern foreign languages, history and geography also enjoy good links with outside agencies. The

special educational needs department has established good links with the community and various agencies to support students with behavioural difficulties.

55. Links with partner schools and colleges are good. Curricular links are growing, particularly in response to the need for more vocationally orientated courses in Years 10 and 11. The college has worked well with the local further education college in developing an alternative curriculum for some students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are good. The headteacher is giving a strong lead. He is well supported by his deputy and senior team, who work effectively alongside governors and faculty and pastoral team leaders at all levels. Management is satisfactory and increasingly effective. The work of individual governors is good, but because statutory requirements for the provision of ICT and collective worship are not met, governance is judged unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the headteacher inspires the confidence of the whole college.
- The leadership group is providing a strong focus for improvement.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation procedures need greater rigour and consistency to ensure they are fully effective.
- Staffing difficulties have hindered school improvement.
- There is a strong commitment to educational inclusion.

Commentary

56. The headteacher is providing good leadership. His vision is strongly articulated through a discussion paper "2003 and beyond" and the college's purpose - "developing enquiring minds" - is the touchstone for much of its recent development. The headteacher is well respected by the whole college community, and secure improvements in provision have been made since his appointment, despite significant staffing problems that have impeded the college's ability to affect change more rapidly. He has the committed support of governors, staff and parents and his vision and values are widely shared. All staff are now clear about the direction of the college and understand the contribution they can make. The college is ambitious for further improvement and its application for business and enterprise college status is evidence of this commitment.
57. The deputy headteacher and three assistant headteachers provide effective support to the headteacher, working confidently in their areas of responsibility. There is a strong focus on college improvement. Current priorities, which include improving teaching and learning, improving the effectiveness of the management and monitoring of faculties, the college application for specialist status and improving the accommodation, are appropriate. All members of the leadership group are playing significant roles in these developments. However the senior team is relatively new and there has been a complete change of personnel in recent years. This lack of continuity amongst senior managers has been a hindrance to sustained college improvement since the last inspection, and a number of college initiatives have yet to bear fruit. The college is now in a position to develop, review and refine its management systems to ensure greater consistency and continuity in its provision.
58. There is a strong involvement of the governors and the whole staff in planning for college improvement. The college improvement committee and cross-curricular working parties are generating ideas and commitment to whole college improvement. The cross-curricular working parties in particular are providing a very effective forum for the sharing of best practice and professional development. Involving all members of the teaching staff, these working parties are beginning to have a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching.

59. Most faculty and pastoral team leaders are providing effective leadership of their teams. Very effective leadership in design and technology, modern foreign languages and art, for example, has led to impressive improvements in provision. However, inconsistencies remain. While subject leaders are all conscientious and increasingly effective in monitoring the work of their teams, management procedures are not always sufficiently robust and comprehensive to ensure consistent practice and a secure basis for self-evaluation.
60. As a result, management at all levels is judged satisfactory. The college's systems for line management are effectively in place. Appropriate links are made between performance management, continuing professional development and college and faculty improvement planning. As yet, however, self-review procedures are not fully embedded. The recent review of the mathematics faculty is thorough and self-critical, and a good model for further faculty reviews. While there are strengths in some departments, notably art and design, in most subjects monitoring processes are not always systematically implemented, and consequently less effective in ensuring consistency.
61. The college has a strong commitment to educational inclusion. Leadership of the learning support faculty, which includes inclusion, special educational needs, the pastoral system and personal, social and health education, is very good. A strong sense of purpose, along with energy and enthusiasm, has enabled rapid recent improvement and a much higher profile for the work of special educational needs. There is a commitment to provide effectively for a number of students from traveller families. Management is satisfactory, but the monitoring of provision is not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that students with special educational needs are having work matched to their needs in every subject. The plan for making the college more accessible, following the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, focuses on premises rather than a wider brief to make the curriculum accessible to all students.
62. The college improvement plan is a three-year plan and is detailed and comprehensive. It has a clear focus on improving standards through a focus on teaching and learning. Governors carefully monitor the progress being made towards meeting identified priorities. The improvement planning process provides a good framework for improving standards, and issues identified by the inspection team have already been largely identified by the school in the improvement plan.
63. Governors are very ably led by the chair of governors. He and his colleagues bring an astute and perceptive approach to realising the priorities identified in the college improvement plan, and bring a wide range of useful expertise to the college. Their involvement in strategic planning is far sighted and effective. They are supportive but not un-critical. Monitoring by the monitoring and standards committee is robust and effectively uses key performance indicators as a means of keeping track of progress. The pastoral and curriculum committee has yet to adopt similar performance measures, which has hindered its ability to monitor the quality of educational provision with rigour.
64. Governors are kept well informed and detailed performance and financial reports are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions. Statutory requirements are met, except in relation to the provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11, and collective worship. Because this is having an impact on standards, governance of the college is not satisfactory. However, governors are aware of the issues and are planning to implement ICT fully from September 2004.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,199,309	Balance from previous year	33,670
Total expenditure	3,203,397	Balance carried forward to the next	29,582

Expenditure per student	3,071
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65. The school's budget is well managed. The bursar has a tight control of spending and alongside the governors has a very good overview of the budget. Governors are regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. The table above reflects the figures given on the school's consistent financial report. The school applies best value principles well and regularly evaluates the cost effectiveness of service providers. Most recently, a thorough investigation of the financial implications of bringing college catering in-house was undertaken before governors agreed to go ahead. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and staff training, are used well. The college offers good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English, French and German were inspected in detail. **Spanish** was sampled. Eleven Year 10 students are studying GCSE Spanish. In the one lesson seen, teaching was very good, using a variety of practical and problem solving methods to ensure good achievement.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has given the faculty a new sense of purpose and established a common approach. Difficult staffing circumstances are being managed well.
- Teaching is good overall, with some very good features, and students achieve well as a result.
- The leadership team lacks time to co-ordinate planning and to monitor and evaluate the faculty's work.

