

INSPECTION REPORT

Brixham Community College

Brixham, Devon

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113527

Headteacher: Mr Christopher Turner

Lead inspector: Malcolm McGregor

Dates of inspection: 4th - 7th October 2004

Inspection number: 268356

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive (non-selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	919
School address:	Higher Ranscombe Road Brixham Devon
Postcode:	TQ5 9HF
Telephone number:	01803 858271
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Morey
Date of previous inspection:	01-Feb-1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Brixham College is an 11 – 16 comprehensive school about the same size as other secondary schools and serving the coastal town of Brixham. It is one of eight secondary schools in the Torbay region, four of which are wholly or partly selective. It is one of only two secondary schools without a sixth form. It is increasingly popular and has increased in size since the previous inspection. Socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The attainment of students on entry into Year 7 has typically been below average as the college loses a proportion of higher attaining students to selective schools in the area. The majority of students who join the college in Year 7 stay until the end of Year 11. There are currently no ethnic minority students and no students for whom English is not their first language. The number of students with Statements of Special Educational Need is above average. The proportion of students registered for free school meals is higher than the national average but lower than at the time of the previous inspection. The college is well respected within its community and there is significant use of the school by the local community. There is also youth work provision on site. The college has recently (September 2004) received Visual Arts College status and was designated the Full Service Extended School from July 2004 for Torbay. In the recent past it has achieved Sportsmark silver award, Artsmark, International School status and Investors in People status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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20055	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	Mathematics English as an additional language
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4738	David Berrisford	Team inspector	Science
17015	Lawrence Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
33368	Val Greatrex	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship
17156	Ted Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	Geography History
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Brixham Community College provides a **very good** quality of education for its students. The vision and **very good** leadership of the principal together with the **good** support of the senior leadership team, staff and governors ensure that it is **very effective** in including and supporting its students. The college is imaginative in developing its role within the local community and provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the principal has sustained steady improvement and growth since the previous inspection.
- There is excellent leadership and management of support for students with special educational needs.
- Standards in the use and application of information and communication technology to support learning require improvement.
- Leadership of physical education is very good and there has been very good improvement in the leadership and standards in science and art and design.
- The very good links with the community and local schools contribute very effectively to the work of the school.
- Assessment information is not used consistently so does not always make it clear how students can improve.
- The inclusive and supportive ethos of the school enables all students to achieve well.
- Students have very good attitudes and their social and moral development is very good and well supported by the very good citizenship course.

Overall progress since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have shown a steady trend of improvement whilst the college has grown in numbers. Curriculum planning and development along with improvements to accommodation have been good, as the college has striven to extend its provision within the local community.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is good overall. Against a background of declining standards of attainment on entry, the college's results have improved year by year. Results have been improving at a faster rate than nationally and in 2003 in national tests at the end of Year 9 they were **average** overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Results show that achievement is **very good** compared to students in similar schools. Results in GCSE examinations have been improving in line with the national trend and in 2003 were **average**. Standards overall are **average** by the end of Year 11 but they represent **very good** achievement based upon students' standards when they were in Year 9 and in comparison to similar schools nationally. Achievement of students currently in the college is **good** and standards of their work are **average**.

Year 11 results

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

Students' personal development is good due to a caring ethos and the way in which the college promotes good attitudes to college life. Students' attitudes towards learning are **good**. Their behaviour is **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the college is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall. Teaching and learning are consistently good or very good in most subjects, as is the support offered to students with special educational needs. Teachers create good working relationships, which lead to a very positive climate for learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to interest and engage the students in relevant, interesting activities although assessment information does not always make clear how students can improve. The overall quality of the curriculum is **very good**. The college continues to extend the breadth of opportunities to meet the needs of its students. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is also **very good**. Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is **very good** and they are able to learn well in a safe and caring environment. Consultation with students and the support, advice and guidance they receive are **good**. The provision for students with special educational needs, known at the college as those requiring learning support, is very good with some excellent features. The college's links with parents and the community are **very good**. Liaison and links with other schools and colleges for further education are **very good** enhancing students' learning and many aspects of the college's work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The principal continues to provide strong leadership, which results in a very good ethos within the school and continuing impetus for improvement. The senior management team works together very effectively, providing very good support for the principal and ensuring that the college operates smoothly, effectively and efficiently. Governors fulfil their duties well, maintain a very careful oversight of the school's budget and provide critical feedback and support for the principal. Many aspects of the college are managed very well, resulting in a college that runs smoothly and effectively. Leadership and management of learning support are excellent. There has been significant improvement in the leadership and management of science and art and design. Governors, however, do not meet their statutory duties to provide a daily act of collective worship and the full curriculum in design and technology for Years 7 to 9.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the education provided for their children. They like the approachability of the principal and staff and feel welcome in the college. Although a small number of parents have concerns about behaviour the inspection team found behaviour to be very good.

Pupils have positive views about their college and appreciate the facilities, good teaching and the care and support they are given.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards in information and communication technology and its use to support teaching and learning.
- Improve the consistency and quality of assessment information and its use to help students understand how to improve.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

Improve the curriculum in design and technology in Years 7 to 9.

Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Results in 2003 in national tests at the end of Year 9 were **average** overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The results in tests at the end of Year 9 have been improving faster than the national trend over the past five years. Achievement in comparison to similar schools is **very good**. Results in GCSE examinations have been improving in line with the national trend and in 2003 were **average**. Based on students' prior attainment these results represent **very good** achievement. Achievement of students currently in the college is **good** and standards of their work are **average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in music and physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards are high and achievement is very good in the express science group.
- Standards in information and communication technology both on the taught course and across the college require improvement.
- Overall standards are average, students achieve well and the college has been improving its results in tests at the end of Year 9 faster than the national trend in the past five years.
- Many students join the college with low standards but they make good progress with their learning as a result of the good supportive teaching.
- Students who require learning support make very good progress as a result of the high quality support they receive.

Commentary

1. Against a background of declining standards of attainment on entry, the college's results have improved year by year.

Key Stage 3

2. Standards in the core subjects of English mathematics and science are below average when students enter the college in Year 7. As a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes standards improve and are broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 9. Results in national tests have improved faster than the national rate over the last three years despite declining standards of attainment on entry to the college in Year 7.
3. In English staffing difficulties have had an adverse effect upon standards and the progress of students during the past 12 months, but overall students' achievement is satisfactory.
4. In mathematics by the end of Year 9, students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and achieve well. Excellent transition arrangements from primary schools help students to settle well into the work in the subject. Students with low attainment are identified and follow a curriculum well matched to their needs. Under-achieving students are also identified and receive booster classes. Improvement is particularly evident in the boys' performance. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact with an improvement in teaching and learning.
5. In science at the end of Year 9 attainment has also been steadily rising, and is now in line with national figures. The attainment of these students is very good when compared with that of students in similar schools.
6. Since the previous inspection standards overall have steadily risen as a result of significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The college sets itself ambitious

targets given the low attainment on entry in Year 7. It has been successful in achieving these by Year 9 in mathematics and science but not in English in 2004 where staffing issues have had an adverse effect on achievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.1 (32.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.4 (33.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.8 (33.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 182 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. Standards of literacy across other subject areas are satisfactory, but much scope remains for further improvement, in particular in the technical accuracy of written work. The school does not have a co-ordinator for literacy across the curriculum, and this has hindered the consistency of the development of literacy.
8. Standards in ICT have remained below average but improvements to the content of lessons and higher expectations are beginning to raise standards. Use across subjects is still variable with some good use of digital imaging in art and design coursework and good use of the Internet for research. In science there is extensive use for data logging, analysis and research. Digital media is used in physical education to record and analyse performance and in geography students use ICT for research and presentation of coursework. Religious education students draw information on other religions and in many subjects there is good use of ICT for presentation and coursework.
9. Students requiring learning support enter the school below or well below what is expected nationally, many of them with poor literacy skills. The achievement of these pupils is very good. Their needs are expertly diagnosed and a programme of support, detailed in their individual education plans, is prepared for them. As a consequence of very good teaching, very effective and properly briefed teaching assistants, and most departments providing activities well matched to their individual needs, they generally make very good progress in lessons and over time.
10. The college has a small but significant number of students with emotional or behavioural difficulties, some of whom have joined the college following exclusion from others. Teachers and support staff in the school are skilled at helping these students reintegrate and settle quickly. As a result, these students generally achieve well.

Key Stage 4

11. Standards overall in terms of students average point score in the 2003 GCSE examinations were in line with the average for schools nationally. Students build effectively on their achievements of earlier years and attain standards above what would be expected based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. The percentage of students who achieved five or more passes at GCSE in 2003 was above the national average. Girls did better than boys but the difference between boys and girls was in line with that seen nationally. Since the previous inspection the overall trend of improvement has been in line with that nationally. The GCSE results in 2004 were lower than those in 2003 in terms of the higher grades and the school did not meet its targets. Much of the underachievement was linked to staffing difficulties.
12. Particularly impressive has been the improvement in science and art and design, both of which were areas of significant weakness at the time of the previous inspection. In science the needs of higher attaining students are being met very effectively with an express group

sitting GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. Standards in this express group are above average for both boys and girls.

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	50 (47)	52.0 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	91.0 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.7 (34.5)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 177 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

13. Students currently preparing for GCSE examinations in Years 10 and 11 are achieving particularly well in science, art and design and physical education. In music standards are above average. Standards in ICT are below average and whilst there has been some progress since the previous inspection this is still an area for improvement. Standards are average in English, mathematics, science, religious education and design and technology. Achievement across subjects is mostly good with satisfactory achievement in history, geography, English, French and Spanish. Standards in geography have seen a decline in the last two years. Standards on the information and communication course are well below average although achievement is satisfactory. Opportunities to apply and extend ICT skills across the school are variable and overall do not support sufficiently the raising of standards in this area.
14. Senior staff have a good awareness of performance data and use the information well to track students' progress, leading to a realistic and accurate understanding of students' achievements and the setting of targets. The use of performance and other assessment data is not as effective at departmental level to improve the quality of teaching and enhance students' learning. In a number of subjects, assessment is not as effective in identifying where and how improvements can be made in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11. Where criteria for grades and levels are not fully used, students do not always understand how they might progress between grades.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes towards learning are **good**. Their behaviour is **very good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to promote and monitor attendance are excellent.
- Behaviour management is very good.
- Students' moral and social development is very good.
- Students' respond well to the college's high expectations and behaviour is very good.

Commentary

15. Students are enthusiastic about college and the majority arrive on or before time. Registration is efficient. Parents are encouraged to use the absence line, open from 4.30pm each day, and telephone calls are made the same morning if there has been no explanation why students are missing. With the help of the school inclusion welfare officer and the vigilant senior leadership team in addition to rigorous monitoring, which includes arrivals after 9.30am marked absent, attendance is better than some other local schools' and broadly in line with the national average. Certificates and annual trophies are awarded for 100 per cent attendance.

16. Students' behaviour in and outside lessons is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good overall. Involved in decisions on the charter for behaviour, students respond very well to staff's very high expectations and their consistently applied positive behaviour strategies. Praise cards and merits are sought after and the well-targeted detentions thought to be fair. Where inappropriate behaviour occurs, it is usually in lessons where students are not challenged sufficiently. Bullying is not tolerated and staff are swift to intervene when it occurs. Any incident is dealt with very well. Students can withdraw to a designated room if they have problems, where they are well supported by staff. Students trust their tutors and are happy to talk to them about their worries; but tutor sessions vary and in some only organisational matters are dealt with whilst students chatter. The one permanent exclusion in the past 12 months and the number of exclusions for a fixed term are well below those recorded nationally.
17. A lively and purposeful atmosphere permeates the college and students enjoy their education. They appreciate the good facilities, for example, for sport, and value the learning resource centre where many practise their IT skills and others complete their homework. Students like and are proud of the college - a fully integrated and inclusive society in which all students, whatever their difficulty, are included and well supported by their peers.
18. The school very well develops students' moral and social education and provision for their cultural development is good. Less attention is given to spiritual development, except for good practice seen in religious education, art and design, citizenship and physical education. There is no formal, whole school planning for developing these four aspects of personal development but they are embedded in the curriculum and in the culture of the school, so that general provision is good.
19. The college ethos encourages spiritual growth by respecting students as individuals and boosting their self-esteem and respect for others. It provides a very supportive environment in which students feel accepted and gain confidence to achieve their potential. Students' spiritual development is satisfactory although opportunities are missed in both assemblies and tutor time to promote this further. There is no daily act of collective worship and opportunities for reflection of a spiritual or moral nature are not provided in form time. Weekly assemblies inspire students to make the most of their education for the benefit of all. The staff of the college are good role models, setting high expectations of students' conduct, in accordance with the behaviour charter. Most subjects make a significant contribution to moral development, particularly religious education, where the focus of learning in Years 9 to 11 is on moral issues.
20. The community college promotes in its students a strong sense of belonging, both to the school and the wider community. Themed personal, social and health education days include the Year 7 Respect day to promote self-esteem, and enable students to deal with bullying, a Drama-for-Life, and drugs awareness and health days. Through the citizenship programme and the many opportunities to participate in team games, outdoor pursuits and residential trips, students develop highly responsible, social attitudes. Prefects help with the induction of new students in Year 7 and Year 10 students help with sports events in the junior schools. Each year group supports a charity through fund-raising. There is also a strong sense of the international community in the college, fostered in modern foreign languages and multicultural elements in a number of subjects. The citizenship project, exchanging students' photographs of their community with schools around the world was particularly successful in broadening outlooks and challenging stereotypes. The college attracts many foreign visitors and has established many international links. Opportunities for students to pursue their own cultural interests are particularly strong in art and design, music and drama.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.8
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	1.1
National data:	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background

No of pupils on roll
906
3
2
1
6
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
139	1
3	

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the college is **very good**.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and are consistently good or very good in most subjects. Teachers create good working relationships, which lead to a very positive climate for learning. However, assessment information does not always make clear how students can improve. The curriculum is very good and the opportunities for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, are also very good. However, the curriculum in design and technology is not sufficiently broad in Years 7 to 9. Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is very good. Consultation with students and the support, advice and guidance they receive are good. The provision for students with special educational needs, known at the college as those requiring learning support, is very good. The college's links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community are very good, enhancing students' learning and many aspects of the college's work.

Teaching and learning

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Teaching and learning are particularly effective in science and physical education, while the strong support offered to students with special educational needs helps them achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A positive climate for learning fosters good relationships through encouragement and praise.
- Nearly all teaching observed was satisfactory or better, with much that was good or better.
- Support staff make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- In some lessons insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently.
- Some teaching is dull, relies on mundane activities and fails to challenge or engage the students.

- The college does not have fully adequate procedures to monitor teaching and learning.
- The use of marking and assessment is inconsistent across subjects in the quality of information it gives students on how to improve.
- The creative process of gaining designation as a Visual Arts College has energised teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 111 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	27 (24%)	46 (41%)	29 (26%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	None

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.

21. Teaching and learning are consistently good or very good in most subjects, as is the support offered to students with special educational needs. Teachers' contribution to a range of extra-curricular activities not only enriches the curriculum but also helps create the kind of relationships, which lead to a very positive climate for learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to interest and engage the students in relevant, interesting activities. In this respect there is particularly good practice in English, where good use is made of collaborative reading and working in groups to secure good development of reading skills. In art and design likewise, charismatic teaching produces good achievement.
22. Satisfactory lessons have some of the features of good and very good lessons but in a number of these the teacher dominates the work with too few opportunities for students to work independently. Where teaching is least effective it is dull, relies on mundane activities and fails to challenge or engage the students.
23. There is an able and well-qualified staff, with almost all subjects taught by specialists. Overall, teaching is good in all subjects in Years 7 to 11 and very good in a number, including maths, science, art and design, citizenship, dance, drama, physical education and religious education. Parents and students are positive about the college's high expectations.
24. The recently acquired status as a specialist college in visual art has informed teaching and learning in the college as a whole with renewed energy and enthusiasm. In ICT, for example, students develop skills in three-dimensional design, which will be as relevant to their work in art and technology as word processing and presentation software for English and humanities, or the effect on their mathematics and numeracy of using spreadsheets for calculations and modelling.
25. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good, but do not yet fully match the quality observed in Years 10 and 11. This is in part because the impact of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy¹ is limited in English, nor is there a full implementation of the strategy across all subjects. Where the strategy is used, however, it is effective. This is increasingly the case in ICT, with a strong effect on teaching and learning. The school's commitment to inclusion is worked out in a number of ways and students with special educational needs achieve very well in the college.

¹ The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy.

26. Students with special educational needs are taught well in withdrawal lessons, where staff demonstrate a good understanding of strategies to teach literacy, and provide good general support for individuals, who are often anxious about their learning. The practice of providing most of the learning support in lessons, with limited withdrawal of students for specialist literacy teaching, ensures students have access to the full curriculum. Having teaching assistants allocated to departments ensures they are appropriately briefed on the curriculum and subject schemes of work. Specialist teachers work very effectively with small groups of students or individuals who have more severe learning difficulties. Teachers' high expectations and students' positive attitudes result in very good achievement in these lessons.
27. Teaching assistants provide additional support for students in most subjects. They frequently enable students with special educational needs to learn as well as their peers, by providing them with sensitive individual support. In the best lessons, subject teachers involve assistants in their planning, enabling them to work more effectively. A good example of this was seen in a good Year 9 geography lesson where the teaching assistant gave very effective but unobtrusive prompts and encouragement to a student during a video activity. Although teachers are aware of each student's individual education plan, they do not all make enough use of the methods for support that the plans advise.
28. The poor social skills of a few students contribute to their restless behaviour and some unsatisfactory attitudes to learning in class. There is still some under-achievement by boys, which is often related to attitudes and behaviour in class as well as to their culture of low expectation.
29. The challenge for the most able students is inconsistent. Overall they achieve as well as other students. There is good practice in science, where the most able students were fast-tracked through the GCSE programme, gaining a 100 per cent pass rate at grades A* to B. Similarly fast tracking is developing in art and design but this is exemplary rather than typical across all subjects. However, development planning is focused very strongly on teaching, learning and attainment and the senior leadership team are committed to helping all students achieve their potential.
30. The good teaching profile across the college seen at the previous inspection has been maintained. Two advanced skills teachers also make a significant contribution to the overall quality of teaching. Although there has been some loss of continuity through staff changes and absences, the senior management team try to secure consistency of quality in those subject teams. This has included the use of training budgets to secure an improved skill base in teaching and learning, procedures for sharing good practice among teachers and the full use of trainee teacher placements to get and hold young and enthusiastic staff. Training in assessment for learning, however, has been relegated to after school sessions rather than featuring as a high priority in strategic planning.
31. Students are provided with homework diaries, but there are inconsistencies in the way they are used and monitored. There are not enough textbooks to take home, so the tasks set for homework are often mundane, or merely the completion of work begun in class.
32. The use made of assessment across the college is satisfactory, especially in Years 10 and 11, although it is not so effective in ICT and English. In a number of subjects, assessment is not as effective in identifying where and how improvements can be made in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11. Where criteria for grades and levels are not fully used, students do not always understand how they might progress between grades. However, a start has been made to ensuring that assessment information is gathered and analysed systematically, and to forming the basis for regular monitoring.
33. In history there is not only very good teaching but work is marked to National Curriculum criteria and well moderated across the department, leading both to secure grades and

good understanding among the students of how they can improve. This is equally true in art and design, where the assessment booklet designed by the department has been used as an exemplar by other departments. Other subjects too have developed a number of ways to make students aware of what they need to do to succeed. In a number of areas students, in ICT, for example, make good use of self-evaluation with the help of assessment sheets from the Key Stage 3 National strategy documents.

