

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **COMBERTON VILLAGE COLLEGE**

Comberton, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110900

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Munday

Lead inspector: Linda Humphreys HMI

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 March 2004

Inspection number: 264050

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1150
School address:	West Street Comberton Cambridge Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	CB3 7DU
Telephone number:	01223 262503
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Paul Tebbitt
Date of previous inspection:	30 November 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Comberton Village College is a large, mixed comprehensive school with Sports College status serving a relatively affluent rural area to the west of Cambridge. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. The college takes part in a large number of initiatives. These include:

- Leading Edge School
- Networked Learning community
- International School
- Training School

The college has eight Advanced Skills teachers, and takes part in the Fast Track teacher scheme, as well as encouraging teachers to undertake Best Practice research scholarships. The college has won Artsmark Gold award, and, just before the inspection, was invited to be an Ambassador school for the Academy for Gifted and Talented children.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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33715	John Hertrich AI	Team inspector	
33734	Vivien Bailey HMI	Team inspector	English
33716	Brian Cartwright HMI	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
33717	Scott Harrison HMI	Team inspector	History, citizenship
33718	Jim Bennetts HMI	Team inspector	Design and technology
22546	John Parsons HMI	Team inspector	Physical education
8756	Pat Hanage AI	Team inspector	Mathematics
23246	John Mitchell AI	Team inspector	Science
31688	Brian McGonagle AI	Team inspector	Art and design
24887	Yvonne Salmons AI	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, English as an additional language
23308	John Morrell AI	Team inspector	Music
4372	Ralph Fordham AI	Team inspector	Religious education
4417	Peter Stevens AI	Team inspector	Special educational needs
31218	Thomas Allen AI	Team inspector	Geography

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were joined on this inspection by Additional Inspectors (AI) appointed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>32</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The college is outstandingly effective.** Students achieve very well and attain results well above average. The college's involvement in educational initiatives, including its Sports College status, is directly to the benefit of its own students as well as those in other schools. The college achieves excellent value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good teaching and curriculum provision enables boys and girls to learn and achieve very well.
- Students are very well cared for, and the support and guidance they receive is excellent.
- The principal's leadership is outstanding, and the contribution of other senior staff and the governing body to leadership and management is very good.
- Some aspects of provision in design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education, whilst good, do not match the very high quality of other subjects, and provision for National Curriculum citizenship is unsatisfactory.

Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	A	A	A	A*

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9. A\* indicates results in the top 5% of these schools*

**Achievement is very good.** Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. At age 14, standards are very high in English, well above average in mathematics, science, geography, history and music and above average in other subjects. At age 16, standards are well above average in most subjects and again very high in English, whilst above average in design technology, information and communication technology and physical education. GCSE results in 2003 are very high, and in the top 5% of similar schools.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent.** Students' attitudes are very good throughout the school. Behaviour and attendance are very good.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education, including teaching and learning, is very good.**

Innovative and experimental teaching are the norm. This makes for exciting learning. Students make rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in response to teachers' very high expectations. Students swiftly learn to think and work independently, and develop powers of reasoning and evaluation. Teachers' detailed knowledge of how students are progressing and what they need in order to move on enables them to plan very effectively. Learning support assistants are very effective.

The curriculum is very good. The opportunities for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, are outstanding. The college provides excellent support, advice and guidance, and takes very good care

of students' welfare, health and safety. The college has developed excellent relationships with parents, other schools and the wider community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the college are very good.** The principal's outstanding leadership has made the college a lively and successful learning community involved in many educational initiatives. The college is managed very well. The governing body is very effective in carrying out its responsibilities. The college does not, however, comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very satisfied with the college. They are particularly pleased with their children's progress, the quality of teaching, and the way the college helps children to settle in well and encourages them to become mature. Students are equally satisfied: 99% of them say it is a good school. Students like the way they are taught and assessed, and appreciate their teachers' high expectations. A few have some concerns about behaviour and homework, but during the inspection behaviour was very good and homework was found to be effective. A significant proportion of students (one fifth) feel that they are not always treated fairly, but inspectors found no evidence to substantiate this.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- improve provision for National Curriculum citizenship by providing more time, and planning more coherently for the three strands of the programme of study
- review curriculum arrangements for information and communication technology in Year 8, so that students' very good progress in Year 7 is sustained and further improved
- raise expectations further in some areas of design and technology and physical education

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average nationally and when compared to similar schools.
- Results have improved faster than in other schools at 16.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), achieve very well in relation to their capability.

#### Commentary

1. Students' work seen during the inspection was generally well above average. Standards in English are particularly high throughout the college. By age 14, standards are above average in art, design and technology (DT), information and communication technology (ICT), French, German, religious education (RE) and physical education (PE), and well above average in the other subjects. By age 16, standards are similar, but students do even better in art, French, German and RE, where standards are well above average.
2. When they enter the college, the attainment of students is above average. They achieve very well in their first three years, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics and science, but also in art, French, German, history, and music. In the next two years to GCSE examinations, achievement continues to be very good in these subjects, and is also very good in geography and RE. Achievement in English is excellent throughout.
3. Results in 2003 national tests and examinations at ages 14 and 16 are well above both the national average and the average in similar schools. Over the last four years GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than has been the case nationally. Students' achievement throughout the college is very good. Boys and girls achieve very well. In 2003, boys' results are much the same as girls' at both age 14 and 16. This is in contrast to the national picture of girls outperforming boys, and is the result of deliberate strategies to improve boys' achievement, and the very encouraging ethos which expects every student to do his or her best. The very small proportion of students from minority backgrounds performs much the same as others.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.5 (39.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	41.2 (41.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	38.6 (39.0)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 228 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*



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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	85.0 (77.0)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99.0 (96.6)	90.5 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.0 (98.5)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	46.7 (44.6)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 236 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Students with SEN, irrespective of the nature or severity of their needs, make very good progress and achieve very well. This is evident in most subjects across the curriculum. The progress made is excellent in French, where pupils achieve national average standards by the end of Year 9, and in science in Years 10 and 11, where for a number of years no student has achieved less than an F grade at GCSE.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes are very good throughout the college. They enjoy school and have a very positive attitude to learning. Overall, behaviour is very good, and in Years 10 and 11 it is excellent. Attendance is very good. Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is excellent.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships are excellent and create an environment in which students become self-assured and confident, and are encouraged to do their best.
- Students have excellent opportunities to reflect on serious issues and to share their thoughts with others.
- Staff and students work very well together to ensure that the high expectations for conduct are met.

