

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE ASH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

Ashford

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125272

Headteacher: Krys Marshall

Lead inspector: Clare Gillies

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> February - 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268481

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of students: 11 - 16  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 884

School address: Stanwell Road  
Ashford  
Middlesex

Postcode: TW15 3DU

Telephone number: (01784) 243 824  
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Appropriate authority: The Governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Nigel Baines

Date of previous inspection: April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Ash Technology College, formerly known as Ashford High School, is a smaller than average, mixed, 11-16 comprehensive school, with just under 900 students on roll. Girls outnumber boys in all years except Year 11. In February 2004 it was awarded technology specialist college status, which came into effect in September 2004. It was awarded Investors in People in 2000 and the Sports England award in 2003. Almost 90 per cent of students are white British; just under five per cent are from Indian backgrounds and several other ethnic groups make up the remaining small percentage. A relatively high percentage of students speak English as an additional language, eleven of whom are at an early stage of learning the language. There are seven travellers. Students come from homes covering the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, which are below average overall.

Students' attainment on entry to the college is below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs is almost double the average, including an average percentage of statemented students. Among students with the greatest special educational needs, (that is, those with statements and those in the School Action Plus category) over one third have moderate learning difficulties, around a third have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, a fifth have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia and the rest have speech or physical difficulties. Just over two-thirds of students go on to further education, whilst most of the remainder go into employment and a few into training,

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20597	Clare Gillies	Lead inspector	
11414	Ann Bennett	Lay inspector	
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
8756	Pat Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science
32211	Brendan Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Art
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology
4317	Kenneth Madrell	Team inspector	Geography Applied leisure and tourism
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	History Citizenship
15472	Paul Andrews	Team inspector	Music Expressive Arts
32855	David Farrant	Team inspector	French German
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education
33672	John Fowler	Team inspector	Religious education Applied health and social care
33160	Natalia Power	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>6 - 10</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10 - 17</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17 - 19</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	
Work-related learning	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>21 - 39</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>40</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the college is unsatisfactory.** It has started to recover after a period of considerable difficulty, with three headteachers since January 2004. Leadership and management overall are now satisfactory. The work done by the new headteacher in the last five months has not had time to make a significant impact. The college has great difficulties appointing good, specialist teachers - staffing is poor, and so the college does not provide an acceptable standard of education. Teaching is unsatisfactory or poor in one in four lessons and students' behaviour reflects this in at least as many lessons. In many subjects, standards are below the national average; in several they have not improved since the last inspection. Provision and achievement are poor in science, music and religious education. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money. ***In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.***

#### The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching was less than satisfactory in one in four lessons during the inspection and in over half of these it was poor or very poor. Parents and students are right to be concerned about the quality of teaching.
- Students' behaviour is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons. When teaching is good or better, students behave well. New systems to improve behaviour are in place but they have not yet been effective.
- Provision for science, music and religious education is poor.
- About half the students with special educational needs do not receive all the support they need.
- English GCSE results improved in 2004 and were in line with the national average. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 9 improved in 2004.
- Despite students making satisfactory or better progress in lessons in English, mathematics and several other subjects, overall they do not achieve well enough.
- The headteacher and governors are fully aware of the college's weaknesses. They have tried hard, with limited success, to attract high quality teachers to the college.
- Statutory requirements are not all met: there is no daily act of collective worship, too little use of information and communication technology (ICT) in most subjects and by the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 and too little control in design and technology.

**The college's effectiveness has declined since its last inspection.** Standards have not improved, particularly at the end of Year 11 and in religious education; they have fallen in science. Students do not learn any better because teaching, and consequently their learning and behaviour, have deteriorated. Attempts to introduce study skills have not been successful.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	D	E	D

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

**Overall achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are below average.**

**In all years:** standards are well below average and students' achievement is poor in science, music and religious education. Students achieve well in art, drama and German.

Standards in physical education are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. **Years 7 to 9:** in 2003, Year 9 test results were below average in English and mathematics and well below in science. In 2004, mathematics results improved. The college's targets were met in mathematics only. **Years 10 and 11:** since the last inspection, the total average points score and the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C have been below or well below average. The average points score for students' best eight GCSE results was well below the national average in 2004. The school targets were not met. English results were average for the first time, as they still are - students are achieving well. Results were low in ICT, French, food technology, resistant materials and religious education. Above average results were in subjects taken by less than 40 students: German, graphics and expressive arts. Present standards reflect the pattern seen in last year's results. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in French, and in ICT for the majority of students.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are unsatisfactory.** Students' attitudes are unsatisfactory – a direct consequence of experiencing changes of teachers and unsatisfactory teaching on a regular basis. Their unsatisfactory behaviour in a significant minority of lessons reflects their frustration. Exclusion levels are high. Students do not learn how to work. Teachers do not check racist and anti-social comments adequately. Attendance is below the national median and punctuality is unsatisfactory.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.** Teaching in ICT, art and design, drama and history is consistently satisfactory or better but this is not the case in other subjects studied by all students. The impact of poor teaching and poor behaviour, especially in science, music and religious education, is significant. Students are demoralised and unenthusiastic about learning. A small amount of very good teaching exists - teaching was good or better in nearly half the lessons seen during the inspection. Most teachers have good lesson plans, but these cannot counteract students' poor behaviour, which undermines learning in many lessons. Many students do not understand how well they are doing and how they could do better.

The curriculum is satisfactory and set to improve in September 2005. Worthwhile vocational courses, which started in September 2004, are proving popular in Years 10 and 11. Students receive good careers education. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students know that many staff care about their welfare and futures. The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. Parents do not feel they know how the headteacher intends to improve the school and they want to be consulted more often. The school's partnership with the community is unsatisfactory. The community aspect of its technology college status is not yet in place.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management overall are satisfactory.** The headteacher and senior management team give sound leadership. The headteacher has put in place all the right procedures to raise standards and improve students' behaviour and attitudes but these cannot overcome poor teaching. Leadership at head of department level is unsatisfactory, with no post holders in science, music and religious education. Management is satisfactory. The work of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors are now realistic about the college's weaknesses.

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

Parents and students are not satisfied with the college. Both groups are frustrated by the number of supply teachers and/or teachers who cannot keep control and do not teach properly. Students are not involved enough in decisions which affect them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Persevere with all efforts to appoint heads of departments for science, music and religious education and to appoint enough qualified, specialist teachers to match the curriculum.
- Review the behaviour policy, with students, and make sure all teachers apply it consistently.
- Urgently raise standards in science, music and religious education.
- Ensure that all students with special educational needs get the support they need;

### **and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Introduce a daily act of collective worship, control technology and more use of ICT in all subjects and by students in Years 10 and 11.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

Achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are below average. Since the last inspection, GCSE results overall have been below or well below the national average. Standards in English and mathematics have steadily improved but those in science have declined.

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

- Standards in English have improved. GCSE results in 2004 were in line with the national average.
- Standards in mathematics have improved, especially in end-of-Year 9 tests.
- Standards and GCSE results in science and religious education are well below average.
- GCSE results in 2004 in German, graphics and expressive arts were at least above average.
- Students' achievement is poor in science, music and religious education, and unsatisfactory in French and information and communication (ICT) for the majority of students in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Commentary**

*The term 'similar schools' relates to all other schools or colleges where students, entering Year 7 or beginning their GCSE courses, had the same overall standards as The Ash Technology College students.*

1. Students enter the college with below average standards. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2004, mathematics results improved on the previous year, English results were almost the same but science results dropped. An average percentage of students attained at least Level 5 (the expected level) in English and mathematics but the percentage was well below the national average in science. The percentage of students attaining the higher level, Level 6, in mathematics was in line with the national average in 2004. The college's targets were met in mathematics only. Targets for 2005 are lower, reflecting the ability of the present Year 9 students.

#### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (32.3)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (33.1)	35.5 (35.4)
science	n/a (31.7)	33.1 (33.6)

*There were 197 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Since the last inspection, the total average points score and the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C have been below, or well below, average. The average points score for students' best eight GCSE results was well below the national average in 2004, halting the slight upward trend up to 2003. As the percentage of students who attained grades A\*-C in 2004 stayed the same in

mathematics and went up in English - matching the national average - it was the decline in science and low results in ICT, French, food technology, resistant materials and religious education, which significantly contributed to the overall decline in 2004 results. Higher than national average results were in subjects taken by less than 40 students: German, graphics and expressive arts.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004**

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	33 (35)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	88 (88)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	28.1 (30.3)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 164 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- None of the college's GCSE targets results were met in 2004. Evidence suggests that the college will struggle to meet the similar targets set for 2005, especially as provision for science is poor. In 2003, achievement was average compared to similar schools because the boys in that year group did particularly well – they normally do far less well than girls, as they did again in 2004. Students achieved much less than expected in 2004 overall, though they achieved very well in English and mathematics. Only in mathematics did boys do nearly as well as girls. They did slightly better than girls in history, but the percentage of A\*-C grades was low in this subject.
- Students from ethnic backgrounds as a whole achieve relatively higher standards than other students - they work hard and are keen to do well. Those students at a late stage of acquiring fluency in English as an additional language achieve very well, exceeding college standards in Year 9 tests and GCSE by a wide margin. Those at an early stage of language acquisition make a satisfactory but variable level of progress.
- Standards of work by students with special educational needs are well below those seen nationally; about half of these students do not achieve well enough. Those with the greatest need who receive one-to-one support, mainly in lessons, achieve well through careful and committed teaching. Many students on the register do not receive enough individual support to raise their low standards of literacy and numeracy or to improve their behaviour. In addition to students on the register, many others at the college with low attainment in literacy and numeracy or minor behaviour and emotional problems do not achieve well enough.
- Standards and achievement seen during the inspection are summarised in the chart below. In several subjects where achievement is satisfactory overall, individuals or small groups of students do not do as well as they could: this includes gifted and higher ability students who do the same work as others, students who simply do not concentrate enough, those who have poor attendance and/or behaviour, or lower attaining students and some with special educational needs who need more support in lessons.

	Years 7 to 9		Years 10 and 11	
	Standards	Achievement	Standards	Achievement
<b>English</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Average	Good
<b>Mathematics</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Satisfactory

<b>Science</b>	Well below average	Poor	Well below average	Poor
<b>Art</b>	Average	Good	Above average	Good
<b>Citizenship</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Satisfactory
<b>Design and technology</b>	Well below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Satisfactory
<b>Drama</b>	Average	Good	Above average	Good
<b>Geography</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Satisfactory
<b>History</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Satisfactory
<b>French</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Unsatisfactory
<b>German</b>	Above average	Satisfactory	Above average	Satisfactory
<b>ICT</b>	Below average	Satisfactory	Below average	Unsatisfactory
<b>Music</b>	Well below average	Poor	Not taught	
<b>Physical education</b>	Average	Satisfactory	Average	Satisfactory
<b>Religious education</b>	Well below average	Poor	Well below average	Unsatisfactory

7. Progress in lessons can be good but students do not always retain information well. A few make reasonable progress overall but do not complete coursework or fail to revise properly for their GCSEs. In 2004, 37 per cent of students attained A\*-C grades in both English and mathematics compared to 44 per cent nationally. It is the significant underachievement in science and religious education, taken by all students, that makes their overall achievement unsatisfactory.

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory overall. Exclusion levels are high. Attendance is below the national median and punctuality is unsatisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. The Race Equality policy is not implemented in full.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The poor behaviour of a significant number of students disrupts learning.
- The number of exclusions is high but an internal exclusion room is working well.
- Anti-social comments, including racist comments in lessons, occasionally go unchecked.
- Many students are well behaved, ambitious, try hard and find ways of coping. Students behave well in assembly and satisfactorily in their friendship groups outside lessons.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is unsatisfactory to college in the morning and to many lessons.
- The college is working to improve the development of students' awareness of spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues.

### **Commentary**

8. As a result of the college's work many students show maturity and behave sensibly. They are polite and eager to help each other and they respond enthusiastically when offered responsibilities and opportunities to help others, for example, joining the school council or becoming prefects and mentors. Prefects are conscientious in their duties and recognise that earning the respect of others is difficult. Students raise money to help those less fortunate than themselves, for example, following the recent Asian Tsunami Disaster.
9. Students are willing and capable learners when teaching fully engages them, but they are rightly frustrated that they are not taught well enough in many lessons; their behaviour in response to this compounds the problem. They dislike it when get a different teacher and lose respect for replacements when they feel they are

disadvantaged as a result. Year 7 students are particularly badly served, and their unacceptable behaviour, on average in two lessons each day, mirrors the quality of teaching they receive. At the start of their secondary education they are not getting a good experience and learning good working habits.

10. Students enjoy doing and making things, and as a result their attitudes are more positive in art, drama, design and technology and ICT. They do not value music and religious education, where their behaviour is consistently poor, as it is in many science lessons. In the dining room and around college students are generally sensible, although some of them take a long time moving between lessons. Students enjoy the social aspects of college when they choose to mix with their friends. Their experiences in class do not help them learn to work with others. They pay good attention in assembly, and show respect for authority. Students are indignant when their after-school clubs are cancelled and this usually as a result of poor behaviour.
11. The college has introduced a new behaviour and reward scheme, with detailed consequences. This makes effective use of the newly set up internal exclusion room but the impact on the high level of fixed period exclusions has yet to be evaluated. The rewards are devised to be readily achievable, even for poorly behaved students, to build up their self-esteem and sense of personal responsibility. Students are critical of certain aspects of the complex arrangements, and do not feel they have ownership of the scheme.

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of students on roll	Number of fixed-period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	792	174	3
White – any other White background	20	11	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	5	1
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	43	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	10	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	13	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0

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

12. Students do know right from wrong, but some choose to misbehave. A significant minority behave in an anti-social manner, dropping litter and spoiling furniture with graffiti and over four out of five of them feel that behaviour is not good. Groups of students repeated these opinions during the inspection. Their views were borne out by the unsatisfactory or poor behaviour in at least one-third of lessons during the

inspection. Many students are irritated by the poor behaviour of the minority as they know it interrupts lessons and hinders their achievement.

13. Almost three out of five students who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that there was racism and bullying in college. A small number make unpleasant comments or use unacceptable language. Most, but not all, teachers challenge sexist, homophobic and racist remarks. A few racist incidents are logged in the college's records but others go unreported so some students get away with unacceptable behaviour. In one instance, following a lesson where a few students' behaviour had been hostile and racist, the teacher commented that she did not believe they would have behaved in the same way had she been white. In contrast, when a couple of students made totally unacceptable comments about sexual orientation and gender differences the teacher challenged them and dealt with them firmly and effectively. If teachers do not follow the college's procedures to report every minor incident, the headteacher is not able to deal effectively with problems. When she has known about incidents, she has acted quickly and she is determined to do this on all occasions.
14. Attendance is unsatisfactory, and so far this academic year it is lower than the previous year. Attendance is less than 90 per cent in almost half the tutor groups. The college has systems to follow up absence, but parental support is sometimes lacking. The level of unauthorised absence is high, and some internal truancy is identified. Punctuality in the mornings is of concern, particularly among Years 10 and 11 students, and students are too often late to lessons, impacting on their learning.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.3	School data	2.4
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

15. Relationships between students with special educational needs and adults providing individual support are positive. However, because much of the teaching for these students takes place individually or in very small groups, too few of them access stimulating teaching which addresses their needs. Students who speak English as additional language, at a later stage of language acquisition, have very high aspirations. They have embraced the work ethic and are determined to succeed academically. This is not so marked in some of those at the earlier stages of learning.
16. At present students do not discuss moral dilemmas and social choices enough. With no PSHE lessons and citizenship lessons no longer happening, the quality of students' personal development largely depends on how well their tutors use form time in the morning. Several sessions of thoughtful work were seen during the inspection, for example, discussing the assembly themes or a citizenship topic, but students did suggest that such use of form time was irregular. The personal development of a few students with special educational needs is specifically addressed through a close examination of news in the media. However, in such cases the students' basic literacy needs are sometimes overlooked.

17. Outside agencies, such as the police and fire brigade, complement work done in citizenship and during form time. Subjects such as history, English and religious education deal with the topics of racism and prejudice as well as significant historical events such as the World Wars and the Holocaust. Class work is supported by displays around college, including one against racism and one highlighting the Holocaust.
18. Trips and visits strengthen students' social behaviour and broaden their cultural and multi-cultural understanding. Students go to the theatre, to Amsterdam for art, to the First World War battlefields and on language trips to France and Germany. A recent visit to a local mosque provided an opportunity for students to consider aspects of a major world religion, and the weekly Good Friday Club is a good spiritual opportunity for students.
19. Not enough monitoring has been done, especially as religious education lessons are not successful, to ascertain whether students' spiritual understanding and awareness of multi-cultural issues are being developed enough through aspects of work studied in all subjects; evidence suggests it is not. Raising teachers' awareness of how they can all contribute has not been a priority so far. Assemblies and thoughts for the week, well planned and introduced by the headteacher, do have moral themes but limited spiritual content. As a result, the college does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and has declined since the last inspection. The quality of assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in ICT, art and design, drama and history is consistently satisfactory or better but this is not the case in other subjects studied by all students.
- The impact of poor teaching and poor behaviour, especially in science, music and religious education, is significant. Students are demoralised and unenthusiastic about learning.
- A small amount of very good teaching exists; teaching was good or better in nearly half the lessons seen during the inspection.
- Teachers now have mostly good lesson plans, but these cannot counteract students' poor behaviour, which undermines learning in many lessons.
- Marking and feedback are unsatisfactory in a significant number of subjects, although assessment is effective in English, mathematics, art, ICT and physical education. Many students do not understand how well they are doing and how they could do better.

## Commentary

20. There is slightly less good or better teaching and significantly more unsatisfactory and poor teaching – one in four lessons – than at the time of the last inspection. It is not surprising that parents and students have concerns about the quality of teaching, although, in the pre-inspection questionnaires, at least two-thirds stated that they felt teaching is good. The key point about the high percentage of unsatisfactory and poor teaching is the dispiriting effect it has on students' morale, confidence and desire to learn. Even when teaching was satisfactory or better, it did not follow that students' behaviour was acceptable. Even when their behaviour was reasonable, it did not follow that they were enthused with their work and keen to do well.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 120 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	9 (8%)	46 (38%)	36 (30%)	13 (11%)	12 (10%)	4 (3%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

21. The correlation between the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and learning is very strong. There were many encouraging examples of good teaching and learning, where teachers did not need to control behaviour because they generated students' concentration and positive attitudes to the subject with interesting and varied work. During the inspection, teaching was most effective in Years 10 and 11 and least effective in Years 7 and 9. The headteacher fully appreciates that the seeds of a good work ethic and good patterns of behaviour must be sown in Year 7.
22. At least half of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or very good in English, ICT, art and design, drama, French, geography, German and physical education. The weakest teaching was in science, music and religious education. In science, despite one very good lesson, almost half the teaching was poor. The fact that consistently satisfactory or better teaching was seen in only four subjects - ICT, art and design, drama and history - confirms that, in many subjects, weak teaching can be linked with groups of students who underachieve. The head of mathematics rotates teachers between groups to ensure that all receive some quality teaching. It is sad to hear a student observe that she knows she has just lost the best teacher and gained the worst. Such feelings cannot inspire students to work hard and achieve their best.
23. The headteacher and senior leadership team cannot be faulted for their efforts to improve teaching. Since September 2004 teachers have received much training and guidance on, for example, how to structure lessons, how to control behaviour and how to make lessons interesting and lively. Most teachers do now have well written and thoughtful lesson plans which often contribute to successful lessons but, if students' behaviour is not controlled properly, good lesson plans cannot save the situation.
24. Features of the lessons where teaching was very good or had very good elements included:
- assessing accurately students' understanding of work covered in previous lessons;
  - asking well chosen questions which stimulate students to think deeply and/or fast;

- referring to everyday situations so that students appreciate the work's relevance to their lives;
  - planning lively quick starters at the beginning of lessons which grab students' attention;
  - setting good quality homework which is integral to the development of the lesson and marking it helpfully with guidance about how to improve;
  - generating a respectful, encouraging relationship in which all students feel valued;
  - playing music as students enter the classroom (in English), which establishes a calm atmosphere for learning and using this music as a tool to extend vocabulary;
  - fun ways of learning, such as games, assembling jigsaws or including amusing anecdotes;
  - using a wide range of activities, such as interactive whiteboards, PowerPoint presentations, analysis of photographs or watching videos;
  - having successful ways of changing tasks quickly without students losing concentration;
  - setting very high standards for work and behaviour and not accepting anything less.
25. Such elements of effective teaching were seen in many other lessons but there were several occasions when, despite the teachers' best efforts, students did not learn as well as the teaching merited. This happened when students only kept focused when working under the teacher's eye, concentrated spasmodically, saw lessons as a chance to socialise rather than work, or exhausted teachers by making them expend energy to keep control.
26. On the teaching side of the equation, features that lowered the effectiveness of students' learning included: spoon-feeding, letting the pace of lessons flag or be too teacher-directed, setting work that was too easy for some or too hard for others, accepting a low standard of work and applying the college's behaviour policy ineffectively and inconsistently. Many of these features were present in science, music and religious education.
27. Students with special educational needs are taught and learn satisfactorily overall. This represents a decline since the previous inspection, when teaching was good overall. One-to-one teaching by specialist teachers and learning support assistants is often good. Whole-class teaching of students with special educational needs, especially those in the lowest sets, is less effective because their needs are too widespread to be catered for solely by individual support. Not all subject teachers take sufficient account of students' individual education plans to provide work for their individual needs. Procedures for providing specially adapted resources are informal and are left to the initiative of the highly-committed learning support assistants.
28. Specialist teachers of students with special educational needs spend too long on administration and on providing individual support to only the neediest students. With too few learning support assistants, whose time is concentrated in English, mathematics and science, students' achievement in other subjects is held back. Students in the learning support unit do not achieve well enough as teaching is not tightly structured and the atmosphere is too relaxed. Enjoying this, some of them prefer to be there rather than in normal classes. In contrast, those students removed



from lessons and sent to the internal exclusion unit study hard and dislike the quiet, disciplined work ethic.

29. Teaching for students who speak English as an additional language at the earlier stages of language acquisition is good. Pre-and post-lesson tutorials are a strong feature of provision. Good teaching methods catch students' interest in the very few lessons for which they are withdrawn from their usual timetable. Respect for, and knowledge of, the mother language is an effective feature of the teaching. All teachers are given advice on best practice to adopt in lessons where there are English as an additional language (EAL) learners.
30. The new headteacher quickly realised that teachers lacked basic information about students' past performance and capabilities. She introduced nationally recognised tests on, for example, verbal reasoning. This information, combined with past national test results, information about special needs, second language skills, students' predicted levels and grades, has been given to every teacher. Termly assessments now take place, but they are not reliable in all subjects. The English, mathematics, art, ICT and physical education departments assess and plan well overall and set realistic goals.
31. Monitoring of the college's marking scheme is not rigorous enough. Most students understand the scheme but the feedback and targets teachers give them are inconsistent between departments. The portfolio used in physical education, where students self-assess their progress, is an example of really helpful guidance for students. However, students' work is not marked regularly in science, geography, design and technology, music and religious education. Comments, where given, rarely tell students how they are doing and how to improve.
32. The progress of all students on the special needs register is well monitored through individual education plans, agreed with students and their parents and carers. Targets for behaviour and progress within lessons are reviewed regularly. There is, however, no effective programme for tracking and monitoring the progress of the whole body of students with special educational needs to target specific areas of weakness and drive up academic standards. Links with subject teachers, to help them tailor work to the needs of lower-attaining students, are unsatisfactory; at the time of the previous inspection, meetings did take place.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are satisfactory. Staffing is poor and the accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory – none meet the requirements of the curriculum offered.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Leadership of the curriculum is good. The changes already in place for September 2005 will offer students in Years 10 and 11 more courses which they will find relevant.
- Careers development and guidance is good, especially in Years 9 to 11.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory.
- The poor match of teachers to the curriculum is a major barrier to raising standards.

## Commentary

33. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements except for the provision of a daily act of collective worship, the control area of design and technology in Years 7 to 9, and ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11. The new leadership team has tackled curriculum changes for September 2005 boldly - the subjects offered will meet students' needs and aspirations better. A study skills lesson in Years 7 and 8 will not continue as it has not been effective overall. The new curriculum will also reflect the recently awarded technology college status by increasing the range of technology courses and making ICT compulsory for all students in Years 10 and 11.
34. In addition to all National Curriculum subjects, Years 7 to 9 students have drama lessons and high ability students take German as a second foreign language from Year 8. In Years 10 and 11 there is a reasonable choice of optional subjects, including applied GCSE (vocational) courses in ICT, art and design, health and social care and leisure and tourism. These are popular and students are mostly achieving well. However, too little time has been allocated, especially for art and design, to meet the full requirements of these courses.
35. Students for whom English is an additional language receive very good support so they can access all areas of the curriculum. All students with special educational needs are also involved in all subjects. Those in Years 7 to 9 receive individual help in lessons. The shortage of learning support assistants means that the majority of these students receive too little support in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Most learning support assistants follow individual students, rather than working within subjects. In the best practice, seen in one case, a learning support assistant, working only in mathematics, helps students to achieve well through a sound understanding of the subject. The lack of any programme of extra classes outside lesson time, to boost students' basic literacy and numeracy skills, limits their potential achievement.
36. The careers advice students receive is good. Two Connexions advisers visit the college weekly and provide helpful guidance and support. The college makes the most of its valuable links with the army, local sixth form and further education colleges and the business partnership. Year 10 students will undertake work shadowing, work experience, enterprise days and visits to universities in the summer term. The large majority of Year 11 students are already confident about their future courses and where they plan to study. Elements of the citizenship lessons, which have now stopped, addressed topics with significant relevance to careers education. In addition, the thoughts for the week and content of several assemblies effectively focus on raising students' aspirations.
37. Courses and training for students in Years 10 and 11 who are at risk of disaffection with normal college life have improved. They benefit from a programme of college links and extended work experience; they have better attitudes to college and their attendance has improved. Nine Year 11 students have successful work placements for either three or four days. Similar arrangements are in place for a larger number of Year 10 students. Courses taken include hair dressing, child care and construction. The programme of support classes they follow in school, to raise standards in other subjects, is unsatisfactory. With no coherent curriculum for these classes and no clear, formal liaison with subject teachers, these sessions are not effective.

38. Enrichment of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, makes a satisfactory contribution to students' education. In sport and drama, a satisfactory range of activities takes place, but few students take part. Attendance at the art club, and at extra geography and history sessions for Year 11, is good. A few gifted and talented students have attended summer schools run by higher education institutions but overall provision for them is not strong at present. A small group of gifted linguists attend a weekly Russian club. Overseas visits and an annual ski trip to the Alps provide life-enhancing experiences and improve attitudes to school, for those few students who choose to go. Access to extra-curricular activities is more difficult for English as additional language students because a high proportion of them live outside the immediate area.
39. There are too few specialist and experienced staff to deliver the curriculum, so the number of unqualified and supply teachers is high. Several are temporary, or now undergoing training. This contributes to the high proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching. With advertisements failing to attract applicants for head of department positions for science, music and religious education, it is hard to see what else the college can do to improve the poor provision in these subjects. There are too few learning support assistants and not enough technician support in art and design and design and technology. Technicians provide good support in science and ICT.
40. Although a few areas of the college have been refurbished to a high standard, much remains which is drab and dreary. Students do not respect these dilapidated areas and chewing gum and graffiti are common. The learning resource centre, reception area, physical education changing rooms and the new hard court areas, ICT rooms and the refurbished accommodation for students with special educational needs are very good; they help learning by providing areas that stimulate students. The rooms for music and religious education do not because of their dirty, tired appearance.
41. Departments find it difficult to access ICT resources because the suites are mainly used for discrete lessons. Resources in art and design, science, music and religious education are unsatisfactory, mostly due to the lack of ICT resources, and books. Science, for example, has no data-logging equipment and design and technology has too little control equipment. The librarian is very efficient and keeps good records to help future developments. The limited number of interactive whiteboards considerably restricts varied and interesting teaching methods.

## **Care, guidance and support**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The college ensures students' care, welfare, health and safety satisfactorily. The college provides satisfactory support, advice and guidance for students based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The college seeks to involve students unsatisfactorily in its work and development.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The newly focused work of the heads of student progress and form tutors is evolving well.
- Form time is not used consistently by form tutors.
- Students are not clear about their progress in some subjects.
- Health and safety practices are not monitored regularly and consistently enough.

## **Commentary**

42. The headteacher has shifted the focus of the form tutor's role to include students' academic progress, and has renamed the co-ordinators for each year group as heads of student progress. There is much potential in the timely change, introducing a more rigorous edge in the focus on standards, still combined with tutors' pastoral role of supporting students in their personal development. This is also reflected in the college's new behaviour policy, and the introduction of an internal exclusion room.
43. Teachers now assess students' work on a termly basis and form tutors use this information to gain an overview of how students are performing. Reports also comment on students' progress in each subject, alongside grades for students' behaviour, motivation and homework. The college marking scheme does not sit tidily alongside this. Students are not always clear about how they are getting on in their subjects, what they need to do to improve and how to meet their target levels or grades. This is particularly an issue in subjects where they do not feel they are taught well and query the validity of their assessment and progress grades.
44. Much depends on the quality of the form tutors and their relationship with their students. Some form tutors are effective and give their students a positive start to the day, but this does not happen for all. Nevertheless, students are confident that they could find an adult to talk to if they needed, and some spoke warmly of the quality of support they had received.
45. The improvements in the furniture, and healthier food and drinks, make the dining area a busy but good-humoured meeting place for students. Enough staff are trained in first aid and they provide the correct care as needed. College policy is to send home those who are unwell, so the small student welfare offices are adequate. Members of the senior leadership team keep a careful eye on traveller students' attendance and progress. Child protection matters are secure and monitored carefully and the college follows the locally agreed procedures correctly. The provision of care and guidance for individual students with the greatest special educational needs is satisfactory.
46. Governors are involved in structural aspects of health and safety but, because their monitoring visits take place out of school hours, they do not see working practices. These are too casual in a number of departments, and cleanliness also lacks attention. Risk assessments are undertaken well in physical education but not in other practical areas, where there is also a casual attitude towards modelling safe working practices.
47. Parents, including those whose children have special educational needs, are happy with the arrangements made when their children start at the college. Testing is undertaken quickly to plan support as needed and the college has efficient procedures for collecting information from students' primary schools. The special educational needs co-ordinator disseminates good practice within the college by training teachers on how to use individual education plans. Older students with the greatest needs are well supported by educational programmes, such as college placements. Care, guidance and support for those who speak English as additional language is very good. All have positive relationships with the co-ordinator, who promotes their well-being in the college. Their learning is very well supported.
48. Students who speak English as an additional language receive helpful specialist advice on further education and careers. Most Year 11 students also speak well of the careers advice they have been given. Many are enthusiastic about modern

apprenticeships and are clear about their requirements. Students are not involved enough in the changes being made in the college, with the new behaviour policy a current concern. Members of the school council feel their voice is heard but a significant number of students were not aware that the school council exists.

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

The college's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory. The college's partnership with the community is unsatisfactory. The college's links with other colleges and schools are satisfactory.

#### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Parents have concerns over several areas of college life. They are not convinced the college considers their views enough. They are keen to see the college becoming more successful.
- Parents are given satisfactory information about students' progress.
- Students are well prepared for education or training after they leave the college.
- Links with the community are unsatisfactory and those related to technology college status have yet to be developed.

#### **COMMENTARY**

49. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed their significant concern in six areas. The inspection confirmed their perceptions were valid:
  - poor behaviour in class which relates to the college's problems recruiting staff;
  - bullying and harassment not always being dealt with properly in the classroom, although those that are reported are properly managed;
  - lack of quality and regularity in homework;
  - cancellation, sometimes quite late, of after-college activities;
  - too little consultation with them, for example, about the new uniform introduced by the previous headteacher; and
  - not feeling well enough informed about their child's progress.
50. This year the college has started issuing parents with termly assessment reports. Some parents, understandably, find them confusing as grades for behaviour, homework, motivation and current performance range from '1' for excellent down to '5' for serious cause for concern, whilst National Curriculum levels rise from 1 to 8. These reports do not give the sort of detailed information and targets for improvement, subject by subject, previously contained in the end of year reports. These reports are in addition to the end of year reports.
51. Links between the college and parents and carers of students with the greatest special educational needs are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator attends parents' evenings so that as many parents as possible are able to consult her. The college liaises effectively with parents and carers of those who speak English as additional language, using the services of translators as required.
52. Parents are right to want to be consulted; an area that the headteacher did not address keenly when she took over the college. The written information parents receive is satisfactory. The monthly newsletters issued early in the academic year, whilst colourful, predominantly featured reminders and information about procedures. Later ones feature news items and reports of successes and achievements – the right way to engage both parents and students and tell them how the college will develop its technology specialism.

53. The college is keen to increase the number of parents selecting it as their first preference for secondary education. They, and future students, are encouraged to visit during the day and for open evenings. As far as possible, the college prepares students well for when they start secondary education. Parents are happy with these arrangements and a high proportion believe staff expect them to work hard. Parents' attendance at information evenings is improving.
54. The college is not sufficiently involved with its community. Only the physical education department is really effective, making good use of local sports clubs and with the outdoor multi-use games area ready for use by the community. Small groups of students benefit from training through a longstanding link with the army. The college has yet to implement the community aspects of its specialist status, although the design and technology department has set links with primary schools in motion.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Leadership is satisfactory at a senior level but unsatisfactory in terms of heads of departments. Management is satisfactory. The work of the governing body is satisfactory. A significant barrier to raising achievement is the difficulty the college has in recruiting good teachers.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The newly structured senior leadership team, under the headteacher's sound guidance, is professional and realistic about the college's weaknesses.
- The headteacher has set in motion the necessary steps to improve teaching and behaviour and to raise standards. She has not yet captured the parents' and students' support.
- Arrangements for training teachers and for newly qualified or other teachers joining the college are good. Their professional development is encouraged well.
- Provision for students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is very good but it is unsatisfactory for students with special educational needs as a whole.
- Science, music and religious education have no heads of departments so leadership is poor. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology and special educational needs.

### **Commentary**

55. When she was appointed in September 2004, the headteacher observed that: "many improvements had to be done quickly as a tremendous degree of slippage had occurred". Since September, the college has started to recover after a period of considerable difficulty, with three headteachers since January 2004. The work done by the new headteacher in the last five months has not had time to make a significant impact. There is much evidence that systems are improving and confidence is being restored but, until the headteacher and governors can appoint a large number of good teachers, their efforts to raise standards will be thwarted.
56. The college's effectiveness has declined since its last inspection. Standards have not improved, particularly at the end of Year 11 and in religious education; they have fallen in science. Students do not learn any better because teaching, and consequently their learning and behaviour have deteriorated. Attempts to introduce

study skills have not been successful. Prior to the inspection, the headteacher reflected that improvement since the last inspection had been poor.

57. The headteacher is quite clear about what needs to be done and in the last five months she has carried out the following (all described in detail in earlier sections of this report):
- observations of all teachers so she knows exactly which staff teach well and which heads of department are effective;
  - training for all staff on teaching and learning and how to control behaviour. A few teachers are not receptive to guidance so improvement has been limited;
  - effective restructuring of the senior leadership team and promotions to keep good staff in the college. Alterations to teachers' timetables have also been made;
  - introduced a new, partially successful, behaviour policy in January 2004 and set up an internal exclusion room and a learning support unit to reduce poor behaviour in lessons;
  - advertised for vacant positions such as the head of science (and had no response), and taken steps towards securing appointments for September 2005;
  - simplified the timetable and altered the curriculum for the next academic year, so that students will study subjects relevant to their interests and aptitudes;
  - carried out tests to quantify students' standards and potential. All teachers have received this information, and more, to raise their expectations of what standards students should achieve;
  - spent wisely in terms of staffing, the specialist technology college funds, and refurbishment.
58. The headteacher and senior leadership team have not yet made as much progress in winning over the parents and students. One in five parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire did not feel they knew enough to comment on leadership, and just under half of the students remain to be convinced that the college is well run. Students have not yet appreciated how aware the headteacher is of their concerns over the quality of teaching and behaviour.
59. Heads of student progress carry out their duties conscientiously and the majority of form tutors establish good relationships with students and use form time productively. It is the lack of heads of departments in science, music and religious education and the unsatisfactory leadership for design and technology and special educational needs that contribute to this layer of leadership being unsatisfactory overall. Leadership and management of English, mathematics, art and design and ICT are good.
60. Good performance management systems, for teaching and non-teaching staff, are well embedded. Teachers are supported to gain additional qualifications. These good arrangements do not benefit the college as much as they could because of the considerable staff turnover. The college is committed to initial teacher training, and to supporting newly qualified teachers, which it does well. The headteacher and governors have tried several approaches to recruitment, often with limited success. The headteacher shrewdly offers incentives to good teachers to encourage them to stay. Plans are in place to further improve the deployment of staff and their workload and to increase the number of learning support assistants.

61. Provision for students who speak English as additional language is very well managed. Their progress is monitored well. Leadership and management of the special educational needs department overall are unsatisfactory, though the administration of students' individual education plans and related paperwork is meticulous. There are no programmes of wide-reaching support and extra tuition for the large proportion of students requiring help with literacy and numeracy. Management of the department is informal, though regular and productive meetings with learning support assistants take place.
62. The supportive governing body is alert to the significant problems the college faces; it is self-critical of some aspects of its work in the past. Until recently, governors had possibly not appreciated the full impact of poor teaching on students' learning and morale. Governors realise that they must be confident, which they now are, that the headteacher is providing them with the true picture of what is happening in college. They have a good range of expertise, for example, in business and industry, to bring to their deliberations. They have not monitored the impact of the race equality policy rigorously. They are now beginning to challenge and probe decisions and information more effectively.
63. The college's finances are well managed. The recording of expenditure, for example, on special educational needs, is now more detailed than previously. Evidence suggests that these funds were not spent with clarity in the past. In addition to making the budget allocation transparent, the headteacher has tackled value for money in staffing by moving teachers who used to work with students individually into more group teaching or pastoral roles. This has made the learning support unit a viable option. The newly appointed manager of the internal exclusion room is not paid a teacher's salary and is giving very good value for money.

***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,180,218	Balance from previous year	172,597
Total expenditure	2,913,851	Balance carried forward to the next year	266,367
Expenditure per student	3,199		

64. With the turmoil of the past to overcome, it is not surprising that the college has not yet launched its specialist status to the community and parents. Nevertheless, these extra funds have been spent wisely, increasing the number of computers and installing interactive whiteboards and laptops in mathematics – a department that is successfully raising standards. When the headteacher can find funding, she invests in essential, and morale-boosting, refurbishment. The entrance hall, with its hi-tech notice board, and the learning resource centre are now attractive, and the new tables and chairs in the dining hall are excellent. The latter has certainly pleased the students and their behaviour there is good.
65. Regular information is provided by the finance manager to the headteacher and governors. The governors' finance sub-committee meets regularly and the finance manager's reports help it to monitor actual and committed expenditure against the budget. The previous audit was carried out in the summer of 2002, and there were no major issues arising from it. The college makes good use of LEA financial systems and reports to governors are based on these. The college spends below the average



amount of money per student for a school of its type. However, as the college is not providing an acceptable quality of education, the value for money is unsatisfactory.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)**

Provision for work-related learning is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Work experience outside the college may not be offered to present Year 10 students.
- The careers programme is good and contributes to students' learning about the world of work.
- The majority of students are not well prepared for entering the world of work.
- The new applied GCSE vocational courses are being studied by over 100 students.

### **Commentary**

66. Present Year 11 students undertook work experience in Year 10, but more varied arrangements are being put in place for current Year 10 students, such as work-related days in college during the summer term. As no details were available it is not possible to assess the likely effectiveness of this scheme. Year 11 students found their work experience interesting in Year 10 and for several of them it brought home the reality of 9 to 5 working life.
67. A few students in Years 10 and 11, following work placements, are confronting the realities of working life directly. Those following courses at sixth form colleges, for example, in construction or child care, are well prepared to move onto employment or further training. The new applied vocational courses, being followed by over 100 students in Year 10, have the potential to extend students' awareness of working environments well but only if students make visits to work places; few such visits have been arranged so far, despite a health clinic on the college's doorstep. GCSE drama has direct relevance to vocational work in the future but no business courses are offered at present.
68. Apart from those taking GCSE ICT or the applied course, students in Years 10 and 11 are not extending their ICT skills enough, an important skill for future employment. An audit of how subjects address WRL issues has been completed but not analysed. Apart from business settings for some ICT work and references by outside speakers to industrial applications in design and technology lessons, teachers do not highlight the links between school work and the world of work. Several have detailed references to this in their schemes of work. The citizenship programme, which has now stopped, did cover several elements of the world of work and students found them interesting. The recently appointed co-ordinator is fully aware that much remains to be done.

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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11	Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11	Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department is skilful at supporting teachers and deploying them in the best way for students to make progress.
- The department is successfully focusing on further raising standards by making changes to its schemes of work.
- The good achievement in Years 10 and 11 has led to students attaining GCSE English results in 2004 which were in line with the national average.

##### Commentary

69. Year 9 national test results have been below the national average since 2002, but they represent satisfactory achievement for all students except for a few with special educational needs. Girls do better than boys, as seen nationally, but in 2001 and 2003 boys did relatively better than girls compared to the national gender averages. GCSE results in English equalled the national average in 2004 and students achieved very well. English literature results were significantly below the national average in 2004, confirmation of a declining trend.
70. Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 because students make a slow start. They are poor listeners and find it difficult to concentrate. Although they learn to speak to be heard in class, they take a while to learn how to work effectively in pairs or collaborate in groups, which adversely affects their learning. By Year 9, however, students have tackled a Shakespeare play with confidence and a measure of success. The developing capacity of higher attainers to annotate what they read helps them to study texts closely - necessary for literary criticism - but not all students do this effectively.
71. By the end of Year 9, much of the students' writing is very brief, containing major errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar which redrafting does not entirely eradicate. Standards in Years 10 and 11 approach national expectations, and these students achieve well. Studying English literature, they successfully explore and comment on the techniques used in a range of World War I poetry such as *The Hero* and *Dulce et decorum est*. As they develop their writing, they use a range of persuasive techniques, for example, in a letter to convince an agent to take on young

singer. They identify a range of writing styles in different types of media texts. Although students' writing is styled for the audience it is meant for, major errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar persist.

72. Teaching and learning are very variable in Years 7 to 9 and more effective in Years 10 and 11. In all years, the best lessons are carefully planned to provide interest and challenge to all students. In these lessons teachers manage classes efficiently, control behaviour successfully and, as a result, students readily engage and learn well. In two unsatisfactory lessons in Years 7 to 9, students were slow to settle and their poor attitudes to work led to disruption and unsatisfactory learning. In Years 10 and 11, students learn well and work sensibly by themselves and in small groups. They respond to the teachers' well-planned lessons which firmly focus on GCSE examination requirements. Teachers must work hard, however, to deal effectively with apathy, minor disruption and inertia in some lower sets. Good assessment leaves students in no doubt as how to improve their work and this helps their progress.
73. The head of department leads well, providing clear guidance and focus for changes to push standards up. Management is also good, ensuring that the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy have been well assimilated into the revised schemes of work. The head of department monitors, nurtures and supports teachers very well and has achieved stable staffing. Teachers are well managed, trained and deployed so that students' progress is maximised throughout their college career. The head of department moves teachers between year groups when needed.
74. The good achievement students make overall is because the plans for each year are good and because drama lessons provide enrichment in Years 7 to 9. A significant strength is the high proportion of students prepared for the GCSE English literature in addition to English. Resources are satisfactory, but the photocopying budget does not extend to providing specially adapted learning materials for all lessons. Access to computers is currently inadequate and there are some unmet training needs in ICT. Since the last inspection staffing has become more stable – a significant factor in the better standards – and schemes of work and assessment procedures have improved. Teaching and learning are now continually monitored to support improving standards.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

75. Standards of literacy are below average and fail to support students' learning. A recently written policy has not yet been monitored. There has been no audit of students' literacy, although reading materials in some subjects have been analysed for level of difficulty. The literacy co-ordinator has recently given all teachers training in practical ideas to promote reading and writing particularly, but teachers need further guidance on how to develop students' speaking and listening. Subject co-ordinators are responsible for the promotion of literacy, and some, but not all, schemes of work have been rewritten to comply with the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy.
76. In most subjects, students are generally poor, inattentive listeners, which does not help them to learn. They do not readily speak up and contribute in lessons and do not learn well collaboratively. Their lack of fluent speech holds them back, for example, in design and technology, ICT and physical education, where they are unable to properly describe processes or evaluate procedures or performance. Students have good opportunities to read a range of texts in English. In many subjects, teachers adapt

reading materials to accommodate students' inadequate reading skills, but in a GCSE applied art and design lesson, students could not access computer images because they could not spell the simple words which would bring them to the screen.

77. There are a few avid readers, but library borrowing is very low for the college's size and many students are content to leaf through magazines on their leisure interests. Although subject-specific words are well promoted, particularly in geography and physical education, students do not always understand what they mean, nor do they use them consistently. Although there are effective literacy policies in geography and history, and students are given word frames to help them in many subjects, their writing does not improve enough because their work is not consistently marked for correctness. The satisfactory standards of the last report have not been maintained.

## French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Standards are below average	Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory	

## German

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

Standards are above average	Students' achievement is good
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their language expertise to plan lively and varied activities that help students in Years 7 to 9 to learn well in both French and German.
- French GCSE results were well below average in 2004; boys' results were very low; lower attaining students make limited progress in Years 10 and 11. Staffing problems contributed to this.
- GCSE German results were very high in 2004.
- Well-devised ICT language programmes are proving helpful and popular.
- The department does not have procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning.

## Commentary

78. At the end of Year 9 most girls attain average standards in French but boys do not, achieving less well than girls. The majority of students achieved below, and boys well below, their predicted GCSE French grades in 2004; higher attaining girls made satisfactory progress. Staff absence and supply cover lowered students' achievement. About 60 higher attaining students take up German as a second language in Years 8 and 9. About two-thirds carry on and take the subject in Years 10 and 11. Very few students take both languages for GCSE. In 2004, GCSE German results were very high. They were amongst the best in the college, with over 90 per cent of students attaining A\*-C grades.
79. In Years 7 to 9, students are interested and concentrate in most lessons because teachers plan well and use a wide variety of interesting resources and activities, including games and quizzes. Students learn to understand written French and German and gain confidence speaking them. In the best lessons the pace is brisk and students regularly practise asking and answering questions. In a Year 7 French lesson about sports and how to express preferences, students with very different abilities all made good progress because the teacher gave them tasks they could manage.

Higher attaining students produced long, complex answers whilst those with special educational needs felt confident using words and phrases.

80. Progress in French slows down in Years 10 and 11, especially in speaking and writing. Teachers continue preparing lessons well but many students lose interest and motivation. Some students' negative attitudes are a significant barrier to their own learning and, at times, to others'. Higher attaining students produce coursework of a good standard because teachers use their extensive knowledge of French to help them. In German, by the end of Year 11, students have a sound grasp of complex grammar and cope successfully with harder work.
81. A growing strength in French teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9, is using ICT effectively to extend students' learning. Students use the well-structured programmes at their own pace and receive immediate feedback. Teachers mark students' work regularly and give encouragement but they do not always indicate what students need to do to improve. Without any help from learning support assistants, a number of students with special educational needs struggle to keep up in Years 7 to 9 and a few of them do not complete their GCSE course.
82. The acting head of department supports a hard-working and enterprising team of less experienced teachers, who keenly share ideas and resources. With the loss of the German specialist this academic year, the headteacher made the best possible temporary arrangements. Spanish will probably replace German in the future. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the department's effectiveness are not yet in place. Students have targets but teachers do not systematically track their progress and use assessment to raise their aspirations.
83. Students now use ICT more and, at present, a French assistant helps GCSE students to speak more confidently. However, since the last inspection there has been no improvement in French GCSE results. The department organises visits to France each year for about 50 Year 8 students and arranged visits to Germany in the past. The after-school Russian club provides enrichment for a few students in Years 8 and 9; they are committed and doing well.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Standards are below average	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department's effective leadership and management have successfully raised standards at the end of Year 9, despite staffing problems.
- GCSE results have steadily improved since the last inspection.
- Difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff are affecting how well students learn.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory in a small proportion of lessons.

## Commentary

84. Students' attainment on entry to the college is below average, with a smaller than expected proportion of higher attainers. Year 9 national test results in 2002 and 2003 were below average. In 2004 the points score is likely to be average - the percentage of students who reached the expected and higher levels improved significantly. GCSE results in 2004 were below average. Most students made very good progress from Year 9 and did relatively much better in mathematics than in their other subjects. A small proportion of students did not do as well as expected. Reasons contributing to this were poor attendance, staffing problems and students not completing their coursework. GCSE results have improved steadily since the previous inspection.
85. Higher attainers are reaching above, sometimes well above, average standards. In Year 11 they capably simplify expressions using positive and negative fractional indices. They have a good grasp of mathematical techniques and can explain what methods they have chosen to use in specific situations. Average attainers use standard techniques, for example, applying the formulae for the circumference of a circle or using Pythagoras' theorem. Some find it difficult to explain what they are doing or to apply their learning to more unusual problems. Lower attainers can find unknown angles, calculate simple percentages and work out the probability of certain events happening. However, they do not quickly remember work between lessons, so find it difficult to work out questions that involve several steps.
86. Boys and girls and students from different ethnic groups all achieve satisfactorily and many achieve well. This is linked to their own positive attitudes to learning and also to the quality of teaching they receive. Those that do not achieve well enough have either poor attendance or unsatisfactory behaviour. A small number of students with emotional and behavioural problems, mainly boys, find it difficult to concentrate in lessons even with firm, clear teaching. Their subsequent misbehaviour occasionally disrupts other students' learning. Learning support assistants working with special educational needs students with the greatest need help them to achieve satisfactorily.
87. There was only one lesson where teaching was less than satisfactory. In this lesson, disruptive students were not managed effectively enough for others to make progress. To meet students' individual needs, teachers plan lessons carefully with a mixture of activities and one-to-one support. They give generally clear and knowledgeable explanations. When teaching is most effective, classroom routines are well established. One Year 10 group arrived for a lesson, not prepared to learn. The teacher's clear discipline and expectation that they would settle down quickly turned their behaviour round quickly and they worked well.
88. Because of the problems in staffing, many students have a negative attitude to mathematics which can make the beginning of lessons difficult. However, teachers usually overcome this and students learn satisfactorily. Improving the management of behaviour is a key factor in helping all students to learn well. Homework is usually set regularly to help students consolidate and improve their learning, but there are a few classes who have had very little.
89. ICT resources have recently improved as a result of specialist technology college status. Students enjoy using them, particularly the interactive whiteboards. In a Year 7 class, students demonstrated to others how they measured angles with a protractor.

This made it very easy for the teacher to spot which students were unsure and needed further help.

90. For several years the college has had considerable difficulties in recruiting mathematics teachers. The head of department supports temporary staff well and plans timetables, sometimes rotating staff between classes, to minimise the negative aspects of the staffing problems. There are also support classes for Years 9 and 11 students after school. Two management posts are not currently filled, with no second in the department and no numeracy co-ordinator. This makes the head of department's job even more difficult. The positive impact of her actions, which are based on a detailed analysis of monitoring and performance data, is shown in the marked improvement in Year 9 test results in 2004 and in the steady improvement in GCSE results since the previous inspection.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

91. Students' mathematical skills are below average but are usually competent enough for the requirements of most subjects. There is no numeracy co-ordinator. As a result, there is no planned systematic development of mathematical skills across the curriculum; this is unsatisfactory. Design and technology teachers tend to work around this problem, for example, by measuring and cutting out materials for students, rather than letting them do it. Students can use time lines in history and they can interpret tables and graphs in science at a simple level. Most students can use formulae in spreadsheets in ICT, although lower attainers have problems with this.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **poor**.

Standards are well below average	Students' achievement is poor
Teaching is poor	Learning is poor
Leadership is poor	Management is poor
Improvement since the last inspection has been poor	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards, achievement and students' attitudes are significantly affected by the shortage of permanent, specialist teachers.
- In class experiments, students' investigation skills are still not developed fully. They do not use mathematical skills or technical words, nor apply ideas enough.
- Poor teaching and/or control of behaviour underpin the drop in standards. Much teaching is poorly planned and unimaginative.
- The technicians provide consistently high quality, efficient support, helping a changing supply of teachers to extend students' experiences.
- The subject is floundering without a head of department.

### Commentary

92. End of Year 9 test results have been well below or below the national average for the past four years. In 2004 they were well below national and similar school results. This represents at least unsatisfactory achievement for many students. In recent years,



GCSE results have been well below average or very low, as they were in 2004. Achievement in relation to students' attainment in Year 9 was poor for the majority. Staffing difficulties have significantly contributed to this situation.

93. The amount of progress made is strongly linked to the quality of teaching. Where there is imaginative planning and encouragement, students respond and learn well. There were no problems capturing the attention of Year 8 students tackling concepts of scientific method. Blindfolded, they only succeeded in their mission if they followed precise instructions systematically. Others enjoyed responsibility for recording results and checking predictions. Progress was very good. In contrast, too little thought choosing and using resources thwarted learning about respiration for Year 9 top set students. A few students' books reveal good quality work in response to good teaching on, for example, solubility of solids or improving plant yields.
94. Year 11 work so far shows that GCSE results are likely to decline in 2005. There are pockets of good progress where well-taught students want to achieve. Year 11 students listened well to explanations of how electrons are shared in covalent bonds, because complicated ideas 'took shape' through their teacher's clear diagrams. Similarly, a small sample of Year 10 class books showed students' willingness to learn. A significant minority, however, make poor progress when they decide not to work despite a teacher's best efforts: poor attitudes limit learning for those who want to work and those who misbehave. Coursework shows that knowledge of investigative procedures is still weak, a feature noted for improvement at the last inspection.
95. Many topics are dealt with superficially, so students' understanding is weak. Opportunities for practising numeracy, using technical words, applying ideas and understanding how to investigate a problem are infrequent. Too many students do not take pride in the presentation of their work or complete it, a picture mainly down to the unsettled nature of teaching experienced by students.
96. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to poor, but students' work reveals more weaknesses than strengths. Teachers do not plan lessons well enough. Narrow teacher-centred teaching methods and textbook-dominated lessons dampen learning. With the best teaching, planned with imagination, learning and enthusiasm flourishes; teachers know what students need to learn and make it happen, such as creatively involving Year 8 in demonstrating ideas themselves.
97. Where management of poor behaviour was weak, students chatted together during explanations so they did not understand or complete work. Many have become used to this behaviour because of a succession of different teachers. Permanent teachers usually mark work consistently but not all give clear, precise messages which sharply raise standards. When they do, checks that students act upon them are not routine. Students with special educational needs do learn reasonably when they are supported by an assistant teacher who notes their progress. Students who learn more quickly than others need much more demanding work.
98. The department has not had a head of department for a long time. Despite the best efforts of senior managers, science teaching has suffered significant staffing problems for a long time, which continue to have a profound effect on standards. A senior manager has begun to meticulously track all students' progress, although specific targets, focusing on particular aspects of science, have yet to be isolated. High quality technical support is a strength. It provides consistent help and continuity through a

constant flow of different teachers. Since the last inspection, standards have remained well below average and are now declining because the quality of teaching and learning has worsened. Attitudes and behaviour are no longer good. Higher attainers are still not catered for, investigative skills are underdeveloped and marking continues to have the weaknesses cited in the last report.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Standards are below average and well below average for those students who do take an ICT course in Years 10 and 11	Students' achievement is unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory for those students taking an ICT course in Years 10 and 11
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow an examination course are not receiving their statutory entitlement in ICT and underachieve.
- Standards in Year 8, where modelling work is in line with national expectations, are rising.
- There has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection.
- Very good assessment practices support students following examination courses in Years 10 and 11.

## Commentary

99. When the present Year 9 students entered the college, they had limited experience of using computers but made satisfactory progress with one lesson a week. In 2004, teachers assessed Year 9 work as being above average, which was too generous. Assessment procedures are being improved so that teachers measure students' capability more accurately. With the introduction of an applied GCSE ICT course, the number of students taking an accredited ICT course in Year 10 has gone up. Even so, two thirds of them, and three quarters of Year 11 students, are not following an examination course and do not use ICT enough in their other subjects. Their standards are well below expectations. Their achievement is unsatisfactory and they do not receive their statutory ICT entitlement.
100. GCSE results in 2004 were very low. This was largely because these students (and those now in Year 11) had only one lesson a fortnight in Years 7 to 9 and the department had significant staffing and resources difficulties, which have now been resolved. Present standards are better in the examination courses, though still below average; these students' achievement is satisfactory.
101. In Years 7 to 9 students use a wide range of software for tasks linked to a college production and the design of a logo reflecting the college's new technology status. They design presentations about themselves. They are starting to add notes to their work to illustrate their understanding, which is good practice. Teachers help students to learn by planning lessons well and preparing good resources that they find interesting, such as using control software to design a water theme park ride. Teachers have selected materials from the Key Stage 3 Strategy wisely; students understand computer models well and are starting to use technical vocabulary more confidently. This is particularly evident in Year 8, where standards are in line with national expectations. Students' grasp of how to tackle problems is not well developed, which is why higher ability students do not reach higher levels. The department is tackling this by adapting resources to match students' needs more closely.
102. Teachers know their students well and move around the classroom giving individual support as needed. They refer to information about students' abilities to check they are achieving as much as possible. Students learn well how to use ICT in a good range of contexts, including, in Years 10 and 11, how it can provide business solutions. The teachers' very good marking and assessment practices in Years 10 and 11 ensure that students know exactly how they are doing in relation to examination standards. Students with English as an additional language do as well as others.
103. Most students concentrate for long periods of time but a small minority of boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 do not have a positive attitude to their work, have an unsettling effect on the others and do not accept responsibility for their anti-social actions. Teachers have high expectations for performance and behaviour, and they follow the college's behaviour policy well. Although the homework set during the inspection was a good extension of the work covered in lessons, students' planners show that it is not set regularly.
104. The head of department is now free to focus on teaching and steering the department forward, which he is doing well. Until recently this was not possible as there was no technical support team to keep the network running and to cope with problems. Teachers offer helpful sessions after school and many students attend. The management of ICT use by other subjects is unsatisfactory. More positive statements about this, in the school's application to become a technology specialist college, suggest that ICT use declined last year. Funds received through technology college status have been used to increase the number of computers, and it is very good that there are now more computers than normally seen in a school of this size.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

105. In most subjects teachers rarely use ICT themselves, or get students to use computers. Students' competence to use ICT in other subjects is below that expected. The music department does not have a computer, so students cannot use composition software, and limited access to computers in many other subjects also makes ICT use unsatisfactory. Where resources are available they are not always used well enough - several teachers do not feel confident using ICT themselves. In history, students competently use the Internet for research and in physical education, teachers evaluate performance using digital cameras. Occasionally, the mathematics department does use computers effectively, for example, for calculations and to draw graphs. Good use of ICT was seen in geography for GCSE coursework. The modern foreign languages department has recently acquired some excellent software which helps students to practise, at their own pace, French or German.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Standards are below average	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been un satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good curriculum is enhanced well by fieldwork and out of hours learning.
- Some students in Years 7 to 9 do not behave well in lessons and have poor attitudes to learning.
- Assessment practices are unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

106. Students enter the college with below the expected standard. In Years 7 to 9 they acquire a satisfactory knowledge of physical and human geography but their understanding and use of geographical language is weak. Although their map and research skills are reasonable, teachers do not encourage students to use maps enough to develop their knowledge of places. Higher attaining students produce good quality writing on topics such as settlement and population. Lower attaining students have weaker literacy skills and do not present their work well.

107. In 2004, GCSE results were below average, similar to those in recent years. Girls achieved better results than boys but not significantly more than they do nationally. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of key facts and concepts, studied through case studies, but have difficulty remembering the detail and applying the concepts to examination questions. Students use ICT well in their coursework, for example in their studies of regional shopping centres. Coursework standards are improving because teachers now give students more help and guidance and they explain how it will be marked.

108. Despite satisfactory achievement overall, in a few classes in Years 7 to 9, some students' poor attitudes and behaviour are a barrier to their progress, especially when teachers cannot control them properly. A further weakness is that teachers do not provide work at different levels and so some students struggle, or find the work too easy. For these two reasons, a minority of students underachieve. In Years 10 and 11 students' attitudes are good and they are keen to learn. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory in all years.
109. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and explain topics clearly. They use an interesting range of resources and pose well-chosen questions. In a Year 11 lesson on urban geography, a video extract and PowerPoint presentation successfully captured students' attention, and the questions asked of them made them think, so they learned well. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory as teachers do not grade work accurately and their moderation is not secure. They mark students' work in line with the college policy but, especially in Years 7 to 9, do not give students enough guidance on what they need to do to improve.
110. Recently revised lesson plans provide good guidance on teaching styles and resources and how to focus literacy. Teachers analyse GCSE results well and then alter their planning, which is good practice. Procedures to review the department's work have not effectively identified weaknesses in students' work and teachers' marking. Fieldwork and out-of-hours learning are worthwhile and successfully help students to understand more. In Years 7 to 9, students use the college site and in Year 11 they visit a local town for their coursework. In Year 11 many students attend the lunchtime and after-school revision and coursework sessions. Nevertheless, standards remain below average, as they were at the last inspection, and weaknesses remain in assessment. In a few lessons, poor behaviour continues to be a barrier to students' learning.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Standards are below average	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve satisfactorily because work is generally well planned to interest them and meet their needs.
- GCSE results were well below the national average in 2004.
- Year 10 students are benefiting from the different GCSE course, which they find challenging and interesting.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how they could do better.

### Commentary

111. Year 7 students enter the college with knowledge, understanding and historical skills below expectation for their age. By the end of Year 9, high ability students can evaluate sources well, but for the majority such skills are below expectations. Analysis of the 2004 GCSE results has been thorough. Staff changes during the course had an effect on results. Year 11 GCSE students are working at below the expected levels. Their weak literacy standards affect their progress. This was a key factor in the decision to change the GCSE course this year. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into work in lessons and supported satisfactorily, so they achieve as well as other students.
112. Students' attitudes and behaviour in history are good and they generally work sensibly. This, and their learning, reflect the teachers' good planning; work is generally matched well to their abilities and needs. When teaching was most effective, students learned well because they were set interesting tasks and were not given too long to do them. In several lessons, although teaching was satisfactory and most students learned enough, a small number of them did not keep working because they were given too long to complete an exercise and the momentum was lost. In many lessons, students are expected to read aloud. Teachers offer support with students' writing, with frames to guide them, and always highlight the key words they must master.
113. In a Year 10 GCSE lesson, students worked well collaboratively and enjoyed learning about the contributions to medicine made by Pasteur and Koch; they achieved well. They strove to produce good quality work because they knew that was what the teacher expected. In another GCSE lesson, the teacher selected video extracts and photographic sources about concentration camps with care. The work on the Holocaust really interested the students and they considered their own reactions to the horrors of the event thoughtfully.
114. Teachers assess and mark work satisfactorily. In GCSE lessons, the feedback teachers give strengthens students' knowledge of what examiners are looking for in work. This helps them improve. Most Year 10 and 11 students know what they must do to raise their grades. Assessment of work in Years 7 to 9 is not so effective. Teachers do not give students enough information for them to understand exactly how well they are doing or how to improve.
115. The turnover of staff in the past has presented difficulties, but now a strong team is being built. A clear focus on how to raise standards and the development of new schemes of work are already beginning to have an effect, particularly in the Year 10 GCSE work. Teacher directed work is still dominant and rarely do teachers employ different or imaginative teaching styles. A recently, well designed programme of study for Year 7, 8 and 9 is developing students' historical skills well. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural content of the course contributes well to the overall development of the students.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **poor**.

Standards are well below expectations	Students' achievement is poor
Teaching is poor	Learning is poor
Leadership is poor	Management is poor
Improvement since the last inspection has been poor	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are poor, lessons being characterised by slow, simple tasks.
- A significant number of students have a negative attitude towards the subject and, as a result, their behaviour in lessons is frequently disruptive and challenging.

- In all years, students fail to make enough progress and as a result their attainment is well below what it should be.
- The accommodation and the resources available are poor.
- Leadership and management are poor and require urgent attention.

## Commentary

116. Most students' knowledge of religious beliefs and their significance is vague and superficial. Teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 far too generously, reflecting the teachers' significant lack of understanding of what standards should be like. At the end of Year 11, many students do not have sufficient grasp of key areas, such as the impact of religious beliefs on moral issues or the complexities of living in a multicultural and multi-faith society. GCSE short course results tumbled in 2004; just 26 per cent of students attained A\*-C in the short course – at least half of them should have done better.
117. Lessons are planned in detail and do contain a number of activities but they move slowly and the standards expected are too low. Too often work involves low-level skills such as filling in missing words on worksheets or cutting and pasting from magazines. At times students are faced with interesting and relevant stimulus material, such as an extract from a recent episode of 'Eastenders' but the religious and spiritual connections are not explored properly. As a result, students' responses remain superficial and they rarely discuss the complexities of belief.
118. The lack of specific activities in lessons to support students with special needs and gifted and talented students means that all students progress at the same, usually slow, pace. In the weakest lessons students make very limited or no progress. At the end of one lesson several students had still not understood the meaning of five religious words. Students rarely receive feedback on their work. A significant number of them bring negative attitudes to this subject, which are compounded by the poor teaching, so they switch off. Behaviour is often unsatisfactory and even those who begin lessons with determination become dispirited, for example, asking after half an hour "Can we please do some work in this lesson?", or deliberately moving desks so that they can work on their own. Inappropriate conversations occur regularly. At times behaviour is very poor, with students openly defying teachers, and using unpleasant language. Often this behaviour goes unchecked.
119. The grim accommodation and resources contribute to students' negative feelings. With graffiti of crude language and drawings on furniture, chewing gum trodden into the carpets, and litter, both classrooms are in need of a thorough clean. The limited displays consist almost entirely of posters and no students' work. There are few textbooks and only one computer in each room. No evidence of ICT-based work was seen during the inspection. The lack of resources in some subjects leads to an over-reliance on worksheets and photocopied materials.
120. Not able to appoint a head of department, the subject has drifted for two years with no sense of direction – hardly surprising, given the recent staffing turbulence. The head of humanities has begun to write new, basic schemes of work to comply with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Although teachers have been observed and given advice, this has not been successful. It is to their credit that they remained determined and committed. There has been deterioration in this subject since the last inspection, when it was also a weak area.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

Standards are well below average in Years 7 to 9 and below average in Years 10 and 11	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is unsatisfactory	Management is unsatisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

### Main strengths and areas for improvement

- Most students enjoy technology lessons and behave well.
- Students learn how to use different materials well, especially in Years 10 and 11, but often they do not know why they use different tools or processes.
- Teaching has many strengths, although a few teachers do not assess students' understanding in detail so students are not sure how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Very few students understand the concepts of computer control and they do not use computers enough.

### Commentary

121. Most students enter the college with a well below average understanding and experience of technology. In Years 7 to 9, they study several different areas of the subject, often in some depth. By the end of Year 9, many work with different materials and tools at a satisfactory standard. However, very few of them know which tools they should use for different tasks and why, or how product design depends on materials and their treatment. They cannot name many fabrics, metals or woods, or define basic terms. Only a few know what specification and evaluation mean.
122. GCSE results in 2004 were below the national average, but better than they had been in previous years. Girls do better than boys and the gap is growing. Teachers have not focused enough on improving boys' relatively weak coursework presentations. In 2004, graphics results were above average, textiles were below and food technology and resistant materials, the most popular choice, were low. The department does not focus on understanding and knowledge early enough in Years 10 and 11, concentrating on practical skills for coursework at the expense of theory. Overall, however, students' achievement is better than at the time of the previous inspection.
123. Teachers often plan lessons with a great variety of activities to keep all students attentive. Many students with special educational needs make good products and occasionally receive high quality, specialist support. Most of the time teachers try to give them extra help, for example, with their reading, writing and understanding, but a minority of them underachieve. A few higher ability students master theory and skills easily and do not achieve all they could. Thus the main factor contributing to the unsatisfactory teaching seen was that the teachers did not set enough work matched to students' different abilities. Other elements were failure to monitor health and safety thoroughly, disorganised materials and a slow pace.



124. A particular teaching strength is how well most teachers encourage students, keep them interested, and keep them working. Poor behaviour is rarely a problem. In a successful Year 10 textiles lesson, after a well guided, lively discussion of design ideas, students collaborated very well evaluating each other's work. As students do not always appreciate why they are doing certain tasks, it is hard for them to know how well they are doing and how to do better, especially as teachers do not assess their learning in detail.
125. There are too few technology rooms, particularly for practical work with electronics, food technology and textiles and for theory lessons. The only general resource area is the rather small and dark computer suite. Equipment is lacking, for example, drawing boards, sewing machines, palettes, and ICT hardware and software for students to explore control technology. Network problems have meant that the good number of computers are not used enough. There is not enough technical and administrative support. As yet problem-solving has not been developed in any area of technology work. There is no uniformity in displays, worksheets and word list design.
126. Although the leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory overall, there has been improvement since the last inspection and good practice is evident, but not shared. Several members of the department have significant whole college responsibilities and lack time to contribute to teamwork, where common practice and problems could be discussed. Weaknesses remain in limited data analysis and few changes in response, teaching not being monitored often enough and high ability students' and boys' underachievement not being tackled rigorously.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

Standards are average at the end of Year 9 and above average in GCSE classes	Students' achievement is good
Teaching is good	Learning is good
Leadership is good	Management is good
Improvement since the last inspection has been good	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Responding to good teaching, students are motivated to succeed and achieve well.
- The head of department has generated good teamwork and good assessment procedures.
- Too little lesson time is allocated to the new applied art and design GCSE, which lowers standards.
- Computer resources are inadequate and there is no technical support.
- Visits considerably enhance students' learning.

### **Commentary**

127. When they enter the college, students do not draw or paint well as they have had limited experience of the subject. In Year 7, their drawing and painting improves rapidly and they learn how to use a good range of media, such as pastels and clay, competently. This good progress continues in Years 8 and 9. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve just as well as others. In 2003 and 2004, teachers assessed standards of work in Year 9 slightly too generously but they now have a clearer understanding of National Curriculum levels.
128. GCSE results in 2004 were below the national average, a drop from the previous year. In each year though, students achieved well, the previous year group having higher ability overall. Those students who took art and design in 2004 did relatively better than they did in the other subjects they took. Standards improve in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is good. More students have chosen art courses in Years 10 and 11; the subject is increasingly popular. Year 10 students who have chosen the applied GCSE art and design course are achieving reasonably well but they do not have enough lessons.
129. The good learning is underpinned by the teachers' clear explanations and expertise in giving demonstrations. Teachers expect students to concentrate and to create work of a high standard and, in this atmosphere, students work well. Teachers plan lessons very carefully and do not waste any time, which contributes to students' good learning. They ask probing questions which make students think, and therefore learn. Projects, such as one on pop art, interest students so they are motivated to persevere.
130. The head of department is well organised and supports members of the team enthusiastically – they work well together. Teachers now assess standards of work correctly and guide students about how to improve. With only one computer, students rarely use ICT to explore digital imagery or other creative techniques. Lack of access to ICT and the limited time for the applied GCSE course reduce the quality of provision overall. Without technical support, teachers spend too much time preparing materials. Teachers give their time willingly so that students can work in the art rooms after school. A keen, high ability student who does not attend lessons is using this time to study for the GCSE examination.
131. Museum visits, an optional Year 8 trip to Amsterdam and visits from speakers, for example, from the art centre in Staines, considerably broaden students' experience of the subject. As yet, no visits have been arranged for the GCSE applied art and design course. The summer school on sculpture for Year 7 gifted and talented students, based on work in the Tate Modern, was excellent. There has been good improvement since the time of the last report, particularly in standards and teaching.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Students are well taught and achieve well in all years.
- Leadership is good and there is a clear vision for expanding the subject and improving standards.
- Management is good, with teaching and learning well monitored.

## Commentary

132. In Year 9, students perform at an above average standard. In one lesson, they created, performed and evaluated spontaneous improvisations and generated pre-quals and sequels to a scripted scene. Evaluation was a strong feature of the good achievement seen. GCSE results were significantly below the national average in 2004, the first year this subject was taken. Standards in Years 10 and 11 already reach the national expectation, although students' writing is less competent than their practical performances. In Year in 11, students work well together planning and rehearsing, for example, an original improvisation based on imaginary profiles of the wearers of a selection of shoes.
133. In an extra-curricular scripted play, students in Year 10 exhibited a wide range of acting styles and an ability to change from reality to stylised interpretation. They performed with confidence and aplomb. Their characterisation was of impressive quality. They took direction well and spoke enthusiastically of taking the production to other schools as part of extended PSHE provision. Well developed skills of self and peer evaluation were a strong factor in the development of the performance.
134. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have a good deal of knowledge of practical performance and model acting techniques well, so students copy them and improve. Teachers plan lessons conscientiously so they can keep up a brisk pace, with activities following in quick succession. Class management is a key strength and students co-operate well. Teachers encourage students to evaluate their own and each other's work, which generates improvement. Students are interested, enthusiastic and concentrate hard. Their ensemble work is a key strength.
135. The head of department's good leadership and determination to raise the profile of the subject have helped standards to rise. Now, almost 70 students are studying for GCSE. Lack of ICT resources is a weakness. Management of the small, highly effective and mutually supportive team is good. Procedures are kept under constant review, and teaching and learning are well monitored. The subject has been re-established since the last inspection. Teaching and response are now better than those described in the last report.

## Music

Provision in music is **poor**.

Standards are low	Students' achievement is poor
Teaching is poor	Learning is poor
Leadership is very poor	Management is very poor
Improvement since the last inspection has been very poor	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attempts to revitalise music for Years 7 to 9 students have not succeeded.
- Very few students take instrumental lessons.
- Teaching lacks rigour. Poor, disruptive behaviour means that students learn very little.
- Resources, such as instruments, are inadequate and ICT is not used at all.
- There are few extra-curricular activities.

### Commentary

136. In the last couple of years, music had almost disappeared from the curriculum. In the last academic year, four supply teachers taught the subject. Since September 2004, a temporary music teacher has taken on the daunting task of reviving music in Years 7 to 9, without adequate resources and without any essential documentation. Music is not offered as a GCSE option. The temporary teacher is a competent pianist who accompanies popular music singing by individuals in assemblies well.
137. There is widespread under-achievement by students of all abilities. Students in Year 9 have no more musical knowledge and understanding than students in Year 7. A significant number of Year 9 students have a negative attitude to the subject, and are quick to express their frustration that they have not had any satisfactory music teaching in the past. They behave badly, actively resisting and undermining the teacher's attempts to keep them working. Most students do not work well on practical tasks and they make little or no progress in group work. Some students in Year 7, particularly girls, are more positively disposed to the subject, but their progress is little better because of the poor behaviour of the majority.
138. The low standards, poor behaviour and underachievement reflect the weak and ineffective teaching over a period of years. There is no established tradition of good practice for the temporary teacher to draw upon and no basic documents such as lesson plans or overall plans for each year. Students are not in the habit of enjoying any music at college and there are few opportunities for ensemble work. No music making of any quality was seen during the inspection.
139. Teaching lacks rigour and does not have a positive impact on students. What students are to learn is vague, tasks lack structure and challenge and lessons lack momentum and interest. During a composition task, a Year 7 girl struggled to make sense of the exercise set: "All we know is that we have to write a piece of music to one of these titles". In other lessons, students could not explain what they were expected to learn, nor could they explain how they would know if and when they had completed a good piece of work. In this poor learning climate, lessons degenerate into a struggle to maintain order, and practical work disintegrates into a cacophony of unproductive and random noise. This department is in crisis as there has been a marked deterioration since the last inspection. There is no head of department and there is no action plan for improvement. This department is having little or no impact on students' musical development.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Standards are average	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A few students produce GCSE coursework of a very high standard.
- The poor attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of students in Years 10 and 11 lead to their unsatisfactory achievement.
- The range and number of extra-curricular activities are good but they are not well attended.
- The new hard court games area and refurbished changing rooms are very good facilities.

### Commentary

140. Students have different experiences before joining the college but overall their standards are average. Students in Years 7 to 9 maintain these standards in most activities. Girls attain less well in games than they do in dance and gymnastics. Boys' games skills are better developed than their movement activities. The 2004 assessments by teachers indicated similar standards. In lessons for all Years 10 and 11 students, most of them learn reasonably and make sound progress. However, a small number of boys' and girls' progress is held back as they do not participate regularly in lessons. This limits their learning and their standards are below average.
141. GCSE results were below average in 2004. Students' average point score was better than in most other subjects they took and their achievement was satisfactory. The same is true for most current students but a few boys and girls in Year 10 underachieve because they lack concentration and their behaviour is very poor. Boys displayed poor attitudes in a football match when they were in Year 10 and continued to behave poorly in lessons in Year 11. This resulted in their Year 11 football matches being cancelled.
142. A small number of higher ability students produce very detailed coursework and use ICT very well to analyse their fitness results. A few talented boys and girls in all years attain standards that are above the national average in practical activities. They benefit considerably from the opportunities provided by their teachers within the good extra-curricular programme. It is disappointing that the vast majority of students, especially girls, do not attend these extra activities.
143. Teachers plan all lessons very well. They share objectives at the start of every lesson and promote literacy skills well by frequently referring to the subject's specialised vocabulary. Teachers always set the right tone for hard work and high standards but in one lesson students' behaviour was not managed effectively and too little learning resulted. However, most teachers manage some very restless students' behaviour well because they have established very good relationships. It is understandable that

teachers do not give students regular opportunities to analyse performances because they are much more focused when they are all involved with practical work. However, performance tasks are planned progressively and build students' practical skills effectively.

144. The head of department provides good support for a mostly inexperienced team of teachers. Assessment procedures are thorough and accurate but teachers do not analyse GCSE results and other data carefully enough to be confident that students achieved well enough. The curriculum programme for students in Years 10 and 11 has been developed to include the GCSE short course and a sports leadership award. The new outdoor area and the refurbished changing rooms have brought very poor facilities to an acceptable level. However, the two gymnasias remain old and dilapidated and the corridors between are dirty and dingy.

### **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

145. **Applied health and social care** started in Year 10 in September 2004. Students are interested in this subject and make satisfactory progress. Teachers include a good variety of tasks and maintain a sense of pace and challenge in lessons. They use ICT well to create an impact, to give students information and to help them produce coursework. Students research topics on the Internet successfully and acquire knowledge and ideas which widen their knowledge and awareness of topics being studied. Work placements, an essential ingredient of the course, have not yet been arranged. Teachers have not given students enough feedback on the quality of the coursework they have produced so far.
146. **Applied leisure and tourism.** Introduced in September 2003, this course will be examined for the first time in the summer term 2005. The course is a popular choice for students in both Years 10 and 11. Standards of work seen are below the national average but all students on the course are achieving well because of good teaching. Teachers have planned the course well and written some helpful and useful booklets to support students' learning. Students enjoy the subject and work with maturity and interest.
147. In **GCSE expressive arts**, students make effective use of the established good practice in drama and the high quality drama teaching and achieve well. In 2004, over 70 per cent of the 18 students who took the course attained A\*-C grades. The course is not running in Year 10. Year 11 students show a strong command of the language, skills and knowledge of drama in the organisation and refinement of their ideas. They know how to improve the dramatic component of their work to obtain high GCSE grades. Their high performance levels in drama are in sharp contrast, however, to their low levels of achievement in the musical component of this course.

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

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

148. The organisation of PSHE is unsatisfactory. Although good use of external organisations has provided the statutory requirements for sex education in the Year 9 programme - looking at teenage pregnancies - the present Year 7 students have had no session on sex education to date. They have received a road safety talk from a local team of experts. The programmes of work previously undertaken during activity

days are not taking place at present. There is also no evidence to date of drugs awareness education; in previous years external speakers have provided this.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Standards are below average	Students' achievement is satisfactory
Teaching is satisfactory	Learning is satisfactory
Leadership is satisfactory	Management is satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lessons taught up to the spring half term were well planned and many students thought they were helpful and interesting.
- Despite a strong commitment to citizenship in the college, as lessons have stopped, students are not extending their understanding of this subject.
- Year 8 students had a very good active experience of citizenship in the autumn term, but no plans are fixed for other students to have the same opportunity.
- Some tutors use form time to teach students about PSHE and citizenship issues; others do not.

### Commentary

149. Given their knowledge and understanding on entry to the college, most students have acquired a sound understanding of good citizenship and begun to develop their own ideas satisfactorily. Year 9 tutors monitored students' progress sufficiently to report on citizenship in 2004. Year 11 students have explored their own moral values, prepared debates and considered several topical issues, such as the USA election and its effect on the UK, and others relevant to their lives, such as entry into the world of work.
150. Although no teaching was seen during the inspection, students' folders indicate that teaching and learning overall were satisfactory. Form tutors taught the citizenship lessons and continue to be responsible for most elements of students' PSHE. This has resulted in an inconsistent quality of provision within and across year groups – an unsatisfactory situation. Some tutors continue to use form time to discuss well planned citizenship and PSHE topics, whilst others rarely do. This difference was also seen in the standard of tutors' marking. Where it was done, students were seldom told how to improve their work. Some tutors clearly encouraged good self-assessment, but not all. A small but significant number of students have not had the same opportunities and experiences as others in their year. This is a major reason why the provision is unsatisfactory.
151. The active learning about citizenship in the Year 8 project - planning and running a senior citizens' party - was very good. Students wrote invitations, made decorations, prepared food and rehearsed and put on sketches, all very successfully. Students in other year groups have not yet had any similar interesting and worthwhile challenges. A record sheet for active citizenship has been introduced, but only a few students use it. Active citizenship is developed reasonably well for the small number who are members of the school council, following the Duke of Edinburgh Award or have roles as prefects, but within the college, opportunities for most students are lacking at present.
152. The schemes of work for citizenship in Years 7 to 11 meet all statutory requirements well. They were well adapted, particularly in Year 11 to cover issues relating to moving on to further education, training or apprenticeships. However, the decision to stop the weekly lesson has limited the effectiveness of the programme. Although there were sound reasons for this and

day sessions are planned for later in the year, some of which will overlap with PSHE topics, Year 11 students will miss out on further citizenship work. The senior team is strongly committed to developing citizenship and already planning changes. Preparation for some citizenship work through several subjects has not yet been followed through.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Students' achievement	5

<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>5</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	5
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	5

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>5</b>
The quality of teaching	5
How well students learn	5
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for students	4
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	5
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	5
The effectiveness of management	4

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