34. Teachers make satisfactory use of resources, including ICT, to get their messages across and to keep students' interest. Planning is consistently effective while in religious education high quality resources have been prepared and developed in the department, which form the basis of commercially published textbooks.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is **very good**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities is also **very good**. Accommodation is **satisfactory**. The quality and quantity of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of curriculum management and development in the college is outstanding.
- A strong inclusive policy informs curricular decisions, ensuring that all students receive their entitlement to a full range of courses.
- The college's status as a Visual Arts College is reflected in its rich provision of courses in this area of the curriculum.
- Accelerated courses in science are successfully extending the opportunities for able students.
- The school makes very good provision for citizenship and enhances the personal, social and health education programme through special days of activities in each year.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, both school-based and utilising community facilities provides very good enrichment of the curriculum.
- Design and technology does not meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Commentary

35. The senior management team is highly creative in its approach to curriculum development, carefully planning the expansion of the college to provide a fully extended service to the community and gaining added status as an international school and Visual Arts College. Students benefit greatly from the enrichment to the curriculum that this concentration of youth and community services on site provides. Curriculum planning is based on a clear philosophy of inclusion that seeks to provide a full range of courses to suit the needs of all students. Management of the timetable is highly efficient, allowing curriculum teams flexibility to organise the grouping of students in their subjects.
36. In Years 7 to 9, all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are provided, with the addition of drama. In the case of design and technology, the scheme of work does not meet the national programme of study fully, because aspects relating to electronics, structures and control are not sufficiently covered. Fast-tracking for able students in science, starting in Year 9, has proved very successful, many completing the double science course in Year 10 and studying a third science in Year 11. Year 9 is also a pivotal year in the visual arts curriculum, where all pupils embark on a GCSE course in art and design, with various options through to Year 11, including early examination entry in Year 10 and an extra art GCSE in Year 11. An extra period for art and design in Year 9 incorporates work in textiles, effectively breaking down the gender divide in this area of the curriculum.
37. In Years 10 and 11, the core curriculum taken by all students includes a modern foreign language, reflecting the school's commitment to its international school status. An alternative course in life skills meets the needs of a small number of students, who also

have access to practical courses in motor vehicle engineering and catering with a further education provider. Students are able to choose three subjects from the option pool, which includes vocational GCSE courses in health and social care and applied science, with applied art and design planned for next year. The curriculum in these years is broad within the context of GCSE, responding well to student demand for courses.

38. The school has embraced citizenship with flair and imagination, making space for it in the curriculum by devoting whole days for each year group to aspects of personal, social and health education and involving outside agencies. Through the college citizenship programme and a well-developed programme of work experience in Year 10 all students learn about work and gain direct experience through work. Within this framework careers education is very well planned and organised.
39. The curriculum is greatly enriched by the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer to students, making full use of the facilities available across the network of the community college. Sports provision outside lessons is excellent and many students participate. The school organises the Torbay arts festival and runs various arts trips, including a visit to Paris for 90 students. Opportunities for music-making are good and include two choirs, an orchestra and steel pan bands in each year. The number of pupils involved in instrumental tuition is twice the national average. They have numerous opportunities to perform, which include the annual school Proms, the Christmas carol concert and a popular talent show. The penultimate week of the summer term is Curriculum Enhancement week, which offers a full programme of arts, sports and technology activities, as well as residential visits in Britain and abroad. The well organised and staffed learning resource centre offers students help with homework on a daily basis.
40. The provision for students with special educational needs, known at the college as those requiring learning support, is very good with some excellent features. Inspirational leadership of the department and very effective management and deployment of a team of dedicated teaching assistants ensure that these students feel safe, very well cared for and well supported in the classroom. The practice of providing most of the learning support in lessons, with limited withdrawal of students for specialist literacy teaching, ensures students have access to the full curriculum. In addition the college works closely with its local pupil referral unit to provide excellent provision for these students to be re integrated into mainstream education and its work in this area is providing an exemplar for other schools and colleges.

Accommodation, resources and staffing

41. The college has a good match of well-qualified specialist teachers and support staff to teach the planned curriculum. The long-term absence of a few teachers has created problems in continuity for some subjects but the college has addressed this situation well. Delivery of the curriculum is supported well by experienced ancillary staff. Well-deployed teaching assistants effectively support students, who have learning needs, in the classroom.
42. Overall, the college provides satisfactory well maintained accommodation for teaching and learning. The college has a well-planned building programme due to commence in the near future. This will improve accommodation for a major part of the college and particularly benefit English, music, art and design and learning support facilities. There is already good accommodation in physical education, science, design and technology and the learning resource centre. The college provides good access to all areas of the college for physically disabled students.
43. The college has a satisfactory level of resources to support teaching and learning. Although there is good level of provision for ICT in dedicated rooms, there is a lack of facilities in subject areas limiting teaching and learning opportunities. This is particularly the situation in science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. In some

areas, there is a lack of textbooks, these include, geography, history and modern foreign languages. In history good use is made of educational visits to support and extend learning in Years 7 to 11. However, in geography only limited visits are undertaken in Years 10 and 11 to extend learning.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is **very good**. Consultation with students and the support, advice and guidance they receive are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is very good.
- Students' relationships with adults are very good.
- Careers advice and guidance are good.

Commentary

44. Health and safety are high priorities for the college, and regular, comprehensive risk assessments are carried out. In spite of the open campus and increasing community use of college facilities, security is tight. Trained personnel administer first aid and practice is good. The college, aware of recent child protection legislation, is complying with this although only one governor has been given this responsibility so far.
45. Students settle swiftly into college routines as a consequence of very good induction procedures, which include transition units in English and mathematics – tasks designed to help them adjust to the demands of the subjects in their new school. They are confident their concerns will be dealt with effectively as a result of the very good relationships quickly established with adults, who know of and understand their particular problems, and they receive good support overall. However, homework planners rarely contain academic and personal targets. Whilst some students say they do not know what these targets are, others confirm they are told the National Curriculum levels they should achieve. Students want to do well and find teachers' comments in lessons useful, although marking of their written work does not always inform them how to improve.
46. The provision for students with special educational needs, known at the college as those requiring learning support, is very good with some excellent features. As a consequence of this, they make very good progress and achieve very well during their time at the school.
47. Careers information is very good. Options choices are given in Year 9 and good use is made of both the careers and Connexions officers. The wide range of information on careers including CDs and booklets kept in the learning resource centre helps students make up their minds about their future.
48. The college values students' opinions and regularly consults them, seeking to involve them in all aspects of college life and promoting this well through their lessons. Regular surveys are conducted to canvas their views on a wide range of college provision such as the quality and range of college lunches and college uniform. The college council is being reconstituted with 45 enthusiastic volunteers attending the first meeting. As yet no constitution has been agreed to ensure fair representation of all year groups and develop a college forum. Though planned, at the request of students, no elections have yet taken place.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college's links with parents and the community are **very good**. Liaison and links with other schools and colleges for further education are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very satisfied with the education their children receive.
- Integration of college and community is very good.
- Support for Friends' events is disappointing.

Commentary

49. The college continues to enjoy strong support from parents, who are pleased their children attend this popular community college, and are pleased with the progress they make and the extra-curricular activities they enjoy, although a small number regret there are sometimes too few places for the latter. Parents' attendance at meetings and curriculum events is very good but few get involved with the Friends' association, whose events are now organised by the college's business manager.
50. Parents receive very good information from the college through the prospectus, governors' annual report and regular newsletters. Progress and end-of-year reports contain grades for the effort children make as well as their achievements although targets set for them are sometimes too general. A few parents query the timing of progress reports but the college does its best to ensure they are issued at appropriate times. Parents of children with special education or other needs are very well informed about individual education plans and invited to comment. Most though all are invited attend the reviews of these.
51. Communication with parents is very good, as a result of questionnaires, surveys and general conversation, and the college acts on views expressed. Many parents value the informal opportunities to speak to the principal and other staff on their way to adult education classes, and know that tutors, heads of year or the principal, deputy and assistant principals are always available should the need arise.
52. Very good links have been established with primary and special schools, many of whom use the facilities for their curriculum, as well as with post-16 and colleges of further education. All are benefiting from the new Arts status of the college and partner schools are keen to work with the new regime. Joint staff training with other local schools has taken place. Facilities in all areas are improving and community use of the buildings is increasing. For instance, the college venue is used for community links day for physical education and regularly hosts primary festivals. Many adults attend adult education classes, and they enjoy the facilities, which include access to several local agencies on site but increased community use does not impinge on students' access. Family learning emanates from the consortium of three community colleges.
53. Links with the local community are very good, for example, students help with the ACE gardening club, and music groups often play in the community. The Brixham community church meets in college every Sunday, and the local Rotary club provides speakers and conducts mock interviews for Year 11 students. Co-operation with Brixham Communities projects is good.
54. The college willingly embraces its role as a community provider and is at the early stages of developing its role as the full service extended school for the Torbay region. With the appointment of the new assistant principal with responsibility to promote this initiative it is involving a wide range of services and educational providers in its efforts to reach out and provide a fully inclusive learning environment for the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is **good**. The principal provides **very good** leadership, and the leadership of other key staff is **good**. The governance and management of the school are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principal continues to provide strong leadership, which results in a very good ethos within the school and continuing impetus for improvement.
- The senior management team works together very effectively, providing very good support for the principal and ensuring that the college operates smoothly, effectively and efficiently.
- Governors fulfil their duties well, maintain a very careful oversight of the school's budget and provide critical feedback and support for the principal.
- Many aspects of the college are managed very well, resulting in a college that runs smoothly and effectively.