Commentary

66. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were average nationally but well below average in comparison with similar schools. Results at Level 6 or higher were particularly disappointing and the college disputed the marking of all the students' papers. More significantly, however, given the typically above or well above average performance up to and including 2001, students' learning in 2002 and 2003 was disrupted by staff absences or changes. To the faculty's credit in the circumstances, GCSE results in English and English literature were significantly above average, representing at least good achievement given students' above average performance in national tests two years before. This good achievement was particularly apparent in the performance of boys, who did significantly better than boys nationally in English and whose performance in this subject was better than in any other subject except design and technology.
67. Standards in work seen are above average in Years 9 and 11. Most students develop good analytical skills, organise their writing well, show good understanding of texts and write confidently about them at length. Students' personal and creative writing and their spoken confidence are particularly good features of their attainment. Achievement is good throughout the age range because of several effective aspects of the faculty's approach. In Years 7 to 9 programmes of work take full account of the Key Stage 3 Strategy's Framework for teaching English. As a result, students benefit from a wide range of opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. They also tackle work that is carefully structured to meet the needs of students with special educational needs as well as being suitably challenging for higher attainers. Learning support assistants provide good support for individual students and for teachers in the classroom. ICT is used effectively to develop students' capability. In all years, students benefit from effective assessment procedures. Marking of written work explains well what they need to do to improve and sets suitable targets for improvement based on clear descriptions of levels or grades. Students also have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own progress. Good extra-curricular provision and attractive classroom displays enrich students' experience of English.
68. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Most teaching is well planned, uses a good range of methods to interest and involve students and ensures a productive outcome. Some teaching is very good. A very pleasing common feature of two completely different but very

good lessons in Years 9 and 11 was the emphasis on students being sensitive to the world around them and being aware of the feelings and circumstances of others. One lesson created this through an imaginative exploration of a 'dream walk' along a woodland path, stimulated by the teacher's beautifully presented and very effective use of paintings, music, leafy branches and flowers. As a result, all students produced reflective writing of quality and achieved very well. In the other, the teacher's previous and very thorough work on war poetry, focused questioning and very effective feedback enabled students to tackle a straightforward revision lesson with knowledge, understanding and insight. By the end of a very productive lesson they were able to provide sensitive commentaries on two poems to the benefit of the rest of the class and their own examination preparation. Occasionally, potentially good lessons are weakened by mistakes in lesson timing, in the transitions between activities and in over-prolonging activities. These resulted in the loss of attention by some students and affected the pace and productivity of learning.

69. Leadership and management are good. Because of unavoidable staffing absences, changes and uncertainties over appointments during the last three years, often affecting faculty leadership, improvement since the last inspection has only been satisfactory. Since September 2003, leadership has depended on the continuing dedication and goodwill of three committed teachers who have established a clear sense of direction and a common approach for the faculty's work. They provide good role models for other teachers. They manage continuing difficulties well by providing strong support for the newly qualified, inexperienced or temporary staff. They have done well to restore above average standards and good achievement. However, the team lacks time for co-ordinated planning, monitoring and evaluation. This is a significant barrier to the faculty's development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Language and literacy skills are above average, with students' speaking skills being a strong feature of their attainment. Most subjects make a good contribution to the development of students' skills. In history, for example, teachers read with students, use drama techniques and encourage self-evaluation as well as emphasising key vocabulary. Mathematics teachers employ frameworks for writing to help students structure their writing, provide opportunities for students to explain mathematical strategies and emphasise the use of correct terms. In physical education, teachers question students very effectively and encourage them to evaluate the performance of others. Key words are displayed in most areas and strongly emphasised. On the other hand, art teachers miss opportunities to challenge the quality of students' writing, speaking and analytical skills, and in religious education, the development of literacy skills by different teachers is inconsistent. In ICT the situation is unsatisfactory, and similarly so in citizenship, where worksheets are over-used and opportunities to develop speaking skills are missed. The college's literacy working group is conscious of and enthusiastic about its role in disseminating good practice. Widening its representation to include all subject areas would enhance its effectiveness.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership ensures a clarity of purpose, resulting in the consistent implementation of policies designed to improve standards further.
- Good management is establishing consistently good practice across the department.
- Good teaching results in good achievement.
- Not enough attention is paid to the needs of less able students in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

71. Students enter with average standards. By Year 9 they reach above average standards as many students reach Level 6 or higher in writing. At GCSE results have been above average. Standards in the work seen in both Years 9 and 11 are above average and students' achievements are good throughout the college.
72. Students in Years 7-9 learn vocabulary and write sentences in the target language in Year 7; they write compound sentences in Year 8 and express opinions in paragraphs by Year 9. Some students are well above average by this time, writing at length about their opinions and ambitions. By Year 11 most students extend their writing to describe an activity or to write a letter. They achieve well, responding to questions about written or spoken extracts and giving reasoned opinions.
73. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Lessons are well planned and resourced with materials which teachers make to suit the students' needs. Learning objectives are shared and evaluated with the students. Lessons are business-like with introductory activities settling students quickly. In the most effective lessons, a variety of activities are used which are challenging, motivating and well designed to sustain students' concentration. Teaching in these lessons is lively and good humoured. Teacher-student relationships are good and the atmosphere harmonious. Classrooms are stimulating with displays which illustrate teaching points.
74. Learning is built on logically, and when a topic is introduced, students begin with what they know, to give them confidence and to consolidate prior learning. Correct language terms are used so that students use them confidently. A good range of teaching strategies and resources are used which cater well for different learning styles. Overhead projectors, individual white boards and worksheets are used effectively. Students' work is marked regularly and presentation is generally good. However, in Years 7-9 there is not enough reference to National Curriculum levels or to subject specific targets, so students do not understand how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 students are familiar with exam criteria and know what grade they are achieving and why. In less effective lessons, teaching does not cater for the different needs of the students in mixed ability classes and pace is lacking due to the ineffective management of poor behaviour. In addition, there is a general tendency to emphasise writing at the expense of speaking.
75. Leadership is very good, and management is good. Good relationships have been established through effective communication and team-building. Consistent practice is being established through good use of departmental meetings and the sharing of good practice. Lessons are regularly monitored and thorough feedback is given. However, books are not monitored enough to ensure that assessment and target-setting are rigorous or informing teaching. Leadership sets excellent standards of teaching as well as efficiency. A good departmental handbook details policies and schemes have been amended to accommodate the National Literacy Strategy, ICT and numeracy. A weekly bulletin gives the department up to date information. All students are offered excursions to France as well as being able to attend clubs in a wide variety of languages. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

German

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

- Good leadership and management are ensuring the impact of frequent staffing changes is kept to a minimum.
- German results at GCSE have been below the national average because of lack of staff continuity and consequent student disaffection.
- Good teaching is resulting in good achievement.

- Not enough attention is paid to the needs of less able students in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

76. Students enter with average standards. By Year 9 they reach above average standards but GCSE standards have been below the national average because staffing discontinuity has led to less effective progress. Standards in the course work seen were better and above average. Students learn to read, write and speak in the target language during Years 7-9. They can express simple opinions and write in paragraphs by Year 9. By Year 11 their writing is more varied but written work, particularly their extended writing, is not of a consistently high quality.
77. Teaching and learning seen were good in all years. Lessons are well planned and resourced with appropriate materials. The practices which the department has developed are evident in German lessons as well as in other languages taught. Learning is built on logically and a good range of teaching strategies and resources are used which cater well for different learning styles. Students' work is marked regularly and presentation is generally good but there is still not enough reference to National Curriculum levels or to subject specific targets. In less effective lessons, teaching does not cater for the different needs of the students in mixed ability classes and pace is lacking due to the ineffective management of poor behaviour. Writing is developed at the expense of speaking.
78. Leadership, which is the same as for the rest of the modern foreign language department, is very good, and management is good. Good relationships have been established and policies designed to consolidate the improvement in standards are in place. There is good recognition of what has to be done and a logical plan of development for the department. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics was inspected in detail and **statistics** was sampled. Standards in GCSE statistics in 2003 were well above average with all students entered for the examination achieving a grade. Current standards remain well above average with increasing numbers of students achieving well. Good teaching was observed in the two sampled lessons. Students responded well to challenging questions and the brisk pace of learning. In one lesson students were asked to analyse seasonal trends on time series graphs. Work set was intellectually demanding, involving opportunities for speculation, the use of ICT and establishing and testing hypotheses.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good; teachers have high expectations of the students and plan lessons well.
- The relationship between teachers and students is very good; the positive attitudes and behaviour of the students contribute to the learning.
- The scheme of work is comprehensive with numerous high quality worksheets and booklets to support students' learning.
- Not all faculty policies and strategies are implemented consistently.
- ICT is not available for all students.

Commentary

79. Standards in the 2003 Year 9 national tests were above average, and students' achievement is good when compared to their prior attainment on entry. Standards have improved, continuing an improving trend, with girls performing marginally better than boys. Current standards of work

seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average and achievement continues to be good. Standards in the 2003 GCSE mathematics examination were broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades was significantly greater than the national average though results overall reflected a dip compared to previous years. Current standards of work seen by Year 10 and 11 students are above average with examples of work that is well above average. Students' achievement overall is good. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers.

80. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout all years. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their planning and explanation, and the breadth and depth of work completed by students is good. Good use is made of the inter-active whiteboard, although ICT is not used consistently to support learning in all classes. Effective teaching is characterised by a good balance between theory and practice, and good questioning which challenges the students to think more deeply and widely about problems. In GCSE classes, work builds successfully on previously learnt skills. For example, higher-attaining Year 10 students reviewing algebraic formulae demonstrated a good understanding of trigonometry when calculating the value of an angle in a triangle. Much recorded work is of a high standard, aiding review and revision, with extended exercises for students to practise new skills and achieve set learning targets. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and there is a positive work ethic throughout lessons.
81. Where teaching is less effective there is often a reliance on worksheets and 'answer only' exercises. Learning objectives and reference to key words are not consistently shared with the students at the start of lessons. Students gain much from the use of the mental starter at the beginning of lessons but the end of lesson review does not always consolidate and reinforce learning. Opportunities to record key statements and formulae in exercise books to aid review and revision are infrequent. The setting of homework and regular marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not reflect faculty policy. As a result, students are sometimes unaware of what to do to improve and the progress they are making.
82. Leadership of the faculty is good. Issues raised in the previous report have been addressed. Assessment procedures are well established and very good data analysis has led to strategic curriculum development to address underachievement and raise standards further. There is a clear vision for improvement supported by a committed team of subject specialists who are prepared to use their free time to support the students. Management is satisfactory with some good features. Comprehensive records are maintained, and the scheme of work is detailed and planned effectively to meet the needs of all students. However, monitoring of the faculty's work, including teaching and learning, is inconsistent. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. Students' numeracy skills are above average and across the curriculum are no barrier to learning. The National Numeracy Strategy is used in mathematics lessons, and other faculties have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In science, physical education, geography, ICT and design and technology, schemes of work identify what students are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in handling data and shape, space and measurement. Students' computational skills are sound and they are not over-reliant on calculators. A cross-curricular working party led by the numeracy coordinator is pro-active in raising awareness of numeracy and strategies to support its teaching.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationship between teachers and students creates a climate of co-operation which enhances learning.
- Teaching and support staff work well together under the good leadership of the head of department and are committed to raising standards.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good. Lessons are well prepared and delivered with a high level of expectation.
- Insufficient use is made of material which assists those with special educational needs and higher attainers.
- Students' work is regularly marked but it does not always tell them what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

84. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 were above the national average and better than those of the two previous years. Results were better than those in English and similar to those in mathematics. The performance of girls was slightly better than that of boys. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of candidates obtaining grades A*-C was just below the national average and was lower than that in the two previous years. The proportion reaching grades A* and A was, however, above average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. Results were lower than those in both mathematics and English.
85. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are average but examination of students' written work and lesson observation show that good progress is made during Years 8 and 9. Achievement is good. Middle and higher attaining students in Year 9 have, for example, a good understanding of the requirements for a successful scientific investigation. Lower attaining students in Year 8 demonstrated a sound understanding of simple food chains and webs. Students with special educational needs make good progress.
86. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. In a GCSE revision lesson, for example, lower attaining students showed that they had a sound understanding of the solar system. This included some difficult concepts related to distances in space and the history of the sun. The written work of higher attaining students, which includes the good use of graphs, is well presented. Achievement is good.
87. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teacher's knowledge of the subject is good. Lessons are carefully prepared and delivered with high levels of expectation. Relationships between teachers and students and between the students themselves are very good. This creates a climate of co-operation which enhances learning. Some teachers use humour to good effect, and praise, which raises the students' self-confidence, is a feature of many lessons. Where the quality of teaching is less than satisfactory, lessons lack variety and the pace of learning is slow. In a very well planned lesson with a Year 9 class, consisting largely of boys, the teacher moved skilfully from one activity to the next. This ensured that all students were well prepared for an investigation of the factors affecting the height to which a squash ball bounces. Expectations were high, students were fully engaged and as a consequence achievement was good. Classes in Years 7 – 10 contain students with a wide range of attainment. Where teaching is less effective, insufficient use is made of materials and strategies to meet all the needs of this wide range of students.
88. Teaching and support staff work well together under the good leadership of the head of department and are committed to raising standards. The recent revision of the Year 7 scheme of work is very good, but this work needs extending to other years. The faculty is well managed. Students' work is marked regularly, often with encouraging comments, but these do not always give enough information on what is wrong and what needs to be done to improve. The faculty's

use of assessment information to monitor progress and set targets is satisfactory. The faculty has responded positively to the last report, and improvement since then has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall pattern of provision in Years 10 and 11 does not satisfy statutory requirements, but changes to be adopted in curriculum in Sep 2004 are likely to rectify this situation.
- Some teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment requires further development.
- Cross curricular developments in ICT are relatively uneven and un-coordinated.
- There are some inadequacies in resource provision which impact adversely on standards.
- The functions of leadership and management have been severely disrupted by staff resignations and illness.

Commentary

89. The college figures for the attainment of students at the end of Year 9 are well below the national average. These figures are based on teacher assessments and show 35 per cent of students gaining National Curriculum Level 5 or above, as opposed to 67 per cent nationally. Results from the GNVQ course in ICT have been close to national averages. The first cohort of the GCSE course which has now replaced the GNVQ will complete their studies at the end of this academic year.
90. Evidence for the positive effect of the college's Key Stage 3 strategy comes from work scrutinised during the inspection. In particular, standards in the current Year 7 have improved substantially. The majority of their work shows that they have the potential to reach nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9. However, the achievement of students in the present Years 8 and 9 remains unsatisfactory.
91. In Years 10 and 11 students are working toward the requirements of course work for GCSE. On the basis of work seen during the inspection, students are working at levels slightly below average, and their achievement is satisfactory. From initially low attainment levels at the end of Year 9, students make satisfactory progress in using a wider range of software, with some good presentational work being completed using Microsoft Word and Publisher. However project work data used is predominantly from secondary sources and the value of the work would benefit from the introduction of primary data collected by the students. Overall, students with special educational needs make progress in line with the achievements of their peers.
92. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. During the inspection there were frequent disruptions to the electricity supply and teachers were unable to offer a normal pattern of lessons. Further, over the past year, a high level of staff illness and resignations has necessitated heavy reliance on supply teaching. In Years 7-9 teaching has unsatisfactory elements, but it also features some very good teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching includes lack of work planned to meet the learning needs of all students, slow pace and a lack of clarity in expectations and resulting low standards of attainment. As a result, students in a Year 9 class made little progress in learning and showed an incomplete understanding of control and modelling. Where teaching is very good it has pace and challenge suited to the abilities of the class. As a result, students in a Year 7 class developed very good skills of measurement and alternative forms of presenting data, and began to create and interrogate databases. They made rapid progress in learning and were able to relate ideas of numeracy to processes of measurement.

93. In Years 10 and 11 some teaching is very good, setting appropriate clear goals and for all levels of prior attainment. A lesson on flat file databases fully engaged students, giving a high level of challenge, expectation and support. Differentiation is planned into the work and students completing the work early are given extension tasks. Other teaching is broadly satisfactory, but does not fully test and extend students' understanding of topics.
94. Accommodation and equipment have improved considerably, but the sharing of computers has an adverse impact on standards. In some cases, the loading of software is very slow and this leads to some frustration and a slower pace of learning. Many of the chairs used in computer rooms are in a very poor state.
95. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The department has a hard working and conscientious leader, but he has a substantial teaching timetable and took on the post temporarily and at short notice. He has experienced substantial periods of ill-health and other long serving key staff have recently left the college. There is lack of clarity within the college as to responsibilities for key aspects of the work such as co-ordination across the curriculum. In these circumstances it has been difficult to ensure the continuity of effective monitoring of groups of students and the setting of challenging and achievable targets suited to individual needs.
96. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Whilst there are now clear schemes of work for Years 7 - 9, weaknesses remain in schemes, delivery, assessment, monitoring and in cross-curricular planning and implementation. Although ICT resources have been considerably improved, and further discrete curriculum time is planned from September 2004 onward, an authoritative whole-college ICT policy has yet to be formulated. The college still fails to satisfy statutory requirements in relation to Years 10 and 11, especially in relation to opportunities in the areas of control and measurement. However these features are recognised by the college, which has appointed a new head of department to take over from the present temporary post holder as from September 2004.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

97. Standards across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. It is only in recent months that the college has begun to audit ICT standards across the curriculum. Whilst there are pockets of good practice in areas such as English, design technology and modern foreign languages, most curriculum areas have not developed detailed ICT policies and strategies for implementation.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and religious education were inspected in detail. **Sociology** was sampled. Standards at GCSE in sociology in the past three years have been in line with the national average. In a Year 10 lesson on attitudes to race, students debated the topic and were able to clarify their own understanding of terms such as racial prejudice and harassment. The lesson was well prepared and the teacher was skilful in handling discussion and dealing with sensitive issues. All students made good progress.

Geography

The provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Classroom teaching is good and is reflected in the students' achievement.
- Fieldwork enhances what is learnt in the classroom.
- The use of a variety of resources increases the opportunity for good learning.
- High expectations, thorough planning and careful management of students' learning are

promoting achievement.

- ICT is under-used to support learning and research.
- Learning materials are not sufficiently varied to meet the needs of some students in mixed ability classes.

Commentary

98. In 2003 GCSE the percentage of students achieving A* - C grades was above average; boys did better than girls. Students enter the school with average geographical skills. By the end of Year 9 standards are above those expected nationally, and their achievement relative to their prior attainment is good. As students move through Years 7 to 9 they make good progress in finding information from text, maps, graphs and diagrams but their skills in using ICT are not so well developed. Students show that they have a good understanding of the geographical processes and the impact they have on the environment. Higher attaining students write well but would benefit from further opportunities to answer more open ended questions so that they deepen their thinking. Students with special educational needs make good progress in working towards their targets, particularly when supported in class. Language skill and subject specific vocabulary is promoted effectively through discussion and reading out loud.
99. Students' standards are above the national average at the end of Year 11 and this represents good achievement in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. Students continue to make good progress in their geographical knowledge, understanding and use of geographical skills. Students of all abilities show a good understanding of geographical vocabulary and convincingly convey their ideas through the effective use of maps, diagrams and graphs. Writing and presentational skills improve, particularly in the way students write up their fieldwork studies. On the whole, students listen well and participate willingly. They take opportunities to pursue independent lines of enquiry with confidence.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers plan their lessons well. Learning objectives are made explicit though these are rarely re-visited at the end of the lesson to consolidate the progress made. Lessons draw on an appropriate range of resources to help motivate and interest the students. Skilful questioning prompts the students to think more deeply and there is some good oral assessment of learning. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning or as a research tool. Overall, students respond well to the activities, although a small number of students in Years 7 and 8 are sometimes difficult to motivate. Marking is regular but does not always show students how they can improve their work. The use of assessment data is not sufficiently well developed to enable students to take greater responsibility for their own progress or to set their own targets. While work is usually well planned to meet the wide range of individual learning needs, in less effective teaching, this is not the case. Texts and worksheets are sometimes inappropriately matched to individual student needs.
101. Subject leadership is good, and the head of subject has, in a very short time, developed a clear vision and strong team of teachers. Management is satisfactory. While the monitoring of teaching and learning is regular, the sharing of good practice has not yet fully developed. The improvement plan is limited and insufficiently focused on the specific needs of the subject. Opportunities for fieldwork are a strong feature of the faculty. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

The provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes support good working relationships and standards of behaviour in lessons.

- Teachers have good knowledge, understanding and commitment to the subject.
- Strategies for improving literacy are good.
- Extra-curricular activities are good.
- The provision for ICT is poor.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory and does not support teaching and learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development.

Commentary

102. By the end of Year 9, judging from the work seen and students' responses, standards are above the national average and students achieve well. Although there has been a strong rising trend in results over the last few years, the GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were below average. This was largely because of the introduction of new GCSE units, which did not link well enough with students' previous courses of study. In work seen in Year 11, standards are average and this shows a marked improvement on the previous two years. The work seen during the inspection indicates that the achievement of the current Year 10 and Year 11 students is satisfactory.
103. By Year 9, students develop a broad range of historical skills, including a good understanding of chronology. Many are aware of the differences between primary and secondary sources and the influence of technological, political, economic and cultural changes on society. In one very good Year 10 lesson, in response to stimulating and challenging teaching, students enthusiastically investigated events surrounding the last days of the Romanov dynasty. They meticulously explored the historical sources and challenged each other's interpretations as well as their teacher's. By Year 11, students have developed a sound appreciation of the causes and effects of the two world wars. They have an appropriate understanding of Hitler and the rise of Nazism and they are able to explain some of the major events of the inter-war period. Very few students are able to access computers to research material for their coursework projects.
104. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In the most effective lessons, the lessons are well planned and the objectives are made clear to the students. Teachers set high expectations for students' behaviour and classroom management is always effective. Students have good listening skills and generally work with good concentration on their individual assignments. Strategies to help students with low levels of literacy are a strong feature of most lessons, with particularly effective use of frameworks to support their writing. In all years, there is some, but not enough, opportunity for independent enquiry. Teachers work hard to increase the motivation of the less committed and they give generously of their time to provide additional teaching periods for several groups of students. However, teaching materials are not consistently matched to students' needs. The subject leaders are aware that assessment is currently unsatisfactory. Marking is inconsistent and students are not always sure how to improve their work. The use of data to set targets and improve teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
105. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 subject leaders provide satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. Self-evaluation procedures are developing gradually, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently robust. The provision for ICT is poor and this has a detrimental effect on standards, especially in Years 10 and 11. Resources are generally adequate. Some aspects of the accommodation, especially office space and the condition of the classrooms, are unsatisfactory.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students in Year 11 have the opportunity to achieve accreditation in the GCSE. Most students take the GCSE examination and standards are rising.
- Teachers are good role models and treat the contributions of their students with respect.
- Marking does not support the development of literacy skills and teachers do not ensure that students complete or correct their work.
- There is insufficient opportunity for students to develop their understanding through independent research and presentation.
- There are good opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through poetry and creative writing.