**Commentary**

- The college expects and promotes a genuine desire to learn through its strong ethos and very high expectations. Students rise to the challenge with enthusiasm. They work well with staff and their fellow students, consulting and collaborating to further their knowledge and understanding. Students really enjoy school and many take part in the very wide range of extra activities. Students consider the college to be good and well run. Their very positive attitudes are a key factor in the standards they achieve.
- Attendance is very good, though not as high as at the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised and unexplained absences are well below the national average. Students arrive punctually unless school buses are late.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.1

National data	7.2
---------------	-----

National data	1.1
---------------	-----

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

7. Behaviour is very good, resulting in a very good atmosphere in which to learn. Last year there were no permanent exclusions. A clear code of conduct provides appropriate parameters for good discipline, and students accept and appreciate the way in which the code is fairly and rigorously enforced. Some minor incidents of bullying occur, though none was observed during the inspection, and students have confidence in how the college deals with this. Students are friendly and helpful to visitors, and are courteous to each other and to staff.

#### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

#### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	999	60	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	60	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	15	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	38	0	0

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

8. Students are provided with very good opportunities to take responsibility particularly through the extensive prefect system in Year 11 and through the 'buddying' system for new students. Younger students can represent their tutor group and year on the students' council. The extensive drama, music and sports activities provide opportunities to develop organisational and leadership skills. Students regularly participate in assemblies and take responsibility for fund-raising and charitable activities. By the time they leave the college the majority are self-assured and able to proceed into further education or work with confidence.
9. Although the college does not provide a daily act of collective worship, religious education provides excellently for students' spiritual development and opportunities are given in other subjects, especially in art and music. Students have a clear understanding of different faiths and traditions, and a deep respect for the beliefs of others. The strong moral climate encourages students to distinguish right from wrong. They are encouraged to be trustworthy,

co-operative and self disciplined. The social and cultural development of students is enhanced by numerous trips and initiatives. The college's links with its partner school in South Africa enable students' to reflect on the impact of poverty and to take action by, for example, providing books.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is very good. The curriculum, the support and guidance for students, and partnerships with parents, other schools and the community, are excellent.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is very good and students learn very well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very high expectations to which students respond with alacrity.
- Many subjects generate exciting learning through innovative developments in teaching.
- Very good assessment procedures give teachers the detailed knowledge of individual students which enables them to plan very effectively for all to achieve well.
- Students rapidly learn to persevere, to reason and to work independently.
- Very high quality relationships promote students' learning and achievement.
- There are a few instances where teachers do not expect high enough standards, in subjects such as DT in Year 7 and PE.

### **Commentary**

10. This is a school in which the majority of teachers are actively involved in developing their work, some by undertaking research, some by leading innovation, often in their capacity as Advanced Skills Teachers (AST), and some by contributing to departmental developments sparked by the first two activities. The college's work as a Training school is another factor in this. So teaching is characterised by a high degree of emphasis on those aspects of teaching which are effective in developing students' learning and achievement, but also by a culture and atmosphere where innovation and experiment are the norm. This makes for exciting learning. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects, whether this be skills in speaking modern foreign languages or in teaching students to understand the concept of proof in geometry.
11. Relationships between teachers and students, and among students themselves, are very good, as all work very willingly together towards the common goal. Students are eager to learn, prepared to work hard, and enjoy the stimulating activities often provided. Teachers have very high expectations and, in response, students make rapid gains in knowledge and skills. They also swiftly learn to think and work independently, and develop powers of reasoning and evaluation, so that they make equally rapid gains in understanding.
12. Assessment within subjects is very good overall. It is outstanding in French, German, geography, and ICT, and very good in most other subjects, including the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers know in detail how students are progressing and what they need in order to move on. This enables them to plan very carefully for the varying needs within the group, and the school's target setting is very effective in promoting progress for all students, including those with SEN. The latter are also well served by the very high quality of support they receive from learning support assistants, who are well prepared through discussion with teachers and who maintain detailed records.
13. Most teachers use marking very constructively to inform students of the standard of their work and also give guidance on what they need to do to improve. Many departments involve

students effectively by inviting comments on marking, or by making students aware of the criteria against which their work is measured.

14. Homework is often another key element in students' success, particularly when the same high level of challenge is extended to the tasks set, as is evident in the most successful lessons.
15. In the very small minority of lessons where teaching does not match the high standards set elsewhere, this is because of low expectations of what students should achieve.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 116 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
28 (24%)	44 (38%)	34 (29%)	7 (6%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

### **The curriculum**

The overall quality of the curriculum is very good. The opportunities for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, are outstanding. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are very good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is very broad and provides a very good range of opportunities for all students, including those with SEN.
- Sports College status has inspired subjects to develop work linked to PE.
- The school is innovative and flexible in meeting the needs, abilities and aspirations of students.
- There is an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- There are areas for development in the curriculum in National Curriculum citizenship, DT, ICT and PE.
- Accommodation and resources are very good, and staffing is excellent.
- The ratio of computers to pupils is significantly below the national average.

### **Commentary**

16. The design of the curriculum maximises opportunities for students of all levels of ability, and enables special arrangements to meet the needs of individuals or groups. Statutory requirements are met, with the exception that the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. The college has reviewed the curriculum for older students to improve its flexibility and relevance to the educational and career choices of pupils. There is good provision of work-related learning, and effective preparation for progression to the next stage of learning at both age 14 and 16. There are some areas for development in the curriculum. The time for citizenship is limited. There are some citizenship activities during the five Personal Development days, and the rich nature of the college's curriculum means that some aspects are taught in other subjects, but this does not provide for all elements of the National Curriculum to be taught in sufficient depth. Cross-curricular arrangements for ICT in Year 8 are not effective, and in DT in Year 7, some projects are too easy and mundane. In PE, some tasks in GCSE work are undemanding.
17. The curriculum is enriched to an outstanding degree. There is a wide and varied programme of opportunities provided in relation to curriculum subjects, and as after-school and lunchtime

activities, as well as special extension days, summer activities, trips and visits. Good use is made of visiting specialists. There is very good participation in sports and arts activities.

18. In fulfilling its specialist school aims, the college has started to influence learning in other subjects, developing work related to PE. For example, in RE very good materials have been developed which examine the consequences of racism in sport, and the moral and ethical implications of sponsorship and civil disobedience. A programme for students with SEN, prompted by suggestions from a learning support assistant, has been extended beyond the college to also provide primary school pupils with a beneficial experience. The 'Champions League' initiative has done much to encourage boys to achieve well.
19. Provision for pupils with SEN is excellent. It permeates the college's organisational and curricular structures and practice, and there are many outstanding features. There is excellent provision in geography, French and German. In addition, there is the very high quality of support provided by learning support staff and the range of additional initiatives introduced by the Centre, (the college's SEN department), which include the 'breakfast literacy' and 'breakfast numeracy' sessions, the 'progress units' and the sports skills programme.
20. Accommodation and resources are very good, and support high quality learning. Improvements in accommodation since the last inspection include a new teaching block and an arts and sports complex with a performance hall, which have helped the college to develop its curriculum. The library has been extended and the bookstock increased. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. Learning resources are of high quality. There have been improvements in the provision of ICT, such as the whole-school intranet. However, the ratio of computers to pupils is significantly below the national average.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The college provides excellent support, advice and guidance for students. It takes very good care of students' welfare, health and safety, and ensures that students are involved in its work and development.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students receive outstanding advice and guidance at all stages of their time in the college.
- There are excellent arrangements for the induction of students into Year 7, the selection of options in Year 9, and transition to further education.
- The college's support services, including provision for students with SEN, are excellent.
- Students are given many opportunities to become involved in the work and development of the college.