Commentary

55. In an area where the college has to compete with schools which are highly selective in their intake of students and which are better funded, it is a measure of the very successful leadership of the principal that Brixham Community College is very well regarded within the community, and is so popular with parents and students to the extent that it is over-subscribed. A constant feature since the previous inspection has been the continuing high-quality leadership provided by the principal, marked by his clear vision, strong sense of purpose and passionate desire to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education. This is seen in the very good ethos within the college and its major commitment to ensuring that the needs of every student are identified and relevant support is provided. The principal has maintained a continuing impetus for improvement. In some areas, such as science and the management of special educational needs, the improvement has been very good.
56. Against a background of declining standards of attainment on entry, the college's results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have improved year by year up to 2004 when GCSE results were lower than those in 2003. This is seen as a temporary blip reflecting the staffing problems, rather than an indication of falling standards. New initiatives, such as the college's acquisition of Full Service Extended School and Specialist Arts College status, have not only enhanced the reputation of the college, but are leading to significant benefits for the students and strengthening the college's already good contribution to and partnership with the local community. A further strength of the principal's leadership is seen in the very good teamwork and commitment of the staff, who, themselves are encouraged to embrace new initiatives and try out new ideas. There is a constant drive to make the curriculum interesting and relevant to the students and to provide them with new challenges, as seen, for example, in the very successful move to enter more able students a year early for GCSE in science, and the college's continuing commitment to ensure that all students study a modern foreign language throughout their time at the college. The principal sets high standards, and staff and students work hard to achieve them, as is seen in the well-ordered environment in which all students have every opportunity to learn.
57. A further measure of the principal's very good leadership is the corporate nature of the senior leadership team, which shares the principal's vision and works very well together. The deputy and five assistant principals, all of whom have clearly delegated responsibilities for whole-school issues, provide very good leadership. They have a major impact on the pastoral and academic care provided for students. They have significant involvement in curricular development, and work well and imaginatively to implement new initiatives, such as provision for citizenship education and work-related learning. Their respective strengths complement each other well, some leading new initiatives, whilst

others, such as the deputy principal play a key management role in ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of the college.

58. The leadership of curriculum team leaders ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Some have very clear vision for the development of their curricular areas, ensure very good teamwork, and have a marked impact on standards. Particularly impressive has been the improvement in science and art and design, both of which were areas of significant weakness at the time of the previous inspection. Also significantly improved is the leadership of learning support. The co-ordinator plays a vital role in leading the college's provision to meet the needs of its most vulnerable students. Her leadership is excellent, and she provides clear vision for the development of the department and the team of teaching assistants. Management of the department is very good, particularly with regard to leading, training and deploying the teaching assistants. The leadership of geography and English is currently unsatisfactory, although the latter situation has arisen because of staffing difficulties. The acting head of department has been in post a short time and has received limited training for her new role but has worked hard to encourage team working and satisfactory management after a time of change and staff turnover in the past year.
59. There are very good systems to ensure the college runs efficiently and smoothly on a day-to-day basis. There is a clear management structure, which ensures effective oversight of pastoral matters through heads of year and of academic matters through curriculum team leaders, although there is a variation in the effectiveness with which curriculum team leaders manage their departments and keep a check on what happens within them, varying from excellent to unsatisfactory. The management of behavioural and attendance issues is excellent. Senior staff have a good awareness of performance data and use the information well to track students' progress, leading to a realistic and accurate understanding of students' achievements and the setting of realistic targets. The use of performance and other assessment data is not as effective at departmental level. The college acknowledges that more time is needed for curriculum team leaders to monitor classroom practice in order to identify ways to improve the quality of teaching and enhance students' learning, although this is carried out very effectively in some areas, such as modern foreign languages, resulting in very well managed support for staff where required.
60. The college makes a very good contribution to initial teacher-training programmes, accepting students for placement, supporting them well and, at times, benefiting through the recruitment of new staff. Long-term staff absences have caused the college considerable difficulties over the last few years, but the situation has been managed as well as legal constraints allow. The college's strategic planning is very good, and has improved since the previous inspection, and its effectiveness is seen in the way the college has developed and improved.
61. The committed and helpful governing body provides astute and effective advice and guidance, and undertakes its role as critical friend well. Governors have been actively involved in the college's development initiatives, such as its submission to acquire Specialist Arts College status. The governing body keeps itself well informed about what is happening in the college, and the chair of governors attends many meetings of the senior leadership team. As a result, governors are well informed about what is happening in the college and have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Thought is given to the most effective ways of working as a governing body, and new mechanisms have recently been introduced to gain greater understanding of the way individual departments work in order to ensure stronger accountability. The governing body fulfils its major statutory responsibilities well, although the college does not fully comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship in the main because of constraints of accommodation. Communication with parents has improved and the college now provides parents with all of the statutorily required information. Control and monitoring of the college's finances have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors maintain a very careful oversight of the budget, which is managed

very effectively on a day-to-day basis by the college's business manager. Strenuous efforts are being made to balance the deficit budget, which has arisen because of higher than expected long-term absence of staff. The college's income is below average and very good efforts are made to ensure that it is spent in the most cost effective way. The college provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income (inc bal b/fwd)	3,093,631	Balance from previous year	59,142
Total expenditure	3,079,426	Balance carried forward to the next	14,204
Expenditure per pupil	3,406		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

62. The overall effectiveness of the school's provision for work-related learning is good. A satisfactory framework for work-related learning is in place that meets statutory requirements. No formal teaching of work-related learning was seen beyond citizenship lessons but information was gathered from interviews with the co-ordinator, careers and other staff and school documentation. The college has good business and industry links and has appointed a co-ordinator with responsibility for work-related learning. There is awareness that a further review of provision is necessary to restructure the range and quality of provision and monitor students' experiences and progress in line with national guidance. Two vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 provide courses closely linked to the world of work and the college is seeking to extend these further. Many subjects such as science, design and technology, history, geography and physical education develop students' knowledge and awareness. The very successful annual industry day gives Year 9 the opportunity to find out how to set up and run a small business. Careers education is very well planned and organised with good links with the community that enable all students in Year 10 to experience mock interviews in readiness for work. Through the college citizenship programme and a well-developed programme of work experience in Year 10 all students learn about work and gain direct experience through work. Students are encouraged to review their work experience and reflect on their performance as part of their personal record of achievement. There is a celebration of work experience to reward and celebrate their work experience. Visiting speakers are a regular feature to raise awareness and provide students with further opportunities to learn about the world of work. Tutors play a role too in counselling students and guiding them in the right direction for help. A local Connexions adviser based in the school provides further help and advice including individual interviews about career pathways. There is also provision for extended work placements as part of an alternative curriculum for some students.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning does not sufficiently take into account the needs of the highest attaining pupils.
- There is good provision for wider reading in schemes of work.
- Pupils are prepared well for assessment in speaking and listening.
- ICT is under-used in English lessons to enhance learning.

Commentary

63. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were in line with the national average. These results represent very good achievement taking into account pupils' prior attainment. Girls performed better than boys. The difference in performance between girls and boys is slightly more significant than the national average. In 2003 GCSE results were average overall compared with national results. Pupils make steady improvement and achieve well relative to their attainment on entry. Girls performed very well in literature and language and the proportion achieving the higher grades was well above the national average. Boys' results were average overall but with a below average proportion of the higher grades and a significant weakness in their literature work.
64. For current pupils, standards are average by Years 9 and 11. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. However, the achievement of the higher attaining pupils does not reflect their abilities, and these pupils need further intellectual challenge and support. Boys perform less well than girls, but the difference is in line with that found nationally. Progress made in lessons seen is satisfactory overall with higher attaining pupils making less progress than middle to lower attaining pupils. The achievement of less able pupils is good. They receive good support, with class teachers and support teachers working well together.
65. Pupils are prepared carefully for assessment in speaking and listening. By Year 9, pupils listen well to each other and are keen to participate in discussions. By Year 11 there is increasing use of emphasis and intonation for effect and all but the weakest pupils are able to structure longer contributions well. Assessment of speaking and listening is planned for and lessons structured to develop the pupils' skills, enabling them to make good progress. For example, one Year 10 class evaluated a videoed speech before preparing their own speeches on capital punishment. Talk is being used appropriately at different stages of the writing process to support pupils as writers.
66. Reading is promoted in lessons and achievement in reading is good. There is good opportunity for wider reading in schemes of work, promoting reading for pleasure in Years 7 to 9. When reading, pupils identify stylistic features of literature and analyse with insight. There are limited opportunities for extended writing in Years 7 to 9, with writing activities focusing on basic literacy skills. By the end of Year 11 pupils' writing is confident and well organised.
67. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers manage pupils well, and positive relationships are formed. The best lessons are suitably varied, with a range of methods used to engage pupils actively. Most pupils try hard to improve their work. Speaking and listening assessment and collaborative work are well planned for and pupils are secure in

how to improve their skill in these areas. Although several teachers lack specialist knowledge, they give pupils a good understanding of texts. The National Literacy Strategy has not been fully implemented to develop pupils' ability to assess their own learning. Activities are not always well matched to the learning objectives or the needs of the higher attaining pupils. There is good provision for wider reading in schemes of work.