Commentary

106. Results for the short course GCSE examination in 2003 were above the national average. Results have risen over the last three years since the introduction of the course, and all students follow the course. Standards in Year 9 are average overall, and achievement is satisfactory; however it is affected by the pressure of time used to teach citizenship. Students in Years 7 and 8 have a good grasp of the main features of Sikhism and elements of Christianity. The use of story writing enables them to demonstrate understanding of religious concepts, and higher attaining students achieve well. Lower attaining students sometimes fail to complete their work, and low literacy skills hinder their ability to organise their learning. As a result, understanding is limited. Students study the concept of prejudice and have a well-developed sense of what is fair. Their studies of Gandhi and Martin Luther King present good examples of opposition to discrimination, but the link with religious belief is not always clear and religious teachings on equality are omitted. Groups who investigate the work of Christian Aid demonstrate a good grasp of the world's inequalities and have a good opportunity to reflect on the materialistic society around them. Their poetry responses enable them to express their understanding and they demonstrate thought and sensitivity.
107. Standards in Year 11 are above average and students are achieving well. Students apply the teachings of Christianity and Islam relating to the sanctity of life, and to the moral dilemma over the issue of abortion. They have a secure understanding of the different views held and the problems that arise, and demonstrate their understanding in extended written responses. Higher attaining students present well-balanced arguments and give their own opinions clearly. Students have a simple understanding of the various arguments for and against the existence of God and the theories put forward. They can identify the problems presented by contrasting views, although their own interpretations are limited. Their work on discrimination displays awareness of the different areas of prejudice and reasons why it develops, and they clearly identify the religious teachings about equality. Some work is left unfinished or is below their potential. Boys achieve a higher standard in their oral work than in their written work, where their responses are more limited. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because the style of teaching provides for short written responses and oral contributions.
108. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of their students. As a result they achieve well. Teachers treat the responses of their students with respect and they are encouraged to contribute and become fully involved in the lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are good. In the most effective lessons, teachers encourage students to develop their ideas and responses more deeply. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding through poetry and creative writing. Where lessons are less successful, teachers dominate and students become passive learners. Teachers encourage students to work together, but there is little evidence of independent investigation or student research. Marking is a weak area and there is insufficient support for literacy development. As a consequence tasks are left unfinished and students do not correct or improve their work. ICT is under-developed as a resource to support learning.

109. Leadership and management are good. The clear vision of the head of department is driving expectations up and setting a course for future development. Students' appreciation of religious education is rising as a result. The planned inclusion of citizenship within the work of the department is a positive development, although this places a time constraint on the teaching of the full agreed syllabus for religious education in Year 9. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attainment of students in graphics and resistant materials is above the national average.
- Very good teaching in graphics and textiles leads to very good achievement for students following GCSE courses.
- There is very good use of ICT by Year 10 and 11 students in resistant materials for examination coursework.
- The unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of students disrupts learning in a few lessons.

Commentary

110. Examinations results continue to show significant improvement with 2003 GCSE results being above average. Girls achieve better grades than the boys. Overall, students achieved better results in graphics and resistant materials than in other design and technology subjects. Standards by the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations, and students' achievements are satisfactory. In their work, students show average skills in designing and making, and produce well made products in a range of materials in resistant materials. Work in graphics, food technology, textiles and electronics provides all students with a good foundation of knowledge and understanding, and the emphasis on developing skills in designing ensures students develop a secure basis for further work. A well designed project on drawing in Year 8 enables students to apply a good range of formal drawing skills as well as freehand sketching in preparing the main stages of product development. Literacy skills are above average. Students write in a variety of styles and use a range of technical terms confidently in their design work. Above average skills in numeracy enable students to work accurately when measuring materials, weighing and marking out.
111. Students' standards on GCSE courses are above average and their achievement is good. Their progress is more rapid because they are given more open ended design opportunities as part of their coursework. Students show confidence in applying more complex design processes. In the work seen, very good ICT and graphics skills helped students enhance the quality and presentation of their design portfolios in all material areas. In resistant materials, GCSE coursework is produced almost entirely using ICT. The majority of students use ICT well. However, the use of ICT in food and textiles could be further developed with better access to additional ICT resources.
112. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, although some very good teaching was observed in resistant materials and textiles. In Years 7-9, teaching is focused on establishing basic skills and promoting quality and accuracy. As students move through Years 7-9, increasing attention is given to developing design as opposed to making skills. Lessons are well structured and teachers ensure students' learning is underpinned with appropriate skills and knowledge, enabling them to work through each task with understanding. A good range of activities maintain students' interest and challenging activities are provided, giving them good

opportunities to practise skills. Classroom management skills are good but on rare occasions, teachers find it difficult to motivate and fully engage all the students in the class. In these lessons behaviour is unsatisfactory.

113. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is well matched to examination criteria. Lessons are very well planned and offer clear guidance for coursework. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and are able to present complex ideas and concepts very well. While the pace of learning is usually good, in a small number of lessons it is allowed to slip and students do not fully complete the work. Classroom displays are stimulating and provide a good range of reference materials. Students are encouraged to test their products at various stages and include a good variety of industrial processes and techniques in all material areas. Teachers provide good individual support for students in lessons and as a result all students achieve well.
114. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has established good working relationships and a strong sense of purpose amongst all staff. Technician support is very effective. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection, when standards were not high enough. Teaching and learning are both now good. Although assessment procedures are good overall, there are still some inconsistencies in marking across different subjects.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music and art and design were inspected in detail. **Drama** was sampled. In the lesson observed, Year 11 drama students were preparing a performance for the forthcoming Leavers' Assembly. They showed above average skills, speaking clearly and confidently, moving with confidence on stage and showing awareness of audience. A well-rehearsed mock stage fight was skilfully done and showed also students' self-discipline and control. They were achieving well because teaching was good. The teacher created a purposeful and enthusiastic atmosphere and provided good direction so that students were able to refine and improve their performance. The lesson reflected good attitudes and relationships that had clearly been successfully built up over the period of the course.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Very good teaching is leading to very good learning and achievement for all students.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curriculum is stimulating and inclusive.

Commentary

115. The college assessed standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 as well above average. Currently, standards are well above average: a much higher than average number of students reached the expected National Curriculum level or beyond. However, teachers over-estimated the number of students reaching the highest levels. These require a depth of understanding and an analytical approach which only a few students achieve. Nevertheless achievement is still very good. Students enter the school with an average knowledge and understanding in art and design and all but a very few students produce thoroughly researched and imaginative pieces, showing an understanding of different media and a very good grasp of the imagery and ideas used by artists of different times and cultures.
116. This very good achievement continues on the GCSE course. In 2003 all students gained a grade in the A*-C range and nearly a third gained an A* or A. Standards are currently well above

average at the end of Year 11, due to the thorough grounding in observational drawing and recording from primary sources as well as the encouragement to research a topic in depth.

117. Teaching and learning are very good at all levels and lessons seen were never less than good. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly to ensure that all students are fully challenged to do their best. All teachers have a very good understanding of the needs of individual students, including those with special educational needs. Praise, encouragement and support feature highly in all lessons. The commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers is outstanding and this is infectious, with even the most reluctant learners making very good progress in most lessons. In a typical lesson with Year 8 students, very good examples of craft in the form of masks, puppets and fabrics from around the world were used as a basis for a design for a wax-resist picture. The students were amazed by the richness and colour, not only of the artefacts but of the teacher's own work, which inspired them to build very effectively on their already impressive skills. The students' attitudes to art are very good and nearly all strive to do their best. In a minority of lessons, achievement is affected by noisy and antisocial behaviour by a few students who often come into class late and disrupt the proceedings. Teachers have good strategies to deal with this but it is time-consuming and disturbing for others. The consistent approach that teachers use highlights the very good teamwork and consultation between staff. This is also apparent in assessment procedures, which give students a good idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The National Curriculum levels awarded tend to be a bit high, especially by the less experienced teachers, but the department has spotted this and is working to moderate them.
118. There are good opportunities for students to appreciate art and artists in a wider context as well as to use a good range of materials and techniques to produce their own work. Visiting artists, workshops and visits to galleries and museums, both locally and in London, make a good contribution. The department has made a sound start in the use of ICT to enhance learning but technical problems and the lack of software have limited progress. The department has also makes a useful contribution in developing the students' skills in speaking and writing but these are not yet sufficient to enable students to communicate higher levels of understanding as they compare their own work to that of other artists.
119. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The knowledgeable and committed leader provides an excellent role model and has a very clear vision for the development of art and design. Systems for the evaluation and improvement of the teaching and the curriculum show clearly a commitment to raising achievement even further. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, and standards have risen significantly in all years.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, which results in good achievement.
- GCSE results in recent years have been consistently above national averages.
- The curriculum takes account of cultural diversity and lessons have a strong practical focus.
- Standards of boys' written work are not as good as those of the girls.
- Marking does not give sufficient guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

120. Towards the end of Year 9 students are achieving above average standards; some reach even higher standards. This represents good achievement, as standards on entry to the college are mainly in line with national averages. In Years 8 and 9 students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of melody and harmony. The ability of Year 9 students to create

fresh approaches to the composing of 12-bar blues is a particular strength, with a degree of experimentation that is interesting and often musical. In a very good and well-planned lesson in Year 9, the teacher's enthusiasm for a piece by the Beatles was caught by the students, who then showed a high degree of competence in using keyboards for the invention of their cover versions of another Beatles' song. Composing in Year 8 is developing well and, in a good lesson in Year 8 on music for television advertisements, students worked hard to produce some effective accompanying music. In recordings, Year 8 students have produced some interesting 'techno' music with an Indian slant. In Year 7, a strong beginning has been made in the study of the elements of music. Singing (an area for development highlighted in the last inspection) is now a feature of most lessons. There is interest in learning instruments but numbers involved are slightly below national averages.

121. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results have maintained one hundred per cent A* – C grades for the past three years. In work seen, standards are above average and all students achieve well. Students in Years 10 and 11 are confident in their use of music technology, and many have the background performance skills in keyboard and other instruments to give them a secure understanding of notation and harmony. Students in Year 11 are musically self-reliant and many have a range of musical skills and expertise. In a few cases the students' assured performances are combined with real creative flair.
122. Teaching and learning are good overall, although during the inspection the head of music was absent. Very good subject knowledge and good relationships with the students are features of the teaching. There was one instance observed of very good teaching in a Year 9 lesson, which resulted in very good student achievement and progress being made in keyboard improvisation. Behaviour in lessons is very good and attitudes to learning are very positive. Year 11 students' commitment to their learning was illustrated by their concern to suggest and work at an alternative practical activity when the required technology did not function correctly. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well and there are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls except in the matter of written work, where there is room for further development of boys' writing skills and more helpful marking to promote improvement. Instrumental teaching is very good with an appropriate focus on the production of good instrumental sonority. There is strong support for the many and varied range of extra-curricular activities, which includes a full college orchestra of 60 players.
123. Leadership and management are good. The head of department gives strong musical leadership to the college's many extra-curricular activities, concerts and tours abroad. The schemes of work for music are thorough and there is a good emphasis on students acquiring skills in performing, composing, listening and the understanding of music. The study of world music cultures is an integral part of the music curriculum. There is a clear assessment scheme in place, which allows the involvement of students in self-evaluation and target-setting. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall with excellent results at GCSE having been maintained. Resources are adequate. Accommodation is presently unsatisfactory but the new music and drama suite, scheduled to open shortly, will do much to raise the profile of the subject and provide a fresh impetus to music in the school, which is highly valued by staff, students and the community.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of students to learn well.
- The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.

- The department lacks a subject specific teaching base for GCSE theory work.

Commentary

124. Standards in lessons and in the work of Year 9 and Year 11 students are above average and show good progress from their work in previous years; most students are achieving well. This includes all students in Year 11 and those following a GCSE course. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Year 11 students' examination results, except for those in 2003, are consistently above the national average. Students achieve better pass grades than those in their other subjects. Students with special educational needs and the talented achieve well. High attaining students are successful in a range of sports at area and county levels.
125. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers manage students very well and plan work to suit all students. In a Year 9 tennis lesson, lower attaining students improved well, because the teacher used modified equipment, simplified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher attaining students, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular participation. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in most lessons. In a Year 10 GCSE dance lesson, students achieved very well, because high quality teaching enabled them to plan work, perform to an audience and evaluate peer performance. Learning is less effective in a few lessons when teaching becomes more prescriptive and students are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.
126. Students' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes, good relationships and the good facilities, including a gymnasium, sports hall, fitness room and six new tennis courts. Students handle numerical data well, through opportunities to measure, record and analyse performance. Teachers emphasise key words, are adept in their use of questioning and enable students to evaluate performance. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of students across the attainment levels. ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.
127. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success, and she has inspired a dedicated team of specialists to support her. Management is good, and procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and students' standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor students' progress and modify the curriculum. Improvement, overall, since the last inspection is very good. Both standards and the quality of teaching have risen. GCSE dance has been introduced and specialist accommodation extended. Library resources are limited and the department lacks a subject specific base for the teaching of GCSE theory work.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Health and social care, business studies and the work related learning programme were all sampled.

128. Students who are likely to struggle with the full range of GCSE options are directed to a **work related learning** option, mixing vocational courses elsewhere with work experience and college courses in a reduced number of subjects. Current arrangements mean that some students miss part of the week's lessons in several subjects. There are firm plans to reorganise the timetabling of this group to provide more consistency next year. Only one lesson was seen and that was satisfactory. Samples of students' work and discussion with students show that over time they make good progress. The attendance of some students has improved, and some are now motivated to go on to college courses next year.
129. Two lessons were observed in **health and social care**. Examination results in the GNVQ course are above average and standards in the newly established GCSE course are also above average. Good, well-structured teaching is leading to good progress.

130. One Year 10 lesson was observed in **business studies**. Whilst last year's examination results were well below national averages, current GCSE students' work is close to national averages. Teaching was clear and well planned, resulting in a good pace of learning. The scarcity of up to date text resources adversely impacts on learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

PSE was sampled. A satisfactory lesson on healthy eating in Year 7 led to students making reasonable gains in understanding. The programme of work is well planned.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 do not study the full National Curriculum syllabus for citizenship.
- The clear vision of the head of department is enabling the school to develop a coherent scheme of work.
- The introduction of the short course GCSE from Year 9 has been well planned.
- There is insufficient opportunity for students to evaluate their work and to develop their citizenship skills.
- The college council and vertically grouped classes provide very good opportunities for active citizenship.
- There is insufficient assessment of students' work to monitor their progress.

Commentary

131. Standards in Year 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Students' understanding of the creation of laws and the legal system in Britain is secure. They can identify the types of law and law courts, and the different roles of people found in the courts. They consider the variety of consequences of crime and the sentences open to the courts, and recognise the individual's responsibility as a good citizen to comply with the law. Case studies enable students to demonstrate that they understand the variety of sentences available to the courts. Their work on human rights demonstrates that they understand the protection given to children and the responsibilities involved. Knowledge of the declaration of human rights is less effective and does not extend to the rights of adults such as asylum seekers. Their recognition of the diversity of British culture is very limited and their understanding of their membership of the European Union is negligible. There has been little previous formal work on citizenship before this year. In Years 7 and 8, this is now taught through their personal and social education course. In Year 9, students are following the short GCSE course in citizenship through religious education lessons. Pressure of time is limiting opportunities for them to develop their formal debating skills or to undertake independent investigation and interview.

132. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Current students did not receive lessons in citizenship in their earlier years and so their knowledge and understanding of government and the law is at an early stage. There is very little evidence that students recognise and evaluate their own progress towards good citizenship. As a result achievement is unsatisfactory. There are, however, very good opportunities for students to demonstrate their concern and responsibility for others through experience as college council members and in organising house events. Students who are part of the peer-mentoring scheme demonstrate very sound characteristics of good citizenship. These opportunities are not taken up by all, however, and despite the opportunities presented through the use of mixed age tutor groups, a significant number of students have very little opportunity to develop their sense of responsibility to the wider community.

133. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are planned to interest students and they are encouraged to reflect on what they study. They are encouraged to apply what they learn to their own experiences, for example when considering the rights and responsibilities of individuals. Teachers are good role models and treat students with respect. As a result students work well together and most respect the views of their peers. The involvement of outside agencies, such as the police and the health services, enables students to recognise the help available in society and lessons benefit from expert advice. Lessons are less successful where activities do not challenge students, and teachers allow individual students to dominate the oral work of the class. The rest of the students become passive and interest is lost. Students who are part of the college council have very good opportunities for independence and to learn about teamwork and organisation. In class, however, where teachers dominate the lessons, there is insufficient development of independent learning. There are few opportunities for students to undertake group projects or to evaluate their work and the work of their peers. There is little assessment, which means that the progress of students is not monitored.
134. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear plan for the development of the subject and appropriate support and training has been obtained for the head of department. The leadership has an ambitious vision for the subject and the development of a unified faculty of tutorial time, assemblies, personal and social education, citizenship and religious education departments is supporting the application of this vision. The syllabus for Years 7 to 9 has been addressed, however a coherent whole school course for the teaching and development of citizenship is not yet in place.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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