

INSPECTION REPORT

Churchill Community College

Wallsend, Tyne & Wear

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108641

Headteacher: Mr David Baldwin

Lead inspector: Ross Parker

Dates of inspection: 18th - 22nd October 2004

Inspection number: 268779

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:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1086
School address:	Churchill Street Wallsend Tyne & Wear
Postcode:	NE28 7TN
Telephone number:	0191 2007260
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Alison Miers
Date of previous inspection:	February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Churchill Community College is a specialist sports college catering for boys and girls from Year 7 to Year 13.

The college is located in an area where until comparatively recently employment was not dependent on educational qualifications, so there is no widespread culture of learning. A significant number of students face personal, social and economic challenges outside school, which undermine their attendance and their motivation.

The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average, and there is a high proportion of students who have special educational needs. The proportion of students who use English as an additional language is a bit higher than in most schools. Students' attainment on entry is below average but until two years ago it had been well below average. Student mobility is average.

The college was re-organised in 2001, amalgamating local secondary and middle schools. This process involved almost two years of disruption to all the schools involved, and required a lengthy period for students, staff and the local community to come to terms with the changes.

The college is part of a Behaviour Improvement Project and a small Education Action Zone, as well as working with community development agencies as an Extended School.

It has been identified as an Enterprise Pathfinder, and won a Barclays New Futures Award in 2003. It gained a Healthy Schools Award in 2000, Sportsmark Gold in 2002, Investor in People in 2002, and Sportsmatch in 2003. It is a base for school centred initial teacher training in physical education and technology, and supports teachers training in other subjects.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
30046	Ross Parker	Lead inspector	Work-related learning Special educational needs
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
21906	John Scottow	Team inspector	Science Post 16 chemistry
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Art and design
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	Geography
8070	Joe Haves	Team inspector	Citizenship History
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
25352	Geraldine Taujanskas	Team inspector	Physical education
20716	Arthur Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education
32996	Alison Walker-Fraser	Team inspector	Business education

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REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Work-related learning	22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	48

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Churchill Community College is an **effective and improving** school. It supports **good** achievement and personal development, and provides **good** value for money. Students come to the college with knowledge and skills which are below average. Their literacy skills are particularly weak, and a significant number face a range of barriers to learning. The secure and very supportive college environment, together with recent developments in teaching and management are now promoting average standards in a majority of subjects. There is excellent support for students who are at risk of exclusion.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Weak literacy skills and unsatisfactory attendance in Years 7 to 11 are contributing to standards, which are still below average in too many subjects.
- The headteacher's very good vision enables the effective key leaders to drive improvement forward.
- The college provides very good care and raises aspirations within an orderly environment and a very strong ethos.
- There is very good support for students with special educational needs, including very good links with parents.
- Very good relationships and good behaviour management enable good teaching to support good achievement and personal qualities.
- Very good links with the community and other schools and the very good curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are supporting the very good inclusion.
- Assessment data is not yet used sufficiently well to track individual students' progress. Assessment lesson by lesson is not used effectively enough to revise planning and match work to every student's needs and help students to know how to move on.
- Students are given too little scope to become independent learners.
- Monitoring and recording attendance are ineffective in the sixth form.
- Accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory for a sports college.

The college has sustained good improvement since the previous inspection. A complex amalgamation has been effectively managed. The quality of teaching and management and, as a result, achievement has improved. Attendance remains a problem, but the college is doing all it can within college and in the community to improve this. Other issues from the previous report have been dealt with effectively.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	E	E	E
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	D	E	E	

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 at the end of Year 9.

Standards in both the 2003 national tests at the end of Years 9, and in GCSE examinations were well below average. They were similar in 2004 though previously low English results improved significantly. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards are currently **below average**. Achievement is now **good**. By the end of Year 9 students' standards are **below average**. Students have improved on the well below average standards they had when they came to the college. They are above average in physical education and are matching the national average in science, geography and religious education. By the end of Year 11 they are **average** in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, geography, physical education and business education. Recent unsatisfactory achievement, particularly in science, has been turned round.

Students' personal development is **good**. Despite unsatisfactory attendance, some initial reluctance to learn, and low self-esteem which causes difficulty in some lessons, students are well managed and the overwhelming majority behave well. The very good level of care and good teaching support them to develop **good** spiritual, moral social and cultural awareness. There is a very good ethos for learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good**. It is predominantly energetic, imaginative and built on very good relationships. The good behaviour management overcomes both minor disruption and inertia to support **good** learning for the majority of students, and very good learning in some areas for students with special needs.

The curriculum is good. The college has secured a wide range of additional funds to support both enterprise and inclusion. Students with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language are very well supported. There are courses to suit a wide range of interests and aptitudes in Years 10 and 11, and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the college are **good**. The headteacher provides a **very good** lead, with good support from governors and other key staff. Management is **good**, with a number of recently appointed but already influential subject leaders. Support staff play an important role in the smooth day-to-day running of the college. However, the college does not provide religious education in the sixth form, or a daily act of collective worship for all students. Additionally the full national curriculum is not provided in music.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

There is a good partnership with parents who are well satisfied with the college. The great majority of students, including several who have been at risk of permanent exclusion, are loyal and very appreciative of what the college is offering them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide more support for literacy in all subjects and across all years so that students can make even faster progress.
- Continue the work in college and in the community to improve attendance, and monitor sixth form attendance more effectively.
- Develop the use of assessment both to track individual progress, and so anticipate under-achievement, to help students to have a better understanding of how they can improve, and to refine planning from lesson to lesson based on what students have and have not learned effectively.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Provide religious education for sixth form students.
- Give students appropriate access to information and communication technology (ICT) in music.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory** and it provides **satisfactory** value for money. It provides good opportunities for students to progress within a secure environment. However, it attracts a small number of students and the college has to generate additional funds to cover the costs. The curriculum is good, though it does not meet the needs of all the potential students as effectively as the main college curriculum.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a good range of subjects to meet a variety of needs, and very good links with other schools.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good in mathematics and English and very good in geography.
- A significant number of students lack independence when they are studying.
- Personal support and guidance are very good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good , as are levels of achievement. Students in Year 13 have improved on their recent examination performance and are now working at the standards expected nationally. Standards in Year 12 are above average.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . The achievement of current Year 12 students is consistently good. Currently, this group of male students are working well above nationally expected standards. However, numbers remain low, as they have been in recent years when achievement has been satisfactory. The new head of department with good leadership has brought a sense of clear purpose and determination that is instilling confidence in teachers and students alike.
Science: chemistry	Provision in chemistry is satisfactory . Standards have been well below average, but work seen during the inspection was average. Lessons are well planned but some opportunities to consolidate students' learning are missed when they arise in lessons.
Humanities: geography	Provision in geography is good . Students' literacy skills are not well developed, so very good teaching is needed to support good learning. Standards are average.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Very good relationships are well maintained throughout the sixth form. Form tutors know students very well and provide very good support and encouragement. They review targets regularly, and students have frequent opportunities to discuss their work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is **good**. Relationships are good and there is mutual respect between tutors and students. Management is satisfactory. While attendance and punctuality at lessons are satisfactory the college does not have a record of who is on site. Data and results from tests are used well to follow progress and set targets for students and to measure the success of different subjects.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy their life in the sixth form and find it rewarding. Students respond willingly to the many opportunities the college has to offer, and they appreciate the strong support they receive to help them to succeed. In lessons, they take pride in their work and strive to achieve the best possible results. Students value the very good relationships they have with staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are **below average** overall, though they are average in about half of the subjects including mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is **good** for all students in Years 7 to 11, and in the sixth form. Standards are below average in English by the end of Years 9 and 11, and in mathematics by the end of Year 9. Standards are above average in mathematics in the sixth form. Standards in mathematics and information and communication technology are sufficient to enable students to make progress in all areas of the curriculum, but standards of literacy restrict students' progress in all years. Over recent years there has been a trend for boys to achieve better than girls, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are still below average in most subjects in Years 7 to 9.
- The underachievement indicated by the 2003 and 2004 tests has been turned round since September 2004.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well and those who use English as an additional language make very good progress.
- Achievement is very good in the Year 12 mathematics group.
- The most competent students are not yet fully stretched and challenged in some lessons.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.0 (29.9)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	32.7 (32.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	30.9 (30.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 204 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Students now come to the college working at levels below the national average. However, until two years ago students came with standards well below average and almost a third had significant difficulty reading. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well above average.
2. In the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 standards were well below average. Overall the trend of improvement over the last three years had been below the national trend. English results failed to keep pace over three years, and science over two, and results in mathematics had failed to match the recent national improvement. Compared with schools in similar social and economic contexts, mathematics and science results were average, but the below average English scores made the overall picture below average. The weak literacy skills that students brought to the college undermined the performance of about one fifth of the students in English, and the proportion of students reaching the highest levels was well below average. Failure to reach the higher levels held back the results in mathematics and science too. Overall boys' results were closer to the national average than girls' results in both English and science.