68. Satisfactory systems to assess pupils' work are in place, but the use of assessment data is under-developed. As a result, teachers do not set individual improvement targets for pupils. Insufficient information is given to help pupils understand how well they have done and teachers are vague about what pupils need to do to reach the next National Curriculum level. In turn, pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers' marking of pupils' exercise books is inconsistent across the department.
69. The use of ICT is limited and mostly consists of research activities and the word processing of coursework. In one Year 11 lesson, low-attaining pupils used ICT effectively to create a presentation on Charles Dickens to the rest of the class.
70. The acting head of department has been in post a short time and has worked hard to encourage team working after a time of change and staff turnover in the past year. The management of the department is satisfactory, but leadership is unsatisfactory. The acting head of department has received limited training for her new role. Some key issues for development have been identified, but a lack of leadership skills has led to unsatisfactory planning for improvement. Further development of existing systems of monitoring, assessment and planning is required to ensure a more consistent approach within the department. Less experienced teachers require more support with lesson planning and with assessment of pupils' work. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Data is being used to inform the planning of groups and a programme of additional lessons is proposed for Year 11 higher attaining pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

71. Standards of literacy across other subject areas are satisfactory overall. Literacy skills are below average in Years 7 to 9 reflecting the well below average standards of many students when they enter the school in Year 7. Much scope remains for further improvement, in particular in the technical accuracy of written work. The school does not have a co-ordinator for literacy across the curriculum, and this has hindered the consistency of the development of literacy. The school's literacy policy promotes the teaching of basic skills. All teachers have received training to help them develop pupils' spelling and the use of key words within subjects. Word banks and key words are on display in most classrooms and spelling is corrected in work produced in most subject areas. Pupils are given opportunities to produce extended written work as in history, where writing frames help pupils to construct appropriate responses. Examples of good teaching to improve literacy were seen in science, where key words are introduced throughout lessons and a variety of writing styles is encouraged, including extended and creative writing. However, the teaching of literacy is not effective in all subjects, with limited support for pupils with writing in most subjects. Reading for pleasure is encouraged through the well-resourced library, which promotes reading through lively displays of books and pupils' work.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- After a period of sustained improvement in its results, changes in staffing have adversely affected standards and achievement in some classes.

- The quality of teaching and learning in classes taught by the department's experienced staff is good and students achieve well in these classes.
- The teaching is unsatisfactory in some of the classes taught by inexperienced staff.
- The department is managed very well and much is being done to help raise the quality of teaching where it is weak.
- The increased allocation of time for languages is having a positive impact on students' learning, although staff have not yet fully adapted their teaching techniques to gain maximum benefit.

Commentary

72. Although standards in French and Spanish² at the end of Year 9 are still, overall, below the national expectation, there has been a steady rise in standards over the last few years, and an increasing proportion of students achieve above the national expectation. The college's GCSE results in 2003 were its best ever, falling just below the national average. Very few students achieved the highest grades, but almost all achieved a pass. Given the below average nature of the college's intake and its policy to enter nearly all students for a modern foreign language, a much higher proportion than is found nationally, this represents good achievement. The loss of two experienced teachers at the very end of 2003 has adversely affected the department's momentum of improvement. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly lower than those in 2003, with a much smaller proportion of students achieving a pass at grade C or above. Currently, overall achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below average throughout the college. However, these judgements mask standards and achievement which differ according to the quality of teaching students receive. Students are most secure in their reading, listening and writing skills. Many are hesitant when speaking French or Spanish.
73. The quality of teaching and learning, and hence students' achievement, is satisfactory overall. It is good in the classes taught by the department's more experienced staff who manage their classes very well, establish good relationships with the students, high levels of discipline and an atmosphere which is conducive to good learning. They have good command of the languages taught and employ a good range of teaching methods and resources, which engage the students' attention. In a very good lesson with lower ability students in Year 10, for example, the teacher very successfully consolidated vocabulary and grammatical structures through the use of a succession of fast-paced oral activities and games and ensuring good participation from all students. The quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement is unsatisfactory in some classes taught by the department's less experienced teachers. In these classes, students are not managed effectively, leading to restlessness and, in some cases, an uninterested attitude. Teaching techniques are not sufficiently secure to ensure that students acquire new skills or consolidate previous learning, the pace of lessons is too slow and not enough is accomplished. In most classes, the marking of students' work is not always rigorous or frequent enough and does not provide sufficient indication as to where students have made mistakes or how they can improve their writing.
74. The department is led well and managed very well. The college is well aware of the weaknesses in teaching and has been working very hard to bring improvement through a whole range of strategies, including observation of lessons and mentoring by more experienced teachers. Within the classes of the experienced staff, there has been good improvement in all of the areas pointed out for development at the time of the previous inspection. Reorganisation of the school's timetable has been of significant benefit to languages. Students in Years 7 to 9 now have three, albeit slightly shorter, lessons each week rather than two. The benefits of this change are only just starting to be felt, and staff have not yet fully taken on board the increased opportunity for them to provide more rigorous input into developing students' speaking skills and more frequent opportunities to

² For the last three years, equal proportions of students have been taught either French or Spanish from Year 7 onwards. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 will have learnt French from Year 7, and the more able linguists will have had the option of studying Spanish as a second foreign language from Year 9. For the last few years, therefore, almost all students have been entered for GCSE in French, with only a small number taking GCSE in Spanish.

consolidate previous learning at the start of each lesson. Not enough consideration has been given as a department to experimenting with different seating and grouping arrangements to give students the opportunity to develop their speaking skills by working with a range of different partners and groups. Significant improvements have been made to the department's accommodation, but the resources and opportunities for the department to make use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning are severely limited. Good use is made of a teaching assistant to provide additional support for small groups of pupils, but the department does not have the benefit of a foreign language assistant.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has resulted in a positive ethos and a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Students achieve well throughout the school.
- Lesson observations and analysis of students' work give evidence of good teaching and learning.
- Assessment and tracking of students' achievements are thorough but assessment used to plan future work lacks consistency.

Commentary

75. Students enter the school with attainment levels below the national average. In 2003, at the end of Year 9, students' results showed good improvement in relation to prior attainment. These results, although still below national norms, were in line with similar schools. Standards have improved over time in line with national trends. Improvement is particularly evident in the boys' performance. Previously girls' results were much better but in 2004 this trend was reversed with boys achieving better results than girls.
76. GCSE results for 2003 show that the proportion of students attaining grades A* to G was in line with the national average. The number of passes at grades A* to C was close to national norms. This was due to above average results attained by girls. Results in 2004 indicate fewer students attaining the higher A* to C grades but a small improvement in the overall pass rate. Standards seen during the inspection indicate further improvements in overall attainment in comparison to 2004 and better results by boys at the end of Year 9.
77. By the end of Year 9, students make good progress in relation to prior attainment and achieve well. Excellent transition arrangements from primary schools help students to settle well into the work in the subject. Students with low attainment are identified and follow a curriculum well matched to their needs. Under-achieving students are also identified and receive booster classes. The National Numeracy strategy has a positive impact with an improvement in teaching and learning. By the end of Year 11, students also make good progress and achieve well. The Numeracy Strategy is effectively used in lessons for students of low and average ability. Teachers extend more able students so that they achieve the highest grades of which they are capable. A rigorous programme of homework is helping to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the specific targets set for them and the effective deployment of learning support assistants.
78. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Learning objectives are clearly displayed so that students are aware of what they are to learn. This arouses students' interest, which is necessary for learning. Full inclusion in all lessons is achieved by teachers' use of targeted questions, matched to students' level of ability, which enables all to participate fully in the lesson. Relationships are very good and lessons are mostly conducted in a harmonious

and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers have high expectations of good standards of work and behaviour and students have a good attitude to work and behave well. They respond well to the tasks set for them and work in exercise books is very well presented. In the less successful lessons with younger students, concentration wanes and low-level disruption occurs. Lesson plans, which break up the main activity into small structured steps, overcome this difficulty.

79. The development of literacy skills is fully supported with the emphasis on key words and learning objectives. Teachers use ICT extensively for presentation and explanation. Students have opportunities to work independently but rarely participate in paired or group work to develop their social skills. Procedures for collection and recording of assessment data for tracking student progress are good. Assessment used to assist students in knowing how they can improve is inconsistently used. There is some good practice but a considerable amount of marking is unhelpful with comments that are too brief and too general. Insufficient use is made of level or grade descriptions to enable students to improve their performance.
80. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum team leader has a clear vision for the development of the subject with a focus on raising standards of attainment. He has created an effective team who are also committed to improving achievement. This has not been an easy task in a period of staffing uncertainty. The college's results now compare favourably with those of similar schools. ICT is effectively used in the efficient administration of the subject. The curriculum team leader monitors teaching regularly. Accommodation for the subject is good and textbooks and learning resources are adequate for the needs of the curriculum.
81. Since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in the subject. Previously teaching, learning and progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 were judged to be satisfactory; they are now good. Competence in numerical skills, especially for the younger students, is no longer a barrier to learning in other subjects. There is no departmental policy on assessment. Systems to improve individual students' performance still lack consistency.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. Although there is no organised policy for mathematics across the curriculum, other subject areas make a contribution to the practice and consolidation of numeracy skills taught in mathematics lessons. These skills are extensively used by the science department, which has a numeracy policy. In science lessons, students construct different types of graphs to display data collected from experiments and they transpose formulae. Students also use graphical skills in geography lessons but they are not always sure of the type of graph to use. In ICT, students use mathematical skills well in the preparation of spreadsheets. The evidence collected during the inspection is that students are able to transfer numerical skills learned in mathematics lessons to use these competently in other subjects. The lack of a whole school policy for mathematics across the curriculum leads to some inconsistency in practice.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement of students at the ages of 14 and 16 in external tests and examinations is very good.
- Achievement of a group of Year 10 students who sat their external examination a year early is outstanding.
- Teaching and learning throughout the department are frequently very good.

- There is very good leadership provided by the head of department, and the management provided by key staff within the department, in order to bring about further improvement and change.
- Students enjoy their science lessons, particularly the more practical aspects of the subject.
- Marking is of variable quality and does not always provide helpful advice for students as to how they may improve on their attainment.

Commentary

83. Achievement in GCSE is very good and has been steadily improving since the previous inspection and virtually all students, who were entered for the examination, secured a grade in their recent examinations. The number of students attaining the higher grades in this examination has also risen and it is now at the national norms for this age group. Boys and girls attain equally well. The attainment of a group of Year 10 students, who this year sat their examination a year early, is outstanding as 100 per cent secured no lower than a grade B. In tests at the end of Year 9 attainment has also been steadily rising, and is now in line with national figures. The attainment of these students is very good when compared with that of students in other schools that have a similar prior attainment on entry to the school. Again, boys and girls attain equally well.
84. Student achievement throughout the school is very good. Standards of work seen in books and in lessons of students in Year 9 and Year 11 are currently in line with those expected of students of similar ages. Students with special educational needs, are achieving very well and, in many cases, are making very good progress. Younger students are acquiring a good range of skills and are beginning to understand what makes a good scientific investigation. They are beginning to use correct scientific terminology to explain their observations with increasing confidence. The group of Year 9 students, who have just started their course that will prepare them for their GCSE examination at the end of Year 10, are on track and are making good progress. Students in Years 10 and 11 are also making good progress in their modular and vocational courses. The successful Year 10 students, now in Year 11, have a very strong basis for the continuation of their studies post-16.
85. Teaching within the department is very good. It is consistently of high quality for each year group throughout the school. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and have a very good appreciation of the requirements for the tests and examinations. Relationships between the teachers and students are good. In the majority of lessons teachers use a range of relevant examples to explain difficult concepts. There is good pace to the teaching with teachers having high expectations of the students regardless of the teaching group. Teachers use a wide range of questioning to test knowledge and understanding and to check on progress. The use of questions, however, at the end of lessons to check on the learning of all students within the group is inconsistent. Where possible, teachers make good use of the ICT resources available to enrich the learning experiences of the students. Students' work is regularly marked but there are inconsistencies in the quality of guidance given to the students as to what is required by them to improve upon their grade or level. Written work is frequently presented well and there are a number of opportunities for students to undertake extended pieces of writing and to write creatively. For example, Year 7 students are writing a story about the life of particles changing state in order to boost their understanding of the kinetic theory. Worksheets are used constructively to help students with their writing. Student understanding of key scientific words and phrases is frequently checked by teachers. When classroom assistants are available they effectively support teaching and, together with the assistance from the technical support staff, enhance the learning experiences for the students.
86. Students enjoy their science lessons and demonstrate a positive approach to their work. They undertake practical work carefully and sensibly and they work together well when working in small groups. Most students are prepared to join in class discussions and to

volunteer answers to questions. They listen well to each other and are confident in expressing opinions.

87. Leadership of the department is very good. The new head of department is already providing clear and effective leadership and is successfully establishing a shared vision and set of agreed values for the department. A number of appropriate priorities have been identified for raising, still further, the standards of student work throughout the school including an interactive computer assessment system. Management of the department is also very good. The revised departmental handbook is comprehensive and is a very good working document for all teachers to use. The department is making good use of data to track student performance and to identify potential areas of underachievement. The department has made excellent progress since the previous inspection. Standards have steadily risen for students in tests at the end Year 9, and for Year 11 students in GCSE. The strategy to enable some students to take their GCSE examination a year early has proved to be very successful, as has the introduction of the vocational science course, applied science. The department now has a clear focus and shared purpose and is consequently one of the most successful departments of the college.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below national averages.
- Growing implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy in ICT offers a strong basis for improvement.
- In the best lessons, strong relationships between staff and students help sustain achievement.
- Assessment and marking of work are uneven, and do not always contribute to students' understanding of how they can improve.
- Results on the GCSE full course have been above college and national averages.

Commentary

88. Standards are below average in Years 7, 8 and 9 and well below average in Years 10 and 11. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show the proportion of students attaining Level 5 or above to be well below the national expectation. In 2003 only 14 per cent of Year 11 students entered for the short course GCSE in ICT gained a pass at grade C or above.
89. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 given that students start the course from a point of relatively low attainment. Boys and girls perform equally well, and there is satisfactory achievement from children with special educational needs. In Years 10 and 11 there is encouraging evidence of improvement (although this is constrained by the behaviour of a small minority) and in work seen achievement is therefore satisfactory.
90. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, ensuring that students develop skills with a range of software applications. The best teaching is well planned, and coupled with good working relationships and positive attitudes on the part of students, it helps secure satisfactory learning in both key stages. However, there is inadequate differentiation of methods and materials to meet the needs of more able children and those with learning or behavioural problems, which mean that the most able students fail to reach their full potential, while those with learning or behavioural problems, are often not sufficiently involved in their learning.
91. Although assessment of students' work has been uneven, improved departmental procedures, and the use of self-assessment material from the National Key Stage 3

Strategy, are beginning to give a more accurate picture of students' achievement, and help them understand how they can improve.

92. Throughout the college, each class has one full lesson every week allowing all students in Years 10 and 11 to undertake at least the short course GCSE in ICT. Despite the lack of vocational programmes, the curriculum for ICT is satisfactory.
93. Leadership and management in ICT are satisfactory. The need to address the issue of low attainment over time is now being met by improved schemes of work, and the growing implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy materials. There is good use of learning support, and of the graduate trainee scheme. There has been a good audit of resources and their use in each department, helping to identify needs in training and the sharing of good practice across the college as a whole.
94. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Although a number of issues remain unresolved investment in ICT resources has secured considerable improvement in availability. The college does not yet match current best practice (particularly in the use of interactive whiteboards and data projectors) and several ICT rooms are too cramped to allow the teacher to move easily around the class, or for the students to undertake group work. However, improved allocation of time and physical resources, coupled with well-trained staff and a willingness to explore the uses of ICT in learning have combined to secure improved standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Provision is **satisfactory**.

95. The use of ICT for support of learning in other subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students make good use of the excellent learning resource centre, and get access to computers and to the Internet when they need. Students do not reach high standards in their discrete ICT lessons although their general capability is such that they make satisfactory use of ICT when they are given the opportunity.
96. All schemes of work incorporate statutory ICT criteria and a number of subjects make regular and imaginative use of ICT in support of teaching and learning. In art and design digital imaging features in GCSE coursework and good use is made of the Internet for research. In science there is extensive use for data logging, analysis and research and there is inventive use of digital media in physical education where the department have invested in resource and state of the art software to record and analyse performance. In geography students use ICT to research tropical rainforests, while Year 7 students have made presentations on Hannibal using material downloaded from the Internet and incorporated into visual displays. From the Internet too, religious education students draw information on other religions and in many subjects there is good use of ICT for presentation and coursework. However, not all departments have adequate access. In music, Year 10 and 11 students use composing software and programmable keyboards, but a scarcity of working computers limits their effectiveness. There are other areas (including English and modern languages) where a lack of departmental access means that there are important aspects such as the redrafting of text where the potential of ICT is not fully exploited.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results, especially those of boys, are well below average.
- Leadership and management of history are good and standards are improving.
- Specialist staff have good subject knowledge and students learn well.
- Relationships with students are good and students display good attitudes to history.
- Weak literacy and analysis and interpretation skills have an adverse effect on standards.

Commentary

97. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average. They were well below those of previous years. The performance of boys, especially at the higher grade passes of A*-C, was well below that of girls and well below that of boys nationally. A badly managed change in the examining syllabus and the poor attendance of some students were the main reasons for the decline in standards and some underachievement. Provisional results for 2004 show substantial improvement.
98. Standards in the current Year 9 and 11 are below average but are improving. The achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, is good when specialist teachers teach them. Progress in lessons is often good but weak literacy skills and poor attendance are barriers to learning over the longer term for some students. Students of all abilities demonstrate increasing factual knowledge of the topics studied but their analysis and interpretation of information are weaker. Students make satisfactory progress with understanding timelines and the sequencing of historical events. By Year 11 some students still have weaknesses with spelling and grammar in their written work. Descriptive work is often good but analysis and evaluation are weaker. Some students demonstrate good skills in the use of ICT for research and use ICT to enhance the presentation of their work.
99. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of effective approaches in the classroom. Good quality explanations and questioning enable students to learn well in lessons. In lessons good use is made of starter activities to engage students and the end of lessons are used effectively to consolidate learning. Effective use is made of ICT to support students' learning. However, some teaching by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9 offers insufficient challenge to students and slows learning. Assessment procedures are improving. Students' work is well marked and they have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Improvements with testing and moderating their work now provide a better picture of how students are performing against national expectations. Relationships in the classroom are good and students display positive attitudes to their work that help them learn.
100. The leadership and management of history are good. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. Schemes of work have been revised and provide good guidance to members of the department. A good programme of visits for students across Years 7 to 11 enhances the curriculum and broadens historical awareness. Accommodation is of good quality and meets the needs of the curriculum well. Although the overall provision of resources is good there is a shortage of textbooks in Years 10 and 11. The improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a failure to lead and manage change in the department.
- GCSE results are below the national average and are continuing to fall.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject.
- The marking of students work is clear and helpful.

Commentary

101. In 2003, GCSE results were below average. The performance of boys was well below that of girls and well below that of boys nationally. The results were well below those of previous years when students' examination performance had been consistently above average. The decline followed a change in the examining syllabus used. In 2004, provisional results are again low and show a further decline.
102. Standards in the current Year 9 and 11 are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to students' attainment when they started at the school in Year 7 and for those who opt for the subject in Year 10. The achievement of boys and girls is similar. In lessons students of all abilities make good gains in geographical skills and knowledge but over the longer term, achievement is less secure because of the difficulty they experience with using and applying their knowledge. In samples of work seen some absence and students' unfinished work and weak literacy levels are further barriers to the achievement of many students.
103. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is satisfactory. All members of the department have good subject knowledge that enables them to explain subject matter clearly and manage students' behaviour well. Features of good teaching that lead to good learning are good starter activities that engage students, good guidance on learning supported with key questions written on the board, good quality explanations and clarification of activities. Such lessons are delivered with pace and provide students with the opportunity to be actively engaged in learning. In one lesson students made good use of the Learning Support Centre to develop their research skills including the use of ICT. In some lessons overlong teacher explanations, and insufficient opportunities for students to discuss their work slow progress with learning. The display of key words and the use of glossaries help students to use technical language effectively but they need further guidance with note making and writing. The quality of marking is good. Assessment practices lack consistency and rigour with the result that students have insufficient information on how they are progressing against national expectations.
104. The leadership of geography is unsatisfactory but management is satisfactory. Up to 2002 students had performed successfully in examinations but the change in syllabus has not been well managed and results have since fallen. The overall provision of resources is good but there is a shortage of textbooks in Years 10 and 11, which is a barrier to students' progress. The lack of fieldwork restricts activities in which students can broaden their experiences and apply their skills. Documentation and schemes of work are of a good standard and there are regular meetings that provide guidance and support on curriculum and teaching. Procedures to review the work of the department lack rigour.
105. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 11 students, who are all entered for GCSE, are achieving well and reaching standards close to the national average, although girls outperform boys by a wide margin.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 enjoy their lessons and achieve well over the key stage.
- The subject is well taught by specialists, who are creative in the range of methods and resources they employ to enable all students to make good progress in learning.
- Leadership of the subject is innovative in piloting new approaches and keeping the department in the vanguard of local and national developments in religious education.
- There are good strategies for assessing students' attainment by subject criteria. Greater use could be made of the outcomes to direct students on how to improve.
- The school has established beneficial links with local Christian youth workers, whose planned involvement in lessons promotes good understanding of Christian perspectives on moral issues.

Commentary

106. Standards in religious education are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All students follow a GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11 and the overall results were close to the national average in 2003, although girls did nearly twice as well as boys at grades A*-C. Similar results were attained this year, when the gender gap shortened, mainly due to a drop in girls' performance, but the difference was still significant. The quality of teaching on the GCSE course has improved now that specialists teach it wholly. They are maintaining standards around the national average and above those of similar schools.
107. Good achievement between Years 7 and 9 means that students improve from below average standards in religious education on entry to reach the levels expected in Year 9 by the local agreed syllabus. Year 9 pupils show average ability at researching issues, such as the Holocaust, and empathising with victims of injustice. Able students understand the possible effects of such events on people's faith. Most students are acquiring the rational skills needed for exploring moral issues but lower attainers struggled with abstract ideas about different forms of truth. Boys' writing on controversial issues is not as well developed as girls'.
108. In Year 11, students are achieving well, their teachers' assessments showing more secure average standards of work than in recent years. Students in the upper band marshal arguments from sources effectively on both sides of the abortion debate but their essays on the sanctity of life lacked sufficient explanation of Christian teaching. Students in the lower band gain good understanding from more varied learning styles, mixing video, role-play and small group discussion. Except for the greater level of detail in girls' writing, the gender difference in standards was less obvious in the lessons.
109. Teaching is consistently good or better across the school, characterised by good subject knowledge and effective lesson planning around clear learning objectives. The teachers are highly creative in devising learning materials and activities for students that bring the subject alive, including short stories that help students empathise with people from different cultural backgrounds. Worksheets are usually graduated to allow all students to make good progress in learning at their own level and teachers give extra support to any with special needs. Marking is done conscientiously but varies in the extent to which it is sufficiently diagnostic to guide improvement. Lessons challenge pupils' thinking through teaching elements of philosophy in Year 9 and expecting academic standards in the use of sources and enquiry methods on the GCSE course.

110. Students are learning well in all years, helped by regular opportunities for discussion and reflection on religious beliefs and moral issues. A strong feature of their learning is the effective use of empathy to help them identify with believers and appreciate how their beliefs influence the lives they lead. ICT is used well to support learning in Years 7 to 9 but not to the same extent in Years 10 and 11. The school's association with Christian youth workers in the local community is working well in religious education. Pupils are benefiting from the collaboration of teacher and youth worker over selected lessons on the GCSE course, where a multi-media approach is engaging students and increasing their understanding of Christian perspectives on moral issues.
111. Leadership of the subject is very good, informed, as it is by involvement in various professional activities at local and national level. Curriculum planning and development are highly effective with the piloting of elements of philosophy in Year 9 anticipating proposals for a National Curriculum framework in religious education. Management is very good. Courses are well organised around students' booklets and other teacher-produced materials that form a rich bank of resources. There is a good system for assessment, based on regular common assignments and results are recorded centrally to monitor progress. Feedback to students varies in the amount of guidance they receive on how to improve and the extent to which specific targets are used to raise standards. The banding arrangements allow teachers to pitch lessons at the right level. Strategies for boosting boys' achievement at GCSE have been proposed but await school policy before implementation. Overall, there has been good improvement in teaching, assessment and curriculum development since the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning of schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 does not ensure progression or the full coverage of the National Curriculum to meet statutory requirements.
- There are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good because of well-planned lessons and effective feedback to students.
- The leadership of the department is good with a clear ethos of high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Accommodation for the teaching of design and technology is very good.
- Assessment across Years 7 to 9 is well established but the use of data for target setting and monitoring students' attainment and progress is not effective.
- Although key issues have been identified, the development plan for the department is not well structured.

Commentary

112. The standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are above the national average for design and technology. In lessons, standards are average and achievement is good. There is a good focus on producing quality products and all students gain a good breadth of experience using a wide range of practical skills and materials. However, there is poor development of graphical skills and design thinking.
113. GCSE results overall in 2003 are similar to national averages. Resistant material results are well below national averages but in 2004 these show a radical improvement as a result of new staffing. In Years 10 and 11, the overall standards in lessons are average and achievement is good. Folios are satisfactory with a good focus on developing graphical capability and with many students making good use of ICT. Students who take resistant

materials do not have a good understanding of existing products to support and extend their design work.

114. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Where lessons are good they are planned well, expectations are high and learning is reviewed with students. Teachers have a good working relationship with students, which contribute to their good motivation and progress in lessons. Students with learning difficulties are supported particularly well in lessons and make good progress.
115. The leadership of the department is good with a clear ethos of high expectations in work and behaviour. Management is satisfactory and good teamwork means the department is starting to plan effectively and to raise standards. However, schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 do not meet the full National Curriculum programme of study because aspects relating to electronics, structures and control are not sufficiently covered. Cross-curricular themes, for example, literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are not covered well in planning. Assessment practice is well established across Years 7 to 9. However, data is not used effectively to set targets or to monitor student attainment and progress. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is more detailed and provides constructive information to students including actions for improvement. The work of the department is monitored well by the head of department. A departmental annual review identifies key issues but does not lead to a well-structured development plan for the department.
116. The accommodation for design and technology is very good. Teaching rooms are well maintained and well organised. The resources for teaching and learning are good but there are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture for use within the department to raise standards. Display is of a good quality but limited use is made of work produced by students to show high expectations of quality, content and presentation.
117. There has been limited progress since the previous inspection due to staffing problems that have now been overcome. Issues that still need to be addressed include the planning for progression in Years 7 to 9, the use of assessment, the insufficient resources for ICT, the planned teaching of graphical skills and the development of design capability.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are highly effective and generate excellent teamwork.
- In the very good teaching, teachers' energy, enthusiasm and teaching methods inspire students.
- Assessment of students' work is thorough and the data collected is used to improve students' learning.
- A wide range of enrichment activities enhances students' experience in art and design and contributes to students' personal development.
- High quality displays in and around the school raise the profile of the visual arts faculty and gives inspiration to students.

Commentary

118. Students enter the college in Year 7 with below average standards and by the end of Year 9 they are in line with the national average, which shows good achievement. Year 11 demonstrate good achievement with GCSE examination results rising each year since the previous inspection. In 2003 standards overall were close to the national average. Girls did

better than boys. Provisional results for 2004 indicate these standards have been sustained.

119. Teaching and learning are good. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable specialist teachers have raised achievement in art and design through good teaching, giving of their time in lunchtime and after-school clubs and twilight sessions, visits to galleries and exhibitions, entering students' work in competitions and developing an exciting and broad scheme of work with good lesson planning. Much time is spent with students planning and working on the many and varied displays in all areas of the school. Enrichment is very good and includes a wide range of extra-curricular activities, involvement with international partners in art based projects, and access to art professionals and workshops. Achievement is good. Work observed in years 7 to 9 uses a range of stimulus and includes portraiture, Chinese calligraphy, designing stained glass windows and observational drawing. In Years 10 and 11 teachers encourage independent learning, which is a feature of lessons and students design folders. Consistent marking across the department and very good use of this information inform students how well they are doing. Teachers have very good relationships with the students. Teachers use display very well in classrooms and around the college to inspire students and celebrate high standards of work.
120. Leadership and management are very good. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection under the new head of department. Current schemes of work have introduced exciting and innovative projects. Students have learned how to use research in their work and be selective. A fast-track short course GCSE stretches the gifted and talented in Year 9. The head of department generates excellent teamwork amongst his staff and this is reflected in the good attitudes of students. He has a clear vision for the future of the department and the flair, determination and energy to carry it out. The department has a very good assessment system with individual student booklets, which show students what is covered in the project, grades given and how to improve them.
121. The recently awarded Specialist Arts status is providing opportunities to improve the accommodation and facilities available within the school and further broaden the curriculum in such areas as ceramics and photography. The introduction of GCSE graphics is popular and is improving the motivation and attainment of boys.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are high because students are given well-focused help.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to music in the local primary schools and in the community.
- Year 9 students achieve well because they are taught in small groups.
- Some teaching does not meet the learning needs of boys.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation limits the opportunities students have in the subject.

Commentary

122. High standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement overall. Students achieve better in Year 9 than Years 7 and 8 because they are taught in small classes and get more individual help. Examination results at the end of Year 11 are high, with students meeting the requirements of the examination confidently. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average, the course attracts students of a wide range of abilities and achievement is very good. Their composition work reflects well the characteristics of the styles that they are studying, and they are secure performers.

123. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are well organised, and have good classroom presence. Lessons are planned in detail to ensure systematic learning. In Years 10 and 11, students are given good support to meet the requirements of the examination through individual help and clear, well-prepared worksheets. In Year 9, where the half class grouping enables students of similar musical aptitudes to be taught together, teachers pitch the work at a level that provides a good challenge for everyone and helps them learn. Some teaching of larger groups in Years 7 and 8 is unimaginative and fails to engage students actively in their musical learning. Where students are sent away to practise parts on the keyboard, boys quickly lose interest and underachieve.
124. Leadership is good. The head of department provides a good role model and as a result, the staff work effectively as a team, and this contributes to the popularity of the subject. Management is good because teachers operate well within the constraints that they work under. A good range of extra curricular activities and events is effectively organised to involve large numbers of students. Students are enthusiastic about their involvement in these opportunities. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because of a lack of practise space, and inadequate soundproofing. The department does not have sufficient specialised ICT resources to enable the requirements of the National Curriculum to be taught effectively. Progress since the time of the previous inspection is satisfactory. Results in Year 11 are higher, and the numbers opting in to the GCSE course are growing. Issues relating to accommodation and ICT continue to restrict the musical opportunities available to students.
125. There is good provision of instrumental tuition and the number of students benefiting is double the national average. The development of musical activity in local primary schools and in the community broadens opportunities for participation in music and is a strong feature of the departments work. The acquisition of both steel pans and samba drums has enriched students' musical experiences and opened up opportunities for students to play to, and teach, others.

Drama

126. Drama was sampled. Three lessons were seen and teaching was very good with a very good range of methods and subject matter. Standards are average. Lessons are characterised by high quality questioning and discussion that leads to very good involvement of students in their learning. Clear explanations and high expectations for participation in practical work are followed up with self-assessment that very effectively involves students in their learning and helps them improve. Students are enthusiastic about the subject as they engage in discussion and analysis of their practical work. They learn the skills of listening and how to value the contributions of others and as a result achieve very well.

Dance

127. Dance was sampled. Teaching is very good. Expectations are high and relationships very good. Standards of performance were in line with expectations. Students achieve well as a result of teaching that stimulates ideas and encourages students to develop their skills alongside their ability to respond expressively to a range of stimuli.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well at both GCSE and in lessons.
- Very good teaching by enthusiastic, expert teachers ensures all students make progress in lessons and achieve very well.
- The department is led very effectively.
- Day to day management is excellent with high expectations of students in terms of participation, performance, behaviour and kit.
- Students who have a very positive attitude to physical education enthusiastically take up the very good range of extra-curricular clubs and teams.

Commentary

128. This is a high performing and highly effective department led by a talented and committed head of department with a clear vision for developing the subject. High expectations are set for students in terms of performance, participation, behaviour and kit.
129. Standards are above average. Two thirds of the students entered for the GCSE in 2003 achieved grades A*-C, significantly above both the national and college average. Although this figure fell to just over a half in 2004, this still represented very good achievement. Dance GCSE shows similar very good achievement with students attaining significantly above the national average in 2003, and an equally impressive result in 2004. Although there is a wide range of ability of students in Years 10 and 11, both GCSE and non-examination students overall are performing above what is expected nationally. Students enter the college below what is expected nationally but by the end of the Year 9 are performing at the level expected nationally, representing good achievement. The department has identified able and talented students and provides well for these in lessons with more challenging activities and access to outside clubs and coaches to develop their talents further. Exceptional performance was observed in a number of sports including a Year 11 cricket option where students bowled and batted with excellent technique. Students with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons and achieve as well as their peers.
130. Teaching and learning are very good with well prepared lessons delivered enthusiastically by expert teachers and as a consequence students enjoy physical education and make very good progress in learning the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding. It is particularly noteworthy that students in Years 10 and 11 are not only offered a broad range of options but are taught in carefully structured lessons which match their skills and level of development leading to very good achievement. Clearly explained teaching points and demonstrations ensure students made very good progress, for example, in the football option in controlling, passing and shooting with accuracy and consistency. Similarly in the cricket option in a very good Year 11 examination class, the teacher's expert use of ICT, progressive practices and guided support ensured all learned and achieved very well in the lesson. In Year 9 gymnastics and dance lessons, targeted questioning was used to very good effect and challenging activities encouraged students to perform at their best. Students achieved very well in an excellent Year 10 GCSE dance lesson on 'chance' choreography as a result of inspirational and expert teaching.

Example of outstanding practice

The school has as a result of students' own fundraising equipped a large dance studio. Dance is developing as a powerful medium through which students can express themselves.

Chance choreography

Eleven girls, totally engrossed in their GCSE dance lesson, move sensitively to well-chosen music and, encouraged by their excellent teacher, choreograph individual dances determined by playing cards. The four suits represent dynamics and the numbers movements. Every student, working to the very best of her ability and at her own pace, creates a dance, stopping only to pick up the next card after throwing the dice to complete the sequence, hence chance choreography. Their motivation, dedication and performance are very impressive and the session a delight to watch in this attractive, airy and spacious dance studio.

131. Leadership of the department is very good and management is excellent ensuring that the department runs very effectively on a day-to-day basis. The head of department has set a clear direction for the subject with an insistence on high standards of behaviour, performance, participation and kit, which is consistently applied through very effective teamwork, and the sharing of common ideals and good practice. The department monitors and evaluates student progress very well. However, clear explanation of National Curriculum levels across each activity to enable students to understand what they need to do to improve is not fully in place. A very good range of extra-curricular clubs and teams, which are enthusiastically taken up by students, enhances the broad curriculum of activities. As a consequence of this and the department's commitment to providing a positive physical education experience for all, the school has been awarded Sportsmark status.
132. The department develops students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by incorporating relevant activities into lesson and curriculum planning. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is also provided for through, for example, the Junior Sports Leader Award taken by students in Year 10. Many individuals and school teams have achieved success in a range of sports at regional and county level. Whilst the general facilities for the delivery of the physical education curriculum are very good, enhanced by the college's acquisition of the community sports hall, there is no dedicated physical education classroom for the teaching of GCSE theory lessons. There has been good progress since the previous inspection.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Applied science

133. Applied science was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good as a result of very good links the teacher made to the science of flame retardant fabrics in the context of the workplace. Students engaged very well in the lesson and contributed enthusiastically to discussions achieving well.

Health and social care

134. Health and social care was sampled. Standards are good. Students studying the development of a child made very good progress with their learning as a result of teaching that challenged their thinking and checked their learning with well targeted questioning. The course is very well planned and supported with good resources and teaching materials that ensure very good development of knowledge and understanding.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and citizenship is a successful and important part of the curriculum.
- Achievement is good across all years with boys and girls achieving equally.
- GCSE examination results are very good and represent very good achievement.
- Teaching is good, challenging and well planned to help students learn.
- Annual curriculum enhancement week is very successful and adds significantly to students' personal development.

Commentary

135. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average with boys and girls achieving well, which is due to very good lesson planning and careful choice of topics to appeal to all students. This is the first year that the college has entered students for GCSE and provisional results are very good with results being higher than in other subjects in the school.
136. Achievement is good overall with students learning to identify key points and weigh up arguments effectively. Students contribute willingly and with enthusiasm in lessons to a wide range of topics and have learnt to listen to each other with respect and express ideas and opinions that are not their own. They learn about and use concepts such as compromise well when working as individuals and in groups. Students demonstrate good knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens both within their local community and the wider world.
137. Throughout all years teaching and learning are good with a significant amount of very good teaching. Teachers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the material they teach. The teaching packs developed by the department ensure consistency across all members of the teaching team. Lessons are very well planned and assessment is carried out regularly. Lessons are lively and challenging with activities such as role-play, interviews, group work and presentations to sustain students' interest and help them learn. Students' understanding of their place as citizens is good and further developed through the school's international links such as a recent exchange of photographs and information with other students and communities around the world. The annual curriculum enhancement week offers a full programme of arts, sports and technology activities, as well as residential visits in Britain and abroad. Through these activities students develop well their skills as citizens, working together beyond the classroom. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of exemplar material to illustrate and clarify tasks and raise achievement.
138. Leadership and management are very good. The subject is well led. The audit, evaluation and action plans are all very good and areas for development are known and understood by the course co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Realistic targets for further improvement are in place for next year. Monitoring of teaching is sound but has not yet ensured continuity across Years 10 and 11. The personal, social and health education course is delivered effectively through citizenship and all statutory areas are covered.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the college seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges.	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the principal	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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