## **Commentary**

21. The college has good procedures for dealing with child protection issues. There are comprehensive health and safety policies and Internet service provision is safe and secure.
22. The college's extensive pastoral and guidance systems are extremely effective. Tutors and teachers know students well and monitor their progress thoroughly through a wide range of information. In Years 8 to 11, there are valuable one-to-one and group interviews to review progress, praise success and set demanding targets. The quality of care and support provided by the Centre, and the access it provides to specialist counselling and other sources of support are outstanding. Students' achievements are enhanced by the work of learning support assistants, mentors and Year 11 volunteers working with younger students. The college consults students through regular surveys, and through the college council.

23. The college collects extensive assessment data on all its students, including results in national tests and examinations. It uses these very well to set targets, to track progress and to report on students' performance.
24. Induction arrangements are exceptionally thorough and are appreciated by parents and students alike. All new entrants are visited in their primary schools by college staff. A series of subject, sports and other events in the summer term allows students to become familiar with the college and its ethos, as well as their future companions, and ensures that college staff begin to get to know their new students.
25. There is an innovative approach to careers education and guidance, and to personal, social and health education, involving planned personal development days at intervals during the year. Students receive objective individual guidance which meets their educational, vocational and other needs.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The college has developed excellent relationships with parents, other schools and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The information provided by the college is of high quality.
- Provision for the college's local community is excellent.
- The college uses its participation in educational initiatives as a means to improve provision for its own students, and for pupils in other schools.
- Sports College status has substantially expanded and improved local activity in sport.

### **Commentary**

26. The college produces a range of clear written communications in various forms that significantly contribute to the excellent link it has with parents and carers. The annual report is clear and detailed. Information is communicated periodically by colourful newsletters. The use of students' diaries helps to keep parents very well informed as to progress, as do the regular reports. The vast majority of parents are rightly impressed with the arrangements for keeping them informed about their children's progress. Similarly they say they are comfortable about approaching the college and are happy that the college does seek their views.
27. Meetings are held for parents annually to discuss their child's progress. In addition, in each year group parents are invited to liaison group meetings, and these are well attended. Parents can meet subject teachers and the college sets a specific topic for each meeting, ensuring that appropriate information is provided to parents at the right time.
28. The college successfully realises Henry Morris's vision of providing opportunities for 'life long learning within the community'. This includes parent education, family learning, health care, adult education, and work with neighbourhood schools and colleges, as well as an impressive range of extra-curricular provision for young people.
29. Community education is outstanding. In addition to the thirty clubs and societies affiliated to the college, a wide range of activities is available for both young people and adults. High quality provision is made for all age groups and covers many areas of interest. Between July and December 2003, there were approximately 23,000 enrolments for the various activities on offer.
30. The after-school activities organised for students by the college are numerous and very well supported. The Artsmark Gold award has created links with a variety of agencies including individual artists, designers and craftspeople. As a result, students have opportunities to

watch and work with artists, including Cambridge Choral Society, an African Dance Group, and the London Community Gospel Choir. A mixed programme of arts and sports is offered in school holidays.

31. Sports College status has driven substantial expansion of activity in sport. A strong relationship exists with local sports clubs, some of whom use the facilities on the college campus. Regular dialogue between the clubs and the college ensures that students progress smoothly from college to adult participation.
32. Adult clubs and activities are also varied and reflect interest and demand. Each term, nearly 900 people are involved in one or more of these activities. Irrespective of the activity and the reason for attendance, a friendliness, warmth and sense of enjoyment is always evident. Participants are appreciative of the fact that so much is available within their local community.
33. A strong and successful focus within the provision is that of encouraging social inclusion, for example through initiatives like the 'Personal Challenge' project and 'Family Learning'. The Open Doors Mental Health Project has been established with the rural mental health psychiatric team. A GP referral system for fitness activities has also been set up. A small ICT group for low income, isolated single parents was set up with a local health visitor.
34. The organisation, co-ordination and management of this aspect of the college's work are outstanding. A detailed and comprehensive development plan covers all aspects of its work. Progress is monitored and reviewed at least annually.
35. The same high quality of management is evident in all activities. Numerous staff take part with enthusiasm and commitment, whether extending the 'Special Needs Sports Programme' into the primary school or demonstrating global citizenship through links with the college's partner school in South Africa.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the college overall are very good. The leadership of the principal is outstanding, and that of other key staff is very good. Management is very effective. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, but overall governance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the principal is outstanding, with a sharp focus on improving achievement for all students.
- There is very good leadership and management by other key staff
- Strong emphasis on improving teaching and learning results in a lively and innovative ethos where students attain high standards and achieve very well.
- The governors know the college's strengths and work very well with staff to identify areas for improvement.
- There are very good systems for reviewing and evaluating the college's work, but there are some inconsistencies in the way these systems are implemented.
- Sports College status and participation in a large number of educational initiatives brings very considerable benefit to the college and to its partner schools.

### **Commentary**

36. The principal provides a clear vision for the college as a lively and successful learning community and has demonstrated a strong drive to put strategies into place to achieve this. The college has a clear philosophy of maintaining the motivation and expertise of its staff through participation in research, innovation and collaboration with partner schools. This has the excellent effect of raising the quality of education provided for the college's students and for those in partner schools, and of retaining high quality staff at the college.
37. Senior staff successfully manage substantial aspects of the college's work efficiently, including responsibility for several initiatives. The effectiveness of management is shown by the way in which many programmes are integrated. This makes very good use of time and resources, and widens teachers' expertise. An example of this is the connection between the programme of induction for different groups of staff and parts of the programme for trainee teachers. The college's improvement plan is clear and well structured, and makes sure that the various initiatives come together to support learning and improve standards.
38. Management of departments and of guidance and care are also very good, with outstanding leadership in some areas, including English, mathematics, science, MFL, music and RE. Leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory because it is not clear where responsibility lies. Arrangements for the management and coordination of SEN are very good. Through sensitive, strong and focused leadership, the coordinator has been instrumental in further developing the already high quality of provision.
39. The governing body is active and very effective in carrying out its responsibilities, working well through a number of committees. Governors are well informed about college developments, and share the common goal. The chair of governors, in particular, takes an active part in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. Governors work closely with senior staff to identify areas for improvement, taking a wide variety of views into account in doing so. The college does not, however, provide a daily act of collective worship.
40. There are very good systems for evaluating the college's work. An annual cycle of review, together with information from parental and student questionnaires, provides the basis for the next round for improvement planning. In many areas of the college's work this review and evaluation is carried out and analysed very effectively. However, in a few areas, procedures do not ensure a rigorous evaluation takes place.
41. The Networked Learning Community is the latest phase of a systematic programme of educational research, working closely with Cambridge University. It has led to the publication of research in educational journals, and the college possesses a rich reserve of expertise, enthusiasm and understanding of educational matters. This is a factor in the high quality of teaching in the college and students' high achievement. This initiative funds the wider co-operative work of the college with other schools, and the spread of good practice nationally through seminars and lectures given by college staff. Leading Edge School status is used very effectively to support a local secondary school in special measures, and for the overall co-ordination of advanced skills teachers (AST) within the local education authority.
42. One of the most important, and innovative, influences on the quality of teaching and learning is the college's team of ASTs, part of its strategy to develop mutually beneficial links with partner primary and secondary schools. This team works successfully within their own departments, at whole college level, and with other schools. The outcomes of research and the continuing debate as to what works and what could be improved are key factors in generating the college's innovative, lively approach to teaching and learning and students' high achievement.
43. The work of these teachers in partner schools covers a broad range of activities. In primary schools they provide subject expertise to boost existing provision; or, as in modern foreign languages, provide something extra. The schools involved confirm the benefit of the relationships, not least in terms of their teachers' gains in skills and confidence. Some of the



work ensures a very smooth transition from primary to secondary school. Another significant benefit is the collaboration with a local secondary school, where a carefully judged and sensitive approach has enabled its teachers to accept, and now to welcome, support in several key areas.

44. The college's work as a Training school complements this wide range of activities influencing teaching and learning very well.
45. Sports College status has enabled significant expansion and linking of curriculum and community provision, including work with all eight primary schools whose pupils enter the college in Year 7. This provision is another example of the work of an AST, who works as the liaison teacher and has built very good relationships. Her valuable work has improved the expertise and confidence of primary teachers, and has established a system of recording pupils' attainment in PE at age 11.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,799,390
Total expenditure	3,805,734
Expenditure per pupil	3,469

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	155,058.00
Balance carried forward to the next	148,775

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **excellent**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in GCSE examinations are outstanding.
- Boys' attainment at age 16 is very high in comparison with boys nationally, and they achieve outstandingly well.
- The work of the most able students of all ages is of excellent quality.
- Excellent curriculum design, innovative assignments, and high expectations enable students of all ability levels to achieve very well.
- Leadership is outstanding and management is very good.

#### **Commentary**

46. Standards in English at age 14 and 16 are very high. The proportions of students who gain grades A\*-C in GCSE English and English literature are outstanding. The results in English literature in 2003 are particularly creditable. The English team have successfully met their objective of improving boys' achievement: the performance of boys in these subjects is outstanding compared to boys' results nationally. Girls' results are also well above average. The department has identified the need to improve the proportion of boys achieving grades A\* and A, which is lower than that of girls. Students' written work demonstrates outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. The standard of written work of the most able students is excellent. One example is a novel in six chapters written by a Year 9 student, set in World War 1. This includes powerfully imagined, original scenes of trench warfare, supplemented with illustrations and examples of poems by well-known writers.
47. The very high standards of students' work are attributable to consistently very good teaching. Teachers expect good behaviour from students in lessons, which effectively supports learning. The design and planning of the curriculum are of high quality and pay careful attention to the development of skills and knowledge through a wide range of innovative assignments. Students are highly motivated through activities which are both creative and fun. In Year 7, students use computers to devise 'cyber novels' where the reader makes plot choices through 'hyperlinks'. In Year 8, students work with great inventiveness and enthusiasm on a 'genre relay', again in pairs. Chapters of original stories are written in the styles of different genres such as horror, fairytales and romance. These activities illustrate the high expectations placed on students from Year 7 onwards. In Year 9, English is taught in single sex groups and this is having a beneficial effect on achievement. Innovative and effective approaches to teaching boys make them less self-conscious and more willing to participate.
48. The leadership of the department is outstanding. Management is very effective, with good and developing systems for quality assurance, for monitoring progress and for setting targets for students. The department is an enthusiastic and reflective team, with a strong interest in developing and sharing good practice. Several members of staff are involved in action research projects which directly benefit the students, including work on the modelling of writing using ICT. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. There is very good development of literacy across the curriculum. English provides outstanding opportunities for developing writing skills across a range of contexts, and writing is also developed well in many other subjects. Research assignments, extended and independent writing feature in subjects such as history, music, geography and MFL. An outstanding example in geography is a letter written by a student in the character of a member of the Masai tribe in Kenya, explaining the detrimental effects of tourism on the landscape. In some tasks in DT and PE not enough is demanded of students to improve their literacy.

## Modern foreign languages

Provision in French and German is **excellent**.

French is the main language taught, and from Year 8 the higher attaining half of the students also study German. Students can continue with either or both languages in Years 10 and 11. Both French and German were inspected.

### French

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Very effective teaching, including exemplary use of ICT and expert use of the foreign language, enables students to achieve very well.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning.
- The achievement of students with SEN is excellent in Years 7 to 9.

#### Commentary

50. GCSE results in 2003 are well above average, with a high proportion of A\* and A grades. Improvement over the last few years has been very good.
51. By age 14, standards are above national expectations and students' achievement is very good overall. In French, middle and lower attaining students achieve very well. Able students make good progress to well above average standards. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above average, and all students achieve at least very well. The standards and achievement of able, and gifted and talented students are excellent in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of students with SEN is very good overall and is excellent in Years 7 to 9. This is because teachers provide fully for their learning needs, with very clear resources, frequent revision and constant encouragement. This represents excellent improvement in the provision for students with SEN since the last report.
52. Teaching and learning are very good overall, with many excellent features. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers plan very well-structured lessons and challenge students with very high expectations. Teachers' consistent and fluent use of French in lessons enables students to develop authentic pronunciation and language patterns. As a result, students make very good progress in speaking and listening in the first three years, and excellent progress in Years 10 and 11. Students speak confidently with good accents in role plays and in unprepared conversations with the capable language assistants. Students can understand extracts containing unfamiliar language because they are confident in deducing meaning. In writing, all students make excellent progress; they can use French to express themselves, often without revision or prompt sheets. This is because innovative teaching methods, for example using music, rhythm and mime, ensure that students absorb and readily recall new language and re-use what they have learned.

Students also develop writing well thanks to teachers' outstanding use of ICT. Excellent assessment also contributes to students' success; teachers' thorough testing, marking, and constructive comments give each student exact information on how to improve. Students have excellent attitudes to learning, and their behaviour is very good.

53. Leadership and management are excellent. The departmental head is an exemplary role model for the expert, committed team. Excellent departmental planning shows clear vision, high aspirations, and effective use of assessment data. Since the last inspection there has been excellent improvement.

## **German**

54. The strengths identified in French are the same in German. GCSE results in 2003 are well above average, with a high proportion of A\* and A grades. In contrast to the national trend, boys achieved better than girls in German. By age 14, standards are above national expectations and students' achievement is very good overall. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above average, and all students achieve at least very well. The standards and achievement of more able, and gifted and talented students are excellent in Years 10 and 11.
55. This is achieved by the same very good teaching and learning, and excellent assessment, use of ICT, and leadership and management. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **outstanding**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Outstanding and innovative leadership has a strong impact on the ethos and direction of the subject.
- Students reach well above average standards, which are also very good in comparison with similar schools.
- Students' hard work and very good behaviour are key factors in their very good learning.
- Teaching is very good because it is carefully matched to students' needs.

### **Commentary**

56. Standards in mathematics are well above average. Results in national tests and GCSE examinations in 2003 support this judgement. Students achieve very well and develop considerable expertise and confidence in the subject thanks to a strong emphasis on getting students to reason, to discuss problems and justify their methods of working. There is some fluctuation in attainment by boys and girls in different years in test and examination results. However there is no overall significant difference in attainment or achievement in these results or in work seen in class.
57. Overall, teaching and learning are very good, with several examples of excellent teaching and learning. Teachers adapt their teaching methods to enable all students to learn very effectively. For example, in a Year 11 higher attaining group, students tackled problems about the nature of proof. They had to decide whether a given example was a demonstration or a proof of a geometry theorem, and explain why. Initially many found this difficult, but persistence and hard work resulted in significant advances in learning. In a lower attaining group in Year 8, students used diagrams and cards to find a series of equivalent fractions. This visual approach helped them to understand the principles more easily and to remember them. Additional support in some classes, matched to students' special needs, is also a factor in these students' very good achievement. ICT is also used very well to illustrate

mathematical ideas, for example at the end of a lesson to draw together students' learning of circle theorems.

58. The head of department and an AST provide outstanding leadership and management to an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of teachers. There is a relentless emphasis on improving teaching and learning, which is demonstrated in a strong desire to innovate and use imaginative approaches to teaching. For example, two Year 7 classes were taught together in a lesson to develop problem-solving and communication skills. Other teachers observed this, with a view to adapting methods and materials for their own classes. Further discussion as to how to improve learning followed at a departmental meeting. This cycle of development is at the heart of the high quality teaching and learning seen in mathematics. Students respond very well to this; their behaviour is very good and they work very hard. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

59. Students receive a very good grounding in mathematics and are able to apply these skills to their work in other subjects. For example, students in geography can use contour lines to interpret landscape and can interpret rainfall and temperature statistics. In science, students use and improve their skills in making and recording observations, graphical analysis and number work.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All students achieve very well in all aspects of science.
- The outstanding leadership of the head of department successfully drives forward improvement.
- A rich curriculum, high expectations and very good teaching enable students to do very well.
- Students contribute much to their own learning by their very positive attitudes to study.

### **Commentary**

60. Standards in science are well above average and students' achievement is very good. This is confirmed by the results in national tests at age 14 and in GCSE examinations. All students show rapid gains from the age of 11 in practical skills and in planning their own experiments.
61. By the age of 14, the highest attaining pupils show exceptional understanding. Students with lower attainment, who find concepts difficult, can, nevertheless, collect reliable sets of data and draw simple conclusions from their results. All students achieve very well between the ages of 11 and 14. The gains in knowledge and understanding of science, as well as in experimental and investigative skills, result from very good teaching, students' extremely positive attitudes to study and very good tracking of their progress.
62. All students continue to achieve very well during Years 10 and 11. Some very high attaining students show levels of understanding worthy of sixth formers. Lower attaining students, particularly those with SEN, achieve very well because of the very strong support they receive from teachers and classroom assistants, who carefully target the work so that students learn at an appropriate pace. By the time students are approaching the end of their time in school, they are being prepared not only to do well in examinations but also to be able to join in important debates relevant to the development of science in society.

63. Teaching is very good. Teachers and students work in a partnership in which both expect much of each other and to which both contribute strongly. Teachers thoroughly plan activities to provide a rich range of challenging opportunities allowing students to be largely responsible for their own learning. In a Year 11 lesson on nitrate pollution in the Norfolk Broads, students made astonishing progress because of the sheer variety of group tasks. Equally, a small group of very low attaining pupils in Year 8 showed excellent achievement because their learning of the structure and function of the skeleton was broken down into small, but very well structured and manageable amounts. The secure feeling of mutual trust allows even the least confident to contribute without fear of failure.
64. The outstanding leadership and management of the head of science leads to students' very good achievement. He secures the highest levels of commitment from a very strong team of teachers and support staff. The department's powerful vision is to raise achievement and to develop students as young scientists with a keen awareness of their place in the modern world through the provision of a rich curriculum both within and beyond the school day. Research and work with other schools being undertaken by some teachers is having a significant impact on developing the work of the department. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Expert, dynamic teaching ensures very good learning in specialist ICT lessons.
- Very good management of ICT resources lifts achievement throughout the college.
- The pattern of provision in Years 7 to 9 hampers progress in ICT.

### **Commentary**

65. Standards in ICT are above average and students achieve well. In Year 7, standards are well above average and students achieve very well. This reflects the very good weekly specialist ICT teaching and very good co-ordinated contributions from other subjects. In Year 8, however, there is no specialist ICT provision, and there is little evidence of consistent cross-curriculum ICT in Year 8. As a result, the momentum established in Year 7 stops. In Year 9, fortnightly ICT lessons re-establish learning, with an emphasis on broadening students' experiences. Thanks to very good, and often excellent teaching in Year 9, students attain above average standards at age 14. Achievement across the key stage is good.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

#### **Zero to Web page in 50 minutes**

In an exceptionally motivating session, 25 Year 9 students mastered web page design at their first attempt. Very rapidly the teacher coached his students through stages of HTML, URLs, hot links, references, text, images and formatting, combining brilliant interactive whiteboard illustration with short, sharp 'hands-on' sessions for the students. No one was allowed to dawdle. No student could opt out. The teacher was everywhere, swift to respond to questions, instantly offering advice, consistently acknowledging progress. The cracking pace saw students switching every few minutes between listening, trying out, learning by refinement, then showing their results. It was mesmerising. It worked so well primarily through the excellent planning and teaching skills of the AST:

- his superb subject knowledge
- the integration of a wide range of technology
- a classroom culture of trial and error that supported every student yet insisted on full concentration and effort.

The students left the lesson genuinely thrilled at their achievement

66. The majority of students in Year 10 and Year 11 follow similar Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) qualification programmes in one lesson per fortnight. They reach average standards in relation to National Curriculum programmes of study, and achieve well in relation to their previous ICT experiences, which for Year 11 meant little previously taught ICT. About one in five students in both years have completed the foundation level, and have begun the intermediate CLAIT PLUS; all current Year 10 students are on track to achieve this higher standard by 2005. Achievement in the core ICT course is satisfactory. In both GNVQ ICT, and applied GCSE ICT, standards are well above average and achievement is very good, with students likely to exceed predicted grades. Overall, achievement is good in these two years.
67. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is characterised by high subject expertise, very high expectations, and a friendly and supportive classroom culture that promotes experiment and trialling. Planning for the needs of individual students is excellent. Learning is characterised by very good attitudes, good collaboration, and very good motivation to master new skills. Assessment is exceptionally thorough. Students contribute regular self-assessments each term, which teachers combine with unit tests scores to give a very detailed profile of the strengths and weaknesses of each student. The use of this data to direct further learning is a key strength of the teaching.
68. Overall, leadership of ICT is good. The college's decisions about provision in Year 8, and about a syllabus in core Key Stage 4 that is restricted to foundation level, are a barrier to progress for some students, but good plans for a radical improvement of core provision at Key Stage 4 suggest that the College is responding to these issues. ICT standards overall have improved in line with national expectations since the previous inspection, and staff use of ICT is significantly better. Overall improvement is therefore good.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

69. The provision of ICT across the curriculum is very well managed and documented by the ICT co-ordinator. Departments provide opportunities that should ensure statutory requirements are fully met, if all students participated as planned. There is some evidence of very good learning of ICT as a result. For example, Year 7 students used animation in some excellent PowerPoint work in mathematics to show how to use a slide rule. However, despite the College's corporate commitment to giving students their ICT capability entitlement, the intended opportunities are not consistently provided for students in Year 8.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well and the work of some students is outstanding.
- Teaching is very good: it is lively and well planned and sets high expectations.
- The quality and use of assessment are excellent.
- Students have too few opportunities to use ICT.

#### **Commentary**

70. Standards in history are very high. Students make rapid progress in history and achievement is very good. The results in last year's GCSE examinations are outstanding, with nearly 92% of students gaining grade C or better. Nearly 55% gained grade A or A\*. Boys do especially

well. Pupils use historical sources well, and are able to establish the contexts in which they were written, the purpose of the author, and their reliability. They have a firm understanding of the importance of historical interpretations. Students write well both in short answers and in extensive detail. Good examples are Year 7 work on the Roman Empire, Year 9 work on appeasement, and Year 11 GCSE coursework on the First World War. In discussion students communicate their ideas effectively. Lower attaining students also achieve well, particularly in improving their literacy.

71. These high standards are the product of sustained high quality teaching to which students respond with significant effort and enthusiasm in lessons and in homework. Teaching is well planned, lively and interesting, with very high expectations. A particularly strong feature is the use of enquiry questions and hypotheses to lead students' learning. These help build students' knowledge and understanding in stages. In the few instances where the teaching was less than very good, this was because questions were often answered by the same few students, or because students were given source materials to interpret but without sufficient factual context. In the latter case, the straightforward telling of a good story might have prepared more effectively for such work. There are too few chances to use ICT.
72. Very good use is made of assessment to raise standards. Marking is thorough, positive and reflects teachers' high expectations. Teachers use the information they gain about students' needs to set realistic targets and to help them plan work which is suitable for different groups of students. In the GCSE course, the use of assessment-related activities to address the requirements of the examination is painstaking, comprehensive and challenging.
73. The department is very well led and managed, and improvement since the last inspection is good.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in the first three years and very well in the GCSE course.
- Teaching is very good and assessment procedures are excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Strong external links support innovations.

### Commentary

74. Standards are well above average. Students achieve well, and those following the GCSE course in years 10 and 11 achieve very well. Results in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are well above national averages. There is no significant difference between boys and girls overall, but girls achieved better at the higher levels. In 2003 GCSE examinations the percentage of students achieving A\* to C grades is well above the national average. Boys and girls achieved more or less equally overall, as well as at the higher grades A\* to B. Results have improved over the past three years.
75. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above average. A very good grounding in mapwork and numeracy skills enables students to carry out investigations, gather statistics and present their findings in graphical form. Knowledge and understanding of settlement are made relevant through analysis of the local environment. Moral and cultural issues are examined in the study of exploitation of the rainforest of Brazil and the effects of tourism on the changing way of life of the Masai people in Kenya. The geography of football captivates students' interest in sport, in line with the college's status as a Sports College. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Students begin to understand the management of the urban



environment through the creation of shopping precincts, the renewal of brownfield sites, the urbanisation of the countryside and commuter villages. They learn about coastal management as control of the physical environment, and, using cost benefit analysis, become aware of the relevance of geography to real life situations.

76. Students benefit from very good teaching overall, with instances of excellent teaching. As a result, very good learning takes place. The very good work ethos of the students and the very good support they receive result in students achieving very well. High expectations ensure that they reach their potential. The use of a wide range of approaches enables students to acquire knowledge and understanding in many different ways. The provision for students with SEN is excellent and enables them to make very good progress. The teachers' very good geographical knowledge is used effectively to challenge and direct learning. ICT is used effectively to enable students to access and process geographical information.
77. The head of department leads and manages his team very effectively. There is a clear vision for development with high expectations for attainment and a willingness to encourage innovations. The staff make significant contributions to the very good management of the department: a united team shares ideas and is committed to achieving high standards. Assessment procedures are excellent and used effectively to set targets for all students. Links with Homerton College help teachers to keep abreast of research and development in teaching and learning. However, fieldwork opportunities for Years 7, 8 and 9 are limited in scope.
78. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. The use of ICT is now strong and the allocation of time for Year 8 meets requirements. Schemes of work have been revamped and Year 11 case study guidelines have been completely revised effectively.

## Religious education

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are very high
- Teaching is excellent and makes an outstanding contribution to students' achievement.
- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and this ensures that students are provided with a very rich curriculum.
- The monitoring of teachers' and students' work is very well developed.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

### Commentary

79. Standards are above average by age 14, and well above average by 16. Standards at age 14 are above average in relation to the Cambridgeshire agreed syllabus. Students achieve well in developing knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. For example, in one lesson students demonstrated a clear understanding of liturgical and non-liturgical celebration. They are able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work enable students to improve their speaking and listening skills.
80. Standards by age 16 are well above average in the core RE programme, and very high in the GCSE course. Students achieve very well in extending their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. Their skills of investigation and interpretation are very well developed. The teachers' outstanding knowledge of the subject enables students to make very good progress in the GCSE course. Students' spiritual and

moral awareness is extremely strong. They demonstrate a deep respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other.

81. Teachers' excellent use of discussion and questioning enables students to express their opinions and form clear judgments about religious and moral issues. Homework is well used to encourage students to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have high expectations of students and challenge them to succeed, and this is very effective in contributing to good achievement. The assessment procedures provide a clear basis for gauging what students know and understand, and detailed comments in students' books set out what they need to do to improve.
82. Curriculum leadership is outstanding: it is innovative, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been very successful in developing a strong team approach, and is very well supported by two other teachers, both of whom are specialists. The monitoring of the work of teachers and students is very well developed. The subject is managed in an excellent way and this is reflected in the quality of religious education provided for the students. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and is often very good in Years 9 to 11 where teachers give students scope to use initiative.
- Achievement is generally good, but in Years 7 and 8 achievement is better in practical work than in written work.
- The department has excellent accommodation and very good resources and uses them well to enhance students' learning.
- Teachers do not always insist that students produce work of the highest quality of which they are capable.

#### **Commentary**

83. By age 14, standards are above average and students achieve well. Students have learnt to work carefully in planning and constructing in wood or acrylic. There is rapid progress in Year 9, where a range of substantial and challenging projects draw out students' best efforts. For example, they used a plough plane and router to an above average standard in making an automator. They gain a good grasp of, for instance, the transistor switch, vanishing point, and hygienic practice in sampling exotic fruit. Occasionally opportunities are missed to raise quality: work pieces were seen inadequately clamped whilst planing, drilling and soldering. Work in Year 7 is on a par with the national average. A few of the projects in Year 7 are at a similar level to those provided for younger children, such as tangrams and an electrical 'steady hand' game, and some worksheet tasks are dull. Some assignments do not motivate pupils' best efforts and have insufficient challenge for the most able, but others provide opportunities to develop practical and evaluative skills effectively, and some high quality products were seen.
84. Standards by age 16 are also above average and achievement is good, after a sometimes slow start in Years 7 and 8. In 2003, GCSE results, taking all courses together, are above the national average, but a lower percentage of students attained higher grades than they did in other subjects. This relative underachievement was more marked in girls' results. The

standards of work seen are broadly similar, but included some samples of coursework in electronics, graphics and food of an exceedingly high standard.

85. Since the last inspection, there has been an effective departmental review, and, as a result, a much higher proportion of students now takes GCSE examinations in DT and results have improved considerably. There are GCSE courses in food, graphics, electronics and resistant materials. The latter course is being replaced by a vocational double award course in engineering, which is now underway in both Year 10 and 11, through links with a Further Education College. This is a worthwhile innovation, and there is evidence of high achievement in metalwork skills, although the gains are more modest in tasks which depend on literacy.
86. Teaching is good. Examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen. Little teaching could be observed in Year 8, and none in Year 7. The best teaching had high expectations of pace and quality, gave crisp and clear instructions and insisted on correct procedures. Lessons were most effective where teachers gave scope for initiative and the versatile application and integration of existing skills. This was particularly evident in work with food and with more advanced graphics and electronics. The raising of quality was most effective where teachers were attentive to what all students were doing all the time, intervening speedily and with a light touch to avert problems or correct errors. In less successful lessons, pace slackened because deadlines were not clear, or because teachers did not intervene readily enough to promote more efficient or safer practice. Poor presentation of written work is too often tolerated.
87. The department is well led, and much successful change has been accomplished by good management. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been streamlined, GCSE standards have risen and facilities have been vastly improved. The department continues to plan development. Accommodation is excellent, resources are very good, and the department is well served by its technicians.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Art and design and music were inspected, and drama was sampled. In drama, results in GCSE examinations in 2003 are excellent. The college has been very effective in raising boys' achievement, and the performance of boys in these examinations is outstanding when compared to boys' results nationally. Girls' results are also well above average. Work seen confirmed that students achieve very high standards.

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make very good progress from the start of Year 7 to Year 9.
- The standard of work produced is well above average in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of art and provide good advice and support.
- Procedures for assessing, tracking and recording students' progress are very good.
- There are limited opportunities for students to produce images using ICT.

### **Commentary**

88. Attainment when students enter Year 7 is below national expectations. However, students enjoy the subject and by Year 8 there is evidence of considerable improvement in their visual diaries. They make good progress in Year 9, by the end of which the standard of their work is

above the national average. Achievement from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9 is very good.

89. In the 2003 GCSE examination, attainment is well above the national average. Girls' results were well above that of boys, but all students achieved very well in relation to their capability. Students with SEN are very well integrated into teaching groups and very good use is made of learning assistants. Achievement throughout Years 10 and 11 is very good.
90. Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and provide very good advice and support. Lessons are very well organised, and the depth of students' understanding of the subject matter is determined through discussing it with them. Homework is set and marked regularly and students receive informed feedback. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good, and there are excellent links with Wysing studios where Year 10 students are currently working on a collaborative project with an artist.
91. Most students work with concentration to acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding. They are productive and work at a very good pace. A significant minority demonstrate the capacity for working with a high degree of independence to produce images that are based upon their own ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs. This results in work produced in Years 10 and 11 that is well above average.
92. Leadership and management are very good. The acting head of department has already succeeded in creating an effective team. Assessing, recording and tracking systems are very good and students are given regular feedback on their performance.
93. Accommodation is very good. Resources in the context of a traditional curriculum are good, but there is limited access to computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers within the art studios. Very good use is made of the department's part-time technician. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. High standards have been maintained, ensured by the high quality of teaching, leadership and management.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The revised curriculum and excellent teaching mean students participate eagerly in enjoyable, well structured lessons with music from a variety of cultures.
- The exemplary assessment procedures enable teachers to track students' achievement and quickly identify underachievement.
- The shortage of ICT equipment is restricting the achievement of many less musically able students, and limits the courses available in Years 10 to 11

## **Commentary**

94. Standards at age 14 are well above average. As standards on entry in Year 7 are average, the standards at the end of Year 9 represent very good achievement. However, students do not have regular opportunities to work with ICT and this restricts the achievement of many of the musically less able students. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the proportion of students gaining level 5 and above is well above average. The proportion of students attaining A\* to C grades in the GCSE examination is also well above average. Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently well above average for the last ten years. Standards in Years 10 to 11 are well above average and this also represents very good achievement.

95. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are very good, and some excellent lessons were observed. Teaching and learning in Years 10 to 11 are excellent. Teachers have excellent knowledge of music and spare no effort to ensure all students receive worthwhile musical experiences. Students are able to recall accurately the content of previous lessons because of the high quality teaching, including skilful use of questioning. They settle down to tasks quickly because teachers provide clear instructions and because they themselves are keen to become involved in practical music making. Students benefit from the resource books the department has devised which offer plenty of opportunities for the more musically able to make very good progress whilst catering well for the needs of the less able. Relationships are very good and the most reluctant of students willingly perform to a high standard to the rest of the class. A regular feature of lessons is that students find themselves able to perform to a much higher standard than they expect. This makes an important contribution to students' personal development, as the performances are often of pieces they have composed themselves, and their success raises self-confidence and self-esteem. In the few lessons judged satisfactory rather than of higher quality, the teacher devoted too much time to managing less able students at the expense of the rest of the class, and the tasks set were not broken down into quickly achievable sections. More able students are further catered for by the instrumental lessons given by an experienced team.
96. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. Assessment procedures are exemplary: staff can quickly identify students who are underachieving. The information is also invaluable for the regular reviews of the curriculum. Accommodation is good, but there are not enough practice rooms for group rehearsals during lessons, particularly when the instrumental teachers are in school. Resources are satisfactory. There are not enough computers to enable students to have regular and frequent access in Years 7 to 9, nor allow the department to offer a broader range of options for Years 10 and 11. There are not enough multi-cultural instruments to allow the learning which has taken place in lessons to be further developed.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students show sustained concentration and tenacity in learning: they achieve well in the first three years and very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Most lessons are well structured and make good demands on students to observe, analyse and report on the effectiveness of performance.
- The quality and extent of the work with primary schools and the community is laying strong foundations for the further development of the quality of provision for students.
- Some writing tasks are not demanding enough and teachers do not always challenge students' thinking, or define learning and progress precisely enough.

#### **Commentary**

97. Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9, and students achieve well in these three years. Standards by age 16 are well above average in the GCSE course, and above average in the core PE course. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 are well above average. Overall, students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. Many students make good progress in games. They show good consistency in receiving, controlling and sending balls accurately and their ability to identify and exploit space is consistently good. In one lesson, students' movement to space in a game was incisive, timely and controlled. When required to observe and analyse

performance in a games context, students are frequently good at identifying what needs to be changed. They are less confident and competent in gymnastics.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students frequently receive accurate feedback on their performance in lessons. Teaching often encourages peer evaluation and opportunities for students to learn to improve the performance of others. Occasionally, the demands made on students in both key stages could be more exacting in, for example, some writing tasks, challenging students' thinking, or defining learning and progress with greater precision.
99. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Whilst the time allocated to the subject is very good, its distribution generates some discontinuity in a part of the time allocated. Where sustained continuity and progression are possible, as in games, learning is well supported across Key Stage 3, but learning is more fragmented in aspects such as dance and gymnastics. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 provides a very good range of accredited courses, in both examination and leadership awards.
100. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. The college has acquired Sports College status and this initiative has enabled liaison with primary schools to be developed effectively, generating very good levels of interest and enthusiasm in primary pupils. A strength of the Sports College development has been the increased opportunity for students to move between PE taught in college, extra-curricular activities and out of school clubs with ease. A strong relationship exists with local sports clubs and regular dialogue takes place with the school to continually improve and extend the range and availability of the provision.
101. Accommodation has significantly improved. Leadership has been effective, establishing a wide range of provision involving all partners in a period of rapid change.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

102. The school offers GNVQ courses in ICT (reported on above) and leisure and tourism, where sampling provided insufficient evidence to report. There is also an applied GCSE course in engineering, run in collaboration with a local college of further education (reported on in DT). AS-level economics is available as an extra-curricular option after school, but was not inspected.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Personal, social and health education.**

103. Personal, social and health education is taught through five days in the year when the normal curriculum is suspended for a varied and appropriate programme. No such day fell during the inspection week and provision was not inspected.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive.
- Some aspects of the personal development days are very successful.
- There is insufficient time for students to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship in sufficient depth.
- There is no scheme of work to draw together the component parts of citizenship and to display progression.

- The leadership and management of the subject are too diffuse.

## Commentary

104. Standards are below those expected and achievement in citizenship is unsatisfactory. Students have a reasonable knowledge about some aspects of the subject but little understanding about others. For example, in different lessons, students discussed critically the attitudes and values of tourists visiting the Masai people of Kenya; they evaluated the strategies used by a prominent charity to advertise for public donations; and they considered issues of the law and moral responsibility. Students on the school council reflected positively on their participation. However, they do not have sufficient knowledge of all the topics in the National Curriculum; nor can they demonstrate that they have developed the associated skills of enquiry and communication, and participation and responsible action to sufficient standards. Nevertheless, students' attitudes towards citizenship are very positive.
105. The curriculum for citizenship is too limited. The school considers the main provision to be five days per year when the normal timetable is suspended. These days appear to be successful, but they are predominantly concerned with personal, social, health and relationships education, and have not addressed the citizenship programme of study in sufficient range and depth. There are effective citizenship elements within the programme. Some are based upon nationally recommended schemes of work and some have been devised by the college and have been adopted by the LEA. For example, students study aspects of the law and the work of magistrates, with opportunities for involvement. They also have the opportunity to hear from well known speakers including the local MP. However, sessions on parliament and democracy go little further than an introduction to the topic. The small amount of written work from these sessions provides no evidence that high standards are attained.
106. The school's intention is that citizenship is also taught in other subjects. To this end, an audit of subject contributions was undertaken by staff, but without the necessary training to ensure well-informed responses. Departments identified where their subjects touched on citizenship, but they did not understand that if they are to teach the National Curriculum well, they must cover the knowledge elements in sufficient depth, linking this to the development of enquiry skills and opportunities for students' participation and responsible action.
107. The school council offers some students a good opportunity for participation and responsible action. Students elect representatives using formal procedures such as hustings and a secret ballot. The council has a growing record of success, including a contribution to the anti-bullying policy and improvements in facilities.
108. The school took seriously the introduction of citizenship, which was led by a senior member of staff. However, citizenship is now organised by a group of teachers and it is uncertain where responsibility for subject development lies and how the weaknesses in the subject will be addressed. There is no clear scheme of work which indicates how the topics and skills indicated in the National Curriculum are to be taught to sufficient depth. Assessment arrangements are poorly developed. Resources for citizenship range from excellent, such as notable visiting speakers, to weak, including the use of undemanding worksheets. Insufficient use is made of ICT.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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