3. In 2004 results in English improved significantly, and students' writing in particular was much better. Results in mathematics remained similar, and in science they declined further.
4. In work seen during the inspection standards are now above average in physical education. They are average in science, geography and religious education. They are below average in English, mathematics, ICT, art and design, design and technology, history music and modern foreign languages. This represents good achievement from the standards that these students brought to the college.

Key Stage 4

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	32 (30)	52.0 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	75 (84)	91.0 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88 (90)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	24.7 (28.1)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 190 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. In the 2003 GCSE examinations results were well below the national average. The proportion of students who gained five or more passes at C grade or above matched the proportion in schools set in similar social and economic contexts. This is currently a more appropriate comparison than students' prior attainment. The distracting external influences tend to outweigh limited aspirations as students get older. In 2003 they undermined the performance of 10 per cent of the candidates. This is the reason for the college's emphasis on building aspirations, both in the classroom and in the community. The number of students who achieved some GCSE passes was lower than in most schools, principally because the college makes special provision for two groups of students. The first includes those who still need a more thorough grounding in basic skills, as well as practice in some important life skills. They receive alternative qualifications to match their good achievements. The second group included students who are in danger of exclusion from college. Their course is primarily focused on out of college placements, and their good achievement is measured more effectively by their progression into employment or further education.
6. Standards were well below average in English, science, and history. They were below average in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and modern foreign languages. In business education and ICT students reached above average standards. Boys' results were significantly closer to the national picture than girls', particularly in English, mathematics and science.
7. In 2004 results were broadly similar. There was a small rise in the proportion of students achieving five or more grades at C or above, when compared with those entered in 2003. English result improved significantly, but mathematics results declined, and science results were significantly worse.

8. These results represented unsatisfactory achievement. A significant proportion of each year group failed to build effectively on the standards they had reached in Year 9. The main reasons were a range of pressures from outside school which undermined their attendance.
9. Work seen during the inspection shows that strategies to improve achievement are working. Standards remain below average in English, as literacy difficulties continue to undermine students' writing in Year 11. They are below average in art and design, where students do not have sufficient access to examples of high quality sketch books, and in both history and modern foreign languages. However, the average standards in other subjects contribute to an overall picture of good achievement in most subjects, including English and mathematics. The earlier unsatisfactory achievement in science has also been turned round.
10. Students with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language often achieve better than many of the students who do not have their difficulties. They are very well supported by teachers, mentors, and support staff.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	66.7 (87.8)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	14.2 (23.9)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	150.0 (170.6)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 11 Results in A, AS, and VCE examinations in 2003 were well below average. This is partly explained by the school's policy of allowing students to take a sixth form course with lower grades at GCSE than is the case in the great majority of schools. This reflects a determination to allow as many students as possible to continue their studies in a familiar environment, even though the most appropriate lower level courses may not have been available. Collaboration with other local providers has made more courses available, and there are now more rigorous entry requirements before students are allowed to start a course. As a result students are now starting more appropriate sixth form courses.
- 12 Small numbers make it impossible to compare individual subject results with national averages.
- 13 Inspection evidence confirms that standards are average in English, where students have good analytical skills and can use evidence well to support their analysis, but are unfamiliar with less well known 17th century writers. The average standards in chemistry show as students can apply their knowledge well to solve problems, but are weaker at evaluating their work. In geography they are typified by solid skills when it come to extracting information from texts, but less evidence of original or analytical thinking. In mathematics standards are above average, and achievement is very good in Year 12 where students are on track for the higher grades, and have covered a lot more of the course than is usual by this stage in the year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are **satisfactory** and their behaviour is **good**. Relationships are **good**. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance in Years 7 to 11 is **unsatisfactory**. Students' attendance in the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Punctuality is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students respond well to the college's strong supportive ethos.
- Good and constructive relationships help to stimulate students to want to learn.
- The college works hard to raise students' self-esteem and confidence through opportunities to take responsibility and involvement in a wide range of activities.
- Most students behave well, but the poor behaviour of some students in a few lessons disrupts teaching and learning.
- There is a very good tracking system to monitor attendance, which in Years 7 –to 11 remains below the national average.
- The independent study skills of students in the sixth form are not well developed.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good.

Commentary

14. Most students have a satisfactory attitude towards school although there are some whose general attitude is a barrier to their learning. Students generally respond positively to the college's strong ethos of inclusion and high expectation of achievement and self-discipline. Relationships are good between students and with the staff, and this has been well developed through the student ASCOP¹ group. Most students are confident to ask for help if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work or with personal problems.
15. Behaviour overall is good and the college is an orderly environment. Students behave well in the dining hall at breaks and lunchtime when they show a good level of maturity. An example of this was observed when students were eating lunch in social groups while listening quietly to the student steel band to which they responded with instant applause. However, there are a significant number of students who at times become boisterous and noisy in corridors and on stairways when they are not directly supervised by staff. In many well planned lessons students work hard, listen attentively to teachers and are keen to answer questions and contribute their ideas. They work well in groups and share resources co-operatively and sensibly. In those lessons, which are not so well managed, the behaviour of some students deteriorates and this disrupts their own learning and the learning of others. The college has good and very positive procedures for behaviour management, and these are consistently applied throughout the college. Students are confident that the college deals effectively with all forms of bullying or harassment.

Attendance

16. Although the college works very hard to improve attendance, this remains unsatisfactory and below the national average. The college has taken a firm line on authorising absence

¹ The "Aspiring Sports Colleges Project" involves Year 11 students who are part of a national drive to build on Sports College status to develop students' self-esteem and aspirations. Students have attended national conferences and then given presentations to form tutors and heads of department on ways of removing barriers to learning. They currently work with Year 7 students putting the theories into practice.

resulting in a steep rise in the number of unauthorised absences recorded. A significant number of students take holidays during term time. The electronic procedures for registration, monitoring and following up attendance are very good and the college is supported well by the attendance team. The majority of students are punctual and arrive at lessons on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.7	School data:	6.0
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

17. Students' personal development is good and the college works hard to encourage students of all abilities to become mature and responsible young people. Opportunities within the college and with partner institutions and the local community contribute very well to students' progress and achievements. The majority of students in all year groups feel that the college is a good place to be and many enjoy all it has to offer. The student council with representatives from all year groups and the peer mentoring arrangements ensure that students have the opportunity to share their views and ideas to improve their environment. Older students are proud of their role as ASCOP members, and they speak confidently about the effect of the project on relationships and aspirations within the college. Junior Sports Leaders value the opportunity to visit partner primary schools to assist younger pupils with sports activities. Students with special educational needs and physical disabilities are very well integrated and are very well supported to enable them to take part in all activities.

18. Overall students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development and experience are enriched through areas of the curriculum such as religious education, music and art and design, but opportunities are often missed within the planned curriculum for reflection and for students to learn to appreciate through deeper understanding and self-awareness. Moral and social education is good and is closely linked to the college's positive ethos, clear system of commendation and reward, extensive opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular provision. During assemblies students reflect on a range of moral and social issues affecting the world today. The college has a system of 'Theme of the Week' but there is inconsistency between form groups in its implementation. The provision for cultural development is good. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage through regular visits to places of cultural interest and by visitors into college who enrich the curriculum. They learn to appreciate a range of multicultural music and through religious education they develop an awareness of world religions and global cultures. As part of the cultural education programme students spend a full day working to explore the dance, music and art of chosen continents, and the extended schools initiative supports a local multicultural celebration each year.

Exclusions

19. The number of fixed term exclusions is low. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last two years. The college works hard to provide a high level of support for students as part of its inclusion policy. Fixed term exclusions are used only as a result of serious behavioural problems.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1086	173	0
White – any other White background	15	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	1	0

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

Sixth form

20. Students enjoy their life in the sixth form and find it rewarding. They have a positive attitude towards their work and their behaviour is good. Students' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The college has recognised the need for closer daily monitoring of attendance to ensure that students' whereabouts are accurately recorded. Students respond willingly to the many opportunities the college has to offer, and they appreciate the strong support they receive to help them to succeed. In lessons, they take pride in their work and strive to achieve the best possible results. However, their independent study skills are not well developed and most tend to rely too heavily on their teachers to provide them with information. Personal development is good through their involvement in a wide range of extended school services and partnerships. Students value the very good relationships they have with staff. Older students on A-level courses act as very good role models for younger students in raising their aspirations and career prospects.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **good**. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is thorough, but data is not yet used to full effect to raise and sustain achievement. The curriculum is good. The college provides a very good level of care. Links with parents are good, and there are very good links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant number of boys find it difficult to settle to their work, and often try to dominate the teacher's attention.
- Very good relationships enable teachers to manage potentially difficult behaviour well.
- Overall expectations are high and lessons are challenging.
- Teachers and support staff enable students with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language to learn very well.
- In most lessons teachers use imaginative methods, maintain a high pace and make good use of resources to enliven lessons.
- In some lessons teachers are distracted by students' behaviour, or attempt to control it using undemanding tasks, which offer too few opportunities for students to become independent.
- Teachers are not making enough use of assessment lesson by lesson to adapt their planning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 134 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (5%)	27 (20%)	63 (47%)	32 (24%)	5 (4%)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

21. There is a solid foundation of good teaching across the college, enhanced by some very good and excellent lessons, especially in English, mathematics, design and technology and physical education.
22. The difficulties which a significant number of students bring to the college, mean that sometimes good or very good teaching is needed to support satisfactory learning. There is an inertia in some teaching groups because students do not have high aspirations, and are highly dependent on teachers for motivation. In some groups students' lack of self-esteem drives them to seek attention in any way that they can. Sometimes this leads to minor disruption, which teachers need to manage very firmly to maintain the pace of learning. In other lessons the problem is evident when boys in particular dominate discussion and questioning, often showing considerable enthusiasm. In these circumstances girls tend to be quieter, and to take a less active part in the lesson, and this restricts their achievement.
23. Teachers create very good relationships and use these to manage behaviour effectively. This is less easy for supply teachers, so high levels of staff absence have undermined the quality of teaching in the past. The majority of teachers create enthusiasm for learning by varying their methods to maintain interest. They start their lessons briskly, and maintain a sharp pace and a high level of challenge. Above all they have high expectations and keep these at the forefront throughout the lesson. They make good use of resources such as computerised white boards, which capture students' attention, and make it quicker and easier to grasp concepts. In the less successful lessons teachers choose inappropriate methods to manage behaviour. They dominate activities, talking rather than letting students talk, and spend too much time on activities, which need low-level skills. In these situations teachers do not challenge students to explain what they think, and as a result understanding is more limited. The college is working to increase the significance of homework, as part of the drive to involve parents more actively in students' learning.
24. Both teachers and support staff work effectively to enable students with special educational needs to learn well and those who use English as an additional language to learn very effectively. Teachers and learning mentors who work with potentially excluded students in the student support centre, work very sensitively to provide excellent support. They judge the appropriate level of challenge very effectively so that students remain motivated but are not distracted by the sorts of conflict that have led to their difficulties. In one lesson a boy in Year 11 who had never enjoyed geography in the past gave a clear explanation of the different effects of the tide on the Tyne and the Bengal rivers. He was thoroughly engaged in the work, and had gained a good understanding of the principles involved.
25. Teachers mark and assess work thoroughly, and give helpful guidance on how to improve. However, the college has only really begun to focus closely on monitoring achievement across subjects in the short term. A recently appointed senior manager has begun to gather and circulate the relevant data. As yet students do not have enough information about how well they are doing in relation to their potential, or what they need to do to improve. In each individual lesson too few teachers are assessing how well each student has coped with the activities. Consequently they are not refining their planning from lesson to lesson. One consequence is that the most competent students are not always stretched and challenged as far as they should be.

Sixth form

Teaching and learning are **good** overall in the sixth form.

26. In the best lessons teachers are enthusiastic and energetic as they inject a brisk pace into the learning. In one excellent mathematics lesson, the teacher demonstrated superb judgement, choosing when to accelerate, and when to slow down and allow students to reflect on their learning. In a very good physics lesson students set to work keenly because the activities gave the theory clear everyday relevance. In most lessons teachers make good use of a wide range of resources, including computers, to keep the work stimulating.
27. Where teaching is only satisfactory teachers use methods which are sound but pedestrian, and miss some opportunities to use discussion to explore ideas in depth.
28. Assessment is good in the sixth form. Marking is thorough, and teachers provide helpful verbal and written comments to make sure that students know how well they are doing, and to set targets for improvement. In mathematics assessment is only satisfactory because systems to track students progress across the different aspects of the subjects are not fully developed.

The curriculum

The college provides a curriculum of **good** quality that is fully inclusive and provides a good range of traditional subjects at GCSE. Work experience and vocational courses are developing and the college recognises the need to extend the range of alternatives for post-16 students. The college's resources are generally satisfactory. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for a Sports College.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college does not provide the statutory daily act of collective worship and there is no provision of religious education for post-16 students.
- The breadth of the curriculum is good for all pupils and the alternative provision in Years 10 and 11 for less academic and disaffected pupils is exceptional in quality and effectiveness.
- Outside sports facilities are inadequate.
- Extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented students is good and all students benefit from a very good range of extension activities available outside the standard teaching day.

Commentary

29. The curriculum in the main college meets all statutory National Curriculum requirements apart from a failure to provide a daily act of corporate worship and appropriate use of ICT in music. Governors' plans to provide post-16 religious education have not yet been realised. An appropriate course was provided but was poorly attended. The course was withdrawn and alternative arrangements are in hand. The college provides a good range of well-taught GCSE courses that meet the needs of the majority of students. The breadth of this programme is extended through provision of three specialist sciences, business education, music and Spanish.
30. There is an increasingly effective programme for developing literacy and numeracy skills across the college. The college provides successfully for students with special educational needs. Support from EMTAS (Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service) teachers enables students recently arrived from overseas to make rapid progress. Joint course provision with partner institutions is well developed and curriculum managers are adept at finding matched funding for such courses. The involvement of the community and a wide range of agencies is very good and results in a wide range of projects and work-related opportunities. A joint community project with Northumbria Police, for example, has gone a

long way to improve the level of understanding between young people and senior citizens in the area.

31. Managers have recently reviewed the range of post-16 courses and now propose to introduce more vocational subjects. Provision for pupils with a history of poor attitudes or those who benefit from a selection of more practical activities is particularly effective at improving their attendance and enthusiasm. It also supports the majority to progress into employment or further education.
32. Within the college, dedicated staff support a wide range of sporting and other activities both at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Many subjects including religious education, physical education, ICT, geography, history and science arrange visits and/or visitors to enrich learning. The taught programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship provides a good core with well-developed opportunities for students to take responsibility within the college and in the local community. Careers advice and information about post-16 education is good. There is a well-developed extension programme for gifted and talented students, and with the recent appointment of a specialist teaching assistant, there is a well planned strategy to extend the range of challenge in every lesson
33. The college is generally well resourced and well staffed. Well managed support staff improve the day-to-day running of the college by working beyond the limits of their traditional roles. After a high quality building and refurbishment programme when the college was re-organised in 2001, much of the accommodation is good. The learning resource centres in particular do much to support the ethos for learning across the college. However, the sports field is poorly drained. With no all weather surface and the need to use indoor facilities for examinations, facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

34. The curriculum for sixth form students is good. Collaboration with Burnside High School and Tynemouth Sixth Form College enhances the range of courses available. There are vocational options in ICT, health and social care and performing arts. However, there are currently insufficient opportunities for some students to stay on in the sixth form to develop Level 1 and 2 courses, and the college does not provide religious education for sixth form students.

Care, guidance and support

Standards of care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. There are **good** procedures to involve students in the college's work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of care and support provided for students by a dedicated staff.
- Students with special educational needs and those at risk of exclusion receive very good care and support.
- Very well planned induction arrangements ensure a smooth transition.
- Students in the sixth form are very well supported and advised through close monitoring.
- In Years 7 to 11 there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment data between subjects.
- Students are involved well in shaping the life of the college and have a strong voice.

Commentary

35. The college follows very good procedures for the care and welfare of students to ensure that they learn in a safe environment. The statutory requirements for health and safety are met in full and all issues are closely monitored. The college has improved its procedures for child protection and these now fully meet requirements. There are effective arrangements,

including efficient filters, to ensure the safety of students when using the Internet. The good relationships and the college's very positive and caring ethos help to raise students' aspirations and self-esteem. This, together with a well-established behaviour management policy makes a strong contribution to their academic and personal achievements, though often at the expense of the scheduled "theme of the week".

36. Most students feel secure that the staff know them well and are confident that they are there to help them. Students understand the good system of target setting for subjects and personal development, and they are involved well in setting their own targets and reviewing progress. Overall, teachers and learning mentors provide good support, advice and guidance during lessons, but there is inconsistency between subjects in the use of assessment data to support teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11.
37. Students in Year 9 and their parents are well advised when making their choices for GCSE examinations. There are good arrangements for careers education and work experience and the Connexions service supports students effectively. There are very good induction arrangements for Year 7 students through the very strong partnership with the primary schools. The very good system of peer mentoring between students in Year 11 and Year 7 helps younger students to settle in quickly.
38. Very good support is provided for those students with special educational needs and well organised individual education plans are shared with parents. Students with physical disabilities are very well integrated and staff and other students offer high quality support to enable them to take part in all activities. The college is very proactive in its recognition of students' individual needs and has a clear understanding of the local culture. Excellent arrangements are made with partner institutions and local businesses for individual students to successfully follow work-related learning projects.
39. Students value the fact that their views are listened to and that they have helped to establish a more positive learning environment. The student council meets regularly and has successfully instigated improvements to the college's resources and the local community. However, insufficient opportunity is provided for students to run their own council meetings and to raise their profile as an important student body.

Sixth form

40. Very good relationships are well maintained throughout the sixth form. Students appreciate the good induction arrangements with well-informed advice and guidance on individual courses, higher education and careers. The learning mentor provides effective additional support to help students to keep on track with their work. Form tutors know students very well and provide very good support and encouragement. They review targets regularly, and students have frequent opportunities to discuss their work. The Sixth Form Management Committee has a strong voice in the college and students regularly organise activities such as the Alnmouth to Seahouses sponsored walk in support of a number of local and national charities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a **good** partnership with parents who are well satisfied with the college. The **very good** community links and partnership with other schools enrich the curriculum. The extended school provision provides **good** opportunities for personal and community development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college works very hard to involve parents through regular surveys and communication.
- The majority of parents are supportive and have a very positive view of the college.

- The college provides parents with a good amount of helpful information about the curriculum, activities and organisation.
- Parents of students with special educational needs are involved very well in assessments and reviews.
- Inconsistencies in the annual reports do not always provide clear information about progress.
- The very well established partnership with the community, local businesses and other schools enriches learning opportunities.
- The Extended Schools provision makes a positive impact on students and the community.

Commentary

41. The college is committed to establishing a good partnership with parents and involves them promptly to discuss concerns or to celebrate students' success. Parents' views are sought regularly through questionnaires, discussions at open evenings and target setting days. Parent governors support the college well. Most parents are satisfied with the education provided and actively support their children's studies at home. Some parents find it difficult to maintain a partnership but the college continues to work hard to include them. The Parents' Focus Groups for Years 7 and 8 have contributed their views very well to the revision of the anti-bullying and homework policies.
42. The college provides good and helpful information about activities and changes in organisation through regular newsletters and the termly newspaper 'Adrenalin'. A significant number of parents do not feel well informed about progress. Inspectors agree that the reports contain inconsistencies between year groups in the clarity of information provided about students' progress. The Student Support Centres involve parents very well and a very good amount of information about progress is provided for them.
43. Community links are very good, and the college has been successful in establishing itself as a community school. Through its sports college status the college works closely with a large number of other schools and sports associations and this makes a strong contribution to students' achievements and personal development. Students who are at risk of exclusion make very good progress through the excellent provision and very strong links with local businesses.
44. The college's involvement in the Extended Schools Pathfinder Initiative has had a strong impact on meeting the needs of students and families and is helping to tackle barriers to learning in the community. A wide range of multi-agency links such as the police, Age Concern, Sure Start, Primary Care Trust and PETE (Partnership for Education Training and Employment) support the college's work very well. A small number of parents have attended courses in literacy organised by the adult learning support agency. The new "Learning Through Football" centre provides very good additional facilities for ICT courses for students, parents and community use. The strong links with other schools and colleges provide extensive and very well-organised opportunities for shared courses, staff liaison links and extra-curricular activities. Joint courses considerably enhance the range of course available to sixth form students. The college works with Newcastle and Northumbria universities to train teachers and the sports co-ordinator programme extends sports opportunities for pupils across North Tyneside. There is extensive additionally funded collaboration with other local schools in initiatives to raise standards and tackle disaffection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and leadership by other key staff is good. Governance is good. Management is good and financial management is very good. The college does not fulfil the statutory requirement to provide a daily act

of worship for all students or to provide religious education in the sixth form, and the full national curriculum entitlement in music

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear strategic planning and good management of staff have led to significant improvements in the college's ethos and students' attitudes to learning.
- Finances are very well managed and have been used very effectively to improve the college.
- Very good professional development for all staff is improving the quality of provision.
- Governors are centrally involved in developing the college's strategy.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic across the college.
- The use of performance data to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision is underdeveloped.

Commentary

45. The headteacher provides very clear direction for the development of the college and, as a result, the college has made significant improvements over recent years and has good capacity for further improvement. His clear vision, commitment and energy inspire others and this is driving up standards. His leadership is innovative as seen in the many workforce changes that he has brought about. He also provides clear solutions to complex problems ensuring initiatives actually lead to change. This is clearly evident in the college's success in gaining funds from a wide range of sources used to improve provision. He is determined to include parents by making the college a focus for the local community.
46. Leadership by other key staff is good. They are a dynamic team providing a strong direction for both students' academic and personal welfare. Successful strategies to improve ethos and attendance are in place. The leadership is committed to ensure all students have a chance of success by providing high levels of support for disaffected students.
47. Governors carry out their duties well. They are fully committed to the improvement of the college and centrally involved in writing the Strategic Intent. The governors have responded properly to the statutory requirements of providing a daily act of worship and religious education in the sixth form. They have made every effort to ensure these are provided, but have been unable to identify sufficient staff who are prepared to carry out a daily act of worship with students. The governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of many aspects of the college, for example, staffing, through reports from the headteacher and visits to the college. Many governors take an active part in monitoring aspects of the college such as improving attendance. However, their perceptions of the academic strengths and weaknesses of the college are less well developed because this has not been a high priority. While providing good support for the college's leadership team the governors do challenge and question strategies. Recently the college's proposals for changes to the school day were returned for further consideration. The governors have a good understanding of financial planning and have helped the college in bringing about a balanced budget.
48. Management of the college is good. Monitoring of many aspects of college life is well established and the results are well used to improve provision. The leadership team visit many classrooms daily to check ethos and behaviour. There have been systematic observations of lessons in English, science, mathematics and ICT. This has resulted in improvements in teaching in these subjects but they have not extended this systematic monitoring to other subjects. When observing lessons, judgements are made about teaching and behaviour rather than the more important standards and learning. The college has started to use data to identify aspects of the college that are excelling and areas that need improvement. This data is not yet used effectively to follow students' progress or set them academic targets.

49. Performance management of the headteacher and all other staff is a strength. Performance targets are carefully written to reflect the priorities in the improvement plan. The very good programme of professional development and the induction of new staff is raising standards. The college has taken a very vigorous approach to recruiting new staff and is now in a better position to improve the consistency of teaching. The college welcomes students and is a satellite training institution for local universities. This work assists recruitment and several recent trainees have been appointed to the college's staff.
50. The recent budget deficit has been eliminated. Budget planning is closely linked to the priorities in the college improvement plan and finances are very closely controlled. Best value judgements are at the forefront of all spending decisions. As a result, the governors and staff have ensured that all available resources are used to very good effect. The college has been very successful at securing additional funds that are very well used to improve the buildings and facilities that have enhanced the ethos of the college and are appreciated by students and parents as a sign that the college is improving.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,379,970	Balance from previous year	238,123
Total expenditure	4,878,740	Balance carried forward to the next	739,353
Expenditure per pupil	4,551		

51. The total income for the college includes funds intended to benefit students in more than one school. These include the school sports co-ordinator project, the Education Action Zone activities, and the behaviour improvement project. The funds also run for more than one school year, and this explains the substantial sum carried forward from one year to the next through the life of the project.

Sixth form

52. The sixth form is well led. The co-ordinator has a clear sense of direction and has initiated a drive for improvement. Relationships are very good and there is mutual respect between tutors and students.
53. The sixth form runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and management is satisfactory. While attendance and punctuality at lessons are satisfactory the college does not have a record of who is on site. Data and results from tests are used well to follow progress and set targets for students. This data is also used well to measure the success of different subjects. The sixth form does not recruit sufficient students to meet all its costs. The college makes up the shortfall from funds secured from other sources and not from base budget. However, it is an important progression route to further study for many students. Attracting the additional funding is fully justified as an integral part of the college's strategy to raise achievement by raising the priority of learning within the whole community.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

The quality of provision for work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an established programme, which provides a coherent experience through every year.
- There are very good opportunities for students to become involved in enterprise projects.
- The excellent “Out of College Provision” exploits work-related experience to protect older students from exclusion.
- Evaluation and assessment of work-related activities and skills are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

54. Work-related learning has a good effect on students’ achievements. Standards in the vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11 are in line with the national average, and achievement is good. In particular lower attaining students, and some who have behaviour difficulties are able to achieve well in the GNVQ information and communication technology (ICT) course. Overall students reach similar standards in vocational courses as they do in their other GCSE examinations, but those following the inclusive Out of College Provision achieve very well as a result of their work-related placements.
55. No lessons were observed in Years 7 to 9, but teaching and learning are good in vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. The programme for Year 7 to 9 is well planned. It ensures that all students learn about the world of work, the impact of business on the environment, and how learning and earning are closely related. In Years 10 and 11 all students study ICT, and each aspect of this course requires them to solve realistic workplace problems. The same sort of practical and relevant activities support good achievement in other vocational options. Additionally, all students in Year 11 undertake well organised work experience placements, and have access to a carefully tailored programme of careers advice and guidance. About half of the students in Year 12 take advantage of further placements to explore different kind of employment. There is insufficient time for students to evaluate their work placements, and when teachers do assess students’ achievements they give insufficient emphasis to the skills they have developed. The college has successfully secured additional funding to support enterprise activities. There is a very good range of opportunities for students to develop projects, which are very well supported by local employers. This theme is supported by specific enterprise days in Year 10 and 11, when all students take part in simulations, which both raise their awareness and tempt them to get involved. As well as promoting projects such as Language for the Lads – where students are translating local tourist information into European languages, the funding is supporting 25 possible under-achievers to tackle their difficulties.
56. Work-related learning is well led and effectively managed. The established provision is carefully organised. To meet future demand the co-ordinator is working with a team of teachers to identify where further development is needed. This has been a methodical process and is designed to ensure that any developments which are identified will have the support of all subjects, and so will effectively extend the current provision for all students.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students progress well and by Year 11 their levels of achievement are good.
- There is an improving trend in standards in Years 9 and 11.
- Learning is good because of students' positive attitudes to the subject and effective teaching.
- Students' ability to speak formally and at length about their work is not well developed.
- Some students lack the ability to structure their writing into effective paragraphs.

Commentary

57. The proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 English language examinations was well below average for boys and girls. This represents satisfactory achievement when account is taken of their well below average attainment on entry to the college. Results were similar to those obtained at the time of the previous inspection. There was a significant improvement in the standards attained in the 2004 examinations. Results in the 2003 English literature examinations were similar to those in English language and improvement in standards was seen in 2004.
58. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average for boys and girls and achievement was unsatisfactory. This mirrored the attainment and achievement of students over the previous two years. Results were similar to those attained in mathematics and science but below those obtained at the previous inspection. They were below average when compared to the results of schools in similar contexts. There was a significant increase in standards in the 2004 tests.
59. Students' learning in lessons is good because of their positive attitudes to the subject and their ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. This is so for all groups, including those students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. All work well collaboratively and show respect for each other's views. The very good working relationships give students the confidence to learn. Their levels of achievement by Years 9 and 11 are good because they have developed their writing skills from a low level on entry to the college to just below the levels expected nationally. This confirms the improving trend in standards seen in the examinations. Students are writing in a range of styles for different purposes but the writing of many boys and girls of average competency lacks structure because it is not paragraphed correctly. Speaking skills are below average but achievement is good in terms of their confidence and fluency when speaking in small

groups. They are not confident and articulate, however, when called upon to speak in more formal situations. Reading and listening skills are at the levels expected nationally and achievement in these competencies is good.

60. Teaching is good. Teachers understand the learning difficulties encountered by many students on entry to the college and they have developed varied teaching strategies to meet those needs. The concentration on developing basic writing skills has brought about the rise in standards. Excellent teaching was seen with younger special educational needs boys and girls and with older students of low competency. The high expectations and the level of challenge in these lessons resulted in extensive learning.
61. The leadership provided by the head of department is very good. There is a strong sense of common purpose in the department's work and teachers are committed to the students and work effectively as a team. The subject leader is rigorous in his analysis of the subject's performance and in taking action to raise standards, especially in relation to the improved attainment now seen in Year 11. He is well supported by a senior colleague whose work has resulted in the raising of standards in Year 9. Management is good. Appropriate assessment systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' progress and action is taken to address any underachievement. There are procedures for teachers to share good practice through observing each other at work. Teaching accommodation is good and the department is well resourced. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection in students' attainment in English language and in the quality and impact of the very best teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Students enter the college with very weak literacy skills. They do not have a fluent command of written and spoken English and they cannot use the language flexibly in different contexts. Many have a reading age below their chronological age. The college has done much to address these weaknesses. Training in the teaching of literacy skills has been provided for the staff and the college's literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to support teachers in implementing the strategies. This has resulted in areas of good practice as in physical education where students write evaluations of their standards of performance. There have been significant improvements in students' writing skills in English. In design and technology students are provided with exemplars of good work in order to improve the standard of their writing. They are also encouraged to read and learn from each other's work. The work of the special educational needs department has resulted in the least competent students making very good progress in improving their literacy levels.
63. Literacy levels remain below those expected nationally, however, and this is a barrier to raising standards further across the curriculum. At the present time there is not a whole college approach consistently applied by all teachers to improve those levels. There is a recognition of this by the college's management and of the need for a monitoring procedure to drive up standards.

Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all ability levels, boys as well as girls, achieve well.
- Teachers motivate students successfully and manage behaviour very well.
- Students and teachers do not make enough use of the foreign language to communicate in lessons.
- The department is well led and managed.

Commentary

64. GCSE results in 2003 were below average in French and Spanish. Boys' grades in both languages were above average and girls' well below. French results declined slightly in 2004, with fewer candidates and a big fall in boys' grades, while girls' improved. Spanish results fell by a large amount in 2004, but the number of candidates increased and boys' grades stayed above girls'. Assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were below national expectations, with girls' results well below and boys' slightly above. These fell in 2004 with boys doing less well than girls. Attainment in Spanish is currently higher than in French, but standards observed during the inspection were below average in both languages in all age groups. Achievement is good in both languages in all year groups. All students, including those from minority ethnic groups, work hard in lessons and make good progress. Students with special needs also achieve well. A few high attaining students do much better than this and move forward confidently to achieve high standards.
65. Teaching and learning are good in both languages in all year groups. All the teachers are experienced, have very good command of their subject, engage students' interests effectively and manage behaviour very well. They use a variety of techniques, encourage a swift pace and make good use of songs and games. All students have the opportunity to use ICT to support their language learning, but a few students make only limited use of this. There are no email links with schools abroad. All students develop good learning habits and a few develop independent learning skills. Most students acquire good knowledge of grammar, which improves their literacy skills, but teachers rarely communicate with students in the foreign language. This means that most students lack confidence when using the language to express their own thoughts and experiences. Assessment is satisfactory. Students taking GCSE in French and Spanish receive good advice on how to gain full marks, but students in Years 7 to 9 do not fully understand how well they are doing and how they might improve.
66. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a sense of purpose. The experienced staff works together well as a team and has high aspirations for all the students. They have built fruitful contacts with various partners, such as local industry and primary schools, which improve language teaching. The college's senior management monitors the work of the department well. Resources are adequate, but there is inconsistency in the department's policy on the use of the foreign language in lessons. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Most of the important issues raised in the previous report have improved, but standards are no higher than they were last time.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good by the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is often highly imaginative enabling students to learn well and enjoy mathematics.
- GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average.
- Attainment in Year 11 is now in line with that in schools nationally.
- Good leadership and management have already improved achievement in a very short space of time.

Commentary

67. In 2003, results obtained by students in national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average. However, this represented satisfactory achievement from their

standards on entry and when compared with similar schools. Results in 2004 were much the same. GCSE results for students in 2003 were below the national average. This showed satisfactory achievement for the cohort at all levels of ability. In 2004, results were significantly worse, particularly for boys at most ability levels. However, the proportion of top grades obtained by boys showed a marked increase.

68. Currently, the achievement of students in Year 9 is soundly satisfactory for the vast majority. They were below average as a cohort on entry and are now not quite so far below. This includes gifted students and those with English as an additional language. Achievement is good for those with special educational needs because teachers focus clearly on raising attainment at an individual level and class sizes are suitably small. Students in Year 11 are doing better. They achieve consistently well to reach average standards. They benefit from the finer setting arrangement for groups, which enables the gifted students to make consistently good progress. The most able are supremely confident. Impressively, they know whether complicated formulae for volumes and surface area are liable to be correct. They do this by checking how many dimensions of length are multiplied together. Students with special educational needs continue to make good progress. Those with English as an additional language are now also achieving well because teachers plan very effectively for all students to be challenged.
69. Teaching is good and is successful in promoting consistently good learning. It is regularly very good and often excellent. Teachers regularly plan very well. They often show great imagination in organising competitive games and use a wide range of resources, including ICT, very effectively. They manage students very well, showing a high degree of respect that students return in equal measure. Students learn well because they are well motivated and regularly enjoy mathematics. In a very good lesson, the most able students in Year 9 worked very well in pairs, usually a boy/girl combination seated together, to estimate angle sizes. Some students showed great excitement at the competitive element and celebrated their success openly. Students regularly respond so well because teachers work very hard at maintaining very good pace in lessons. They achieve this by ensuring that all students are challenged to make significant progress. In many lessons, students are given the chance to discuss mathematics as a group or in pairs. Lower attaining students in Year 10 learned very thoroughly about co-ordinates on a two-dimensional grid because of meaningful paired discussion. They were also motivated because they could all see a superbly produced large and colourful grid on the classroom wall. Teaching is rarely less than good. However, this occurs when work lacks a meaningful context. Teaching is also less than good when teachers allow some students to dominate lessons. This results in quiet more passive students not only being left out of discussion but receiving less teacher feedback on their progress. Teaching is never less than satisfactory.
70. Teaching is often better in Years 10 and 11 because students of like ability are matched closer together and challenge for all is easier to maintain. Neither are there groups taught by more than one teacher, which is occasionally the case in Years 7 to 9. This occasionally causes confusion for students and teachers have to spend valuable time planning for consistency of approach. Whilst teachers assess well in lessons when to move students forward, there is inconsistency in the quality and quantity of written advice students receive on how to improve. Target setting is developing, but the college is only recently using prior attainment data to set meaningful targets. Some data currently used is not precise enough to track progress meaningfully. However, teachers' judgements of attainment are accurate and this ensures at least good challenge in the majority of lessons.
71. Leadership and management are now good. The new head of department is determined and purposeful and has made an impressive start. Within a very short period of time, she has made a difference in standards by improving schemes of work to plan for a wider use

of resources. The head of department understands data well and has set systems in place to tighten up assessment including students judging their own progress. She has helped rebuild confidence amongst a talented team of teachers. Previously, staffing problems have caused inconsistency and a lack of continuity. Herself a very good teacher, she has encouraged imaginative teachers to provide ideas for the team. She has welcomed the very good support provided by a variety of extra funding. This includes talented personnel from outside the college and the opportunities to withdraw students into smaller focused groups. The head of department recognises that there is a need for a teaching assistant, particularly where ability levels in groups are widest.

72. Improvements in teaching, leadership and management and the standards attained by most students have meant that by the end of Year 11, students now achieve well. This represents consistently good improvement since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. Students show satisfactory levels of mathematical competence that enable them to work at suitably challenging levels in other subjects. In geography, science and ICT they interpret graphs meaningfully. Students in design and technology measure and weigh accurately. In art and design they use perspective to good effect because teachers plan for this. Impressively, also because teachers focus well on this, students in religious education appreciate the symmetry of patterns in Islam.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recently introduced changes are improving students' achievement.
- Teaching that is too directed prevents students developing their learning sufficiently.
- Marking is inconsistent in quality.
- Work in some lessons is not well matched to students' abilities.
- Effective additional support is organised for students.

Commentary

74. Results at the end of Year 9 were well below average in 2003, but average compared with similar schools. In 2004 results dropped, mainly because of the extended absence of key staff during the spring and summer terms. Girls achieved better than predicted from the levels they reached by the end of Year 6, and better than boys. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are now average overall. Recent improvements in teaching are ensuring satisfactory achievement for the majority of students.
75. Results in GCSE examinations were below average in 2003 and they also dropped in 2004. Up to and including 2004 all students were entered for double science and standards were well below average. Boys' results were better than girls. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 take single, double or triple award science so that their needs are more effectively met. Students in triple science lessons are achieving above average standards. In other lessons standards are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Most students achieve equally well with no evident differences between groups of students, except for a minority with poor attitudes in a few lessons.
76. Teaching is satisfactory overall and was good in almost half of the lessons seen. In the best lessons teachers use stimulating presentations that bring topics to life, making good use of ICT. They provide imaginative activities that interest and involve all the students and make good use of assessment to monitor everyone's learning. In unsatisfactory lessons

activities are mundane or do not match all students' abilities well, and occasionally the teacher's subject knowledge is not accurate. In a minority of lessons too much time is spent copying information. Some teachers spend too long instructing or using ineffective whole class discussions. The result of this is that students do not develop their own understanding sufficiently.

77. Learning is satisfactory. The majority of students are positive about science but some students are reluctant to learn in some lessons. Teachers insist on good behaviour, working hard to engage all students but this can limit the amount of science learnt. Able students are suitably challenged in the higher sets so they achieve well. Teachers make effective use of well-adapted teaching resources to support students with special educational needs so they make good progress. The teaching assistant attached to the department makes an important contribution to ensuring that these students achieve well. Teachers set a good range of homework tasks that support and extend the work in lessons.
78. Marking is inconsistent in quality. Tests and questions are marked thoroughly but work in books is sometimes marked only superficially. About half of the teachers write effective comments for improvement but these are not always followed up with students. Although target levels are recorded in many books in Years 7 to 9, too few students are aware of their current levels or how to improve. Students develop good practical skills but they do not use ICT sufficiently in practical investigations.
79. The good leadership by the recently appointed head of department is raising standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The head of department, working effectively with the line manager, monitors performance well and has introduced improvements that are beginning to impact on weaknesses. Teaching has been improved by making more use of current best practice and by more effective use of assessment data. Management is satisfactory because the changes are only just taking effect. The effects of staff absence have been reduced by careful deployment of senior and part-time staff. Good links with the local education authority are supporting effective staff development. Revision classes for Year 11 and booster classes in Year 9 are helping to raise standards, and there is extra support for more able students in all year groups. Dedicated technical staff provide very good support for lessons. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, with significant improvement since the beginning of the academic year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching of lower ability students.
- The very good support from the local authority, the support teacher and the teaching assistant has had a positive effect on raising students' achievement.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are generally good and often very good.
- A significant number of more able students do not achieve as well as expected.

Commentary

80. Standards are below average on admission. According to 2003 teacher assessments, standards were in line with the national average by the end of Key Stage 3. Standards fell significantly in 2004 after a range of more up to date teaching approaches was introduced too quickly.
81. Standards in Years 7 to 9 remain below average but achievement is currently good. Students are making good progress after significant disruption to their learning last year. Students in Year 7 are able to use presentation software and to animate their slides and

use transition effects. By Year 9, they can use spreadsheets and databases and have experienced creating sequences to monitor and control events.

82. The small cohort who took GNVQ in 2003 achieved above average results. At present, all in Key Stage 4 do GNVQ and standards are average overall and students are achieving well.
83. Teaching and learning are both good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan very well and make good use of time in the lessons. For example, in a very good lesson with a lower set in Year 11, the very clear introduction, stress on key words and sharing of learning objectives resulted in students being enthusiastic, fully involved in their learning and making very good progress. These students are being supported with extra tuition and residential weekends to help them to achieve a higher level in GNVQ. The students feel valued by the staff and attitudes and behaviour are very good. However, where lessons are less than good, there were insufficient opportunities to extend the learning of more able students. Students were unenthusiastic about their work because it was neither challenging nor stimulating, and in a few lessons learning was affected by unsettled behaviour. Students with special educational needs and those using English as an additional language are supported very well in class and achieve well.
84. The subject is well led and well managed. The subject leader has very good support from the headteacher and a recognised expert from the local education authority. The subject has a high status in the college and is making an important contribution to the college's strategy to raise achievement. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been a significant expansion of ICT facilities across the college and suitably skilled staff have been employed. All students in Years 10 and 11 now take a recognised qualification.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is very good in physical education. Students video their performance and use this to evaluate how well they have done and how they can improve. It is good in mathematics and English, where in a Year 8 lesson a group of gifted and talented students were creating a presentation, using the skills they have learned in ICT lessons. The mathematics department use ICT well and there is a clear strategy for improvement. In history, there is very good use of the college intranet and students can download their homework from the web. However, the use of ICT needs development in other subjects. For example, there are too few opportunities to use specialist ICT programmes in art and design and music.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching is raising students' achievement and confidence.
- Students' wider literacy skills are underdeveloped and this affects the quality of their oral and written work.
- Leadership and management are good, ensuring all students' learning needs are met.
- Good use is made of information technology to support homework.

Commentary

86. In 2003 GCSE examination standards achieved were well below the national average. In 2004, standards remained at a similar level and achievement in that year group was unsatisfactory. A number of higher attaining students failed to achieve their full potential

because they focused their attention on other subjects and achieved better results in those areas of their work. Standards in Year 9 were about average.

87. Standards seen during the inspection are below average in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, standards are slightly below average at this early stage of the school year. A significant minority of students do not develop their written answers in sufficient detail. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 to 11. Students display positive attitudes because the teaching staff is becoming more skilled in motivating them. Throughout Years 7 to 11, students, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in developing a range of historical skills, because teaching is often imaginative, using resources effectively.
88. The overall quality of teaching through Years 7 to 11 is good. The quality of learning, though good overall, is more variable, because many students have underdeveloped literacy skills and some lack confidence. The knowledge and understanding that they show when supported to talk about their work is not fully reflected when they come to write things down. Teachers work hard to encourage students to achieve their full potential. All staff are specialists and possess secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. In one Year 7 lesson this helped students to discover how medical practices once relied upon astrology to inform diagnosis. Relationships are good and most students want to succeed. In a GCSE class, the good relationships encouraged students to contribute actively in a discussion about the 'Versailles Peace Conference'. Occasionally, questioning is not sufficiently focused and, as a result, students' detailed knowledge of a topic is not developed sufficiently well.
89. The leadership of the department is good. Considerable thought is given to ensuring the curriculum meets students' needs effectively. As a result a new GCSE coursework topic has been introduced that reflects the focus on sport in the college. Staff are an effective team and all teach to a good standard. Management is efficient and much hard work has been carried out to establish a wide range of educational visits to further enrich the good quality curriculum.
90. The department has taken a lead in pioneering the use of information technology to support homework. Tasks are posted on the school intranet and students can do their homework using computers in the very well equipped resource centres. This good use has led to an improvement in the quality of homework and a higher rate of prompt return for marking. Assessment procedures have been revised and further steps are being taken to improve the use of this data. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Progress and achievement in Years 7 to 11 are good because students, many with attitudinal barriers to progress, respond well to good teaching.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not provide students with sufficient information to allow them to set their own improvement targets.
- Hardworking teachers with good command of this subject ensure that most lessons proceed at a good pace, and enable students to meet the shared objectives.

Commentary

91. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are satisfactory. Students enter the college with variable primary school experience of geography. They make good progress and by the

end of Year 9 reach national average standards. In 2003, the GCSE A*-C pass rate was in line with the national average and they improved slightly in 2004. Students involved in alternative study programmes are encouraged to take GCSE geography and obtain pass grades in spite of low performance predictions. This represents very good achievement for them and means that achievement overall is good.

92. Teaching is good. Subject specialists plan interesting lessons that aim to link geography to students' own experience. Students know what they are expected to do and teachers use a range of resources to make points clear. There is a good range of teaching styles but the department does not have ready access to computerised projection. This limits the amount of interactive work students do. The use of some non-specialist rooms makes it hard for teachers to display work from all classes. Regular marking in Years 10 and 11 provides students with very good advice on how to improve. However, teachers' assessments within each lesson in Years 7 and 8, and comments on their work, do not provide students with the information they need to know how to improve their work.
93. Teachers face three main difficulties. In Years 8 and 9, a minority of boys seek teacher attention by calling out or making silly comments. Skilled management prevents disruption of lessons but pace sometimes slows and some students do not get their fair share of teachers' attention. More generally, students lack confidence in their oral work and their answers lack detail. Written work mirrors this weakness with students too dependent on teachers coaxing more extended answers. Irregular attendance reduces the impact of the careful planning so that good teaching results in only satisfactory learning. The exception to this is the very good learning by students with special needs or who have English as an additional language. Work provided matches their particular needs and they receive good classroom support. Good teacher student relations overcome barriers to learning and make geography a popular choice for GCSE. There is a good range of planned fieldwork. Investigation skills develop year on year and lead to the high quality of GCSE work involving investigation of eco-systems in Thornley Wood
94. Leadership and management are good and have supported good improvement since the previous inspection. The subject leader encourages good working practices and there is an effective sharing of teaching styles. Monitoring of marking is less regular and there are variations in quality and frequency. The subject development plan identifies clear objectives, with a focus on developing ways that teacher assessments in Years 7 to 9 can better encourage learning and improve standards.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are improving attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching is successful in engaging students' interest and enjoyment in Years 7 to 9 and students are achieving well.
- Homework is insufficiently established.
- Learning materials are well matched to students' needs.
- Assessment is underdeveloped.

Commentary

95. Standards are improving, and are now broadly in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus in Year 9. Students have a reasonable knowledge about Christianity and other major religions, but show only limited ability to compare similarities and differences between religions. Most students are achieving well. Lower attainers and students with

special needs make good progress in lessons, helped by well designed resources and learning activities.

96. In Year 11 standards are below average, though achievement is satisfactory. Religious education was a non-examination subject until last year, when the GCSE short course was introduced for all students in Year 10. The enthusiasm and drive of the teaching team are gradually improving students' attitudes and raising the profile of religious education in the college. Higher attainers are generally producing thoughtful responses to moral issues. Most students are not explaining the different arguments, nor their own views, in any detail. Successful use of a range of discussion activities is helping lower attainers and those with special needs to make good progress on the course.
97. The quality of teaching is good overall. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Whilst the majority of students are responding well, a significant number – mainly higher attainers - are still negative in their attitudes towards the subject and the value of the short course qualification. Specialist teaching is often very good, using artifacts effectively to introduce students to a religion's basic beliefs and a range of discussion methods to give students confidence to voice their own views on moral issues. Learning resources are well matched to suit students of different abilities but teachers do not always use those designed to stretch the higher attainers. Marking is satisfactory though assessment is mainly based on tests at the end of each unit of work. There is insufficient assessment from lesson to lesson of how well students are developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. Setting of homework is variable across the college and underused for extending learning and aiding assessment on the GCSE course.
98. Good leadership and management have ensured good improvement since the previous inspection. Staffing is improved and the curriculum is much improved, enriched by cross-curricular initiatives and external links. The planned church visit for Year 8 is an excellent experience, giving students a real sense of worship and an understanding of the church's role in serving the local community. Assessment is the main area for development, to ensure testing covers the whole range of knowledge, skills and understanding on courses and to generate fuller records for monitoring students' progress across the college.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- In GCSE classes students are well prepared for examinations.
- Students find lessons challenging and enjoyable.
- Test results are not used to set targets for improvement.

Commentary

99. Teachers' assessments show standards to be below average at the end of Year 9 and this is confirmed by the inspection. In 2003, GCSE results were below the national average. The results for 2004 show a significant improvement with students gaining better grades in design and technology than in their other subjects. Boys and girls attain similarly.
100. In Year 9 students measure, cut and join materials with fair accuracy and use a good variety of tools safely. Drawings are well annotated but often lack scale. Students' understanding of materials and structures is below average.

101. In GCSE classes, standards are average. Designing and practical work are of a similar standard. Design research is appropriate and is well analysed but not always used to guide the next stage of their work. Evaluations of end products are detailed but evaluations of developing ideas are not so evident.
102. Achievement is good across the college. Students in Year 11 entered the college with well below average standards in design and technology and reach average standards in GCSE classes. In Year 7, where students joined the college with below average standards, they are already attaining average standards. The good progress in Years 7 to 9 is the result of good teaching and positive attitudes. The work is pitched at just the right level to be both challenging and fun. For example, Year 7 students were completely engrossed in the planning and making of scones. GCSE students benefit from good teaching too, but they are also given very clear guidance on improving coursework and examination revision. Students with special educational needs achieve similar to other students. Gifted and talented students achieve very well in GCSE classes because of the challenging extension work they are set. However, such work is not so often provided for higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9.
103. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Students produce good quality work because expectations are high. Teachers plan a good balance of practical and theory work that develops skills and understanding well. Good relationships and very good behaviour come from teachers' good class management skills. Marking is very good in GCSE classes but in Years 7 to 9 it does not give enough clear guidance for improvement.
104. Leadership is very good. After only a year in post the new team's very positive drive to raise standards through challenging teaching and a relevant curriculum is reaping rewards. Management is good. The monitoring of work is improving standards. However, teachers are not making enough use of the wealth of data on students' performance either to set challenging targets, or to identify signs of under-achievement.
105. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Good teaching has been sustained and now there are no weak lessons. Achievement is now good. All other issues have been successfully addressed.

Child care

106. A Year 11 lesson was sampled and this was satisfactory. The class of all girls was developing questionnaires to help their research on children's toys. Progress was satisfactory. The teacher worked hard to engage the students and the majority enjoyed the lesson.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below average.
- The quality of teaching and the achievements of students are good.
- The students' attitudes are very good.
- Procedures for assessment are good. The use of assessment is satisfactory.
- Leadership and management are good and support the good teamwork.

Commentary

107. Examination of students' work shows that on entry to the college their standards in art and design are well below average. Students quickly progress and they achieve well. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 their standards are below average. In 2003 GCSE examination results were below average. They have not improved in the more recent, as yet unvalidated results, in 2004. More stable staffing supported by well qualified teachers is leading to a gradual rise in standards. However, due to timetable problems there are still some teachers who teach the subject without a qualification in art and design. In some lessons during the period of inspection and in samples of previous work students attain average levels in Years 8, 9 and 10. Good displays of work at different levels of competence for students up to Year 9 are raising standards by showing students what they need to achieve. The inclusion of all students is very good and students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language achieve well.
108. Teaching and learning up to the end of Year 9 are good. Teaching is also good up to the end of Year 11 but the learning of the students is only satisfactory. In Year 10 and 11 what the students learn is affected by the students not having enough examples of previously completed works of a high standard to examine. Good and the occasional very good teaching is characterised by the high level of applied subject expertise supported by thorough planning. Behaviour is very good and students' show very good attitudes to the subject both in the pace of their work, and their enthusiasm.
109. Assessment procedures are good but teachers do not use assessment sufficiently when planning what they need to teach individual students. Marking is thorough and the students are told clearly what to do to improve, but teachers give them insufficient time to follow this up.
110. The good leadership and management by the subject leader and the good teamwork and collaboration between the three teachers allow them to make the best use of their good range of qualifications. Older students have insufficient opportunities for three-dimensional work but all have good opportunities to partake in extra-curricular activities.
111. The range of books and examples of the work of artists is expanding well but there is still a need for a wider range and a greater quantity. Work-related opportunities are satisfactorily introduced to the students and opportunities are taken to involve visiting artists in the students' work. Students effectively use their literacy and numeracy skills.
112. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching, schemes of work, assessment and the attitudes of students have improved.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons do not always match the needs and abilities of all students.
- Extra-curricular groups and workshop activities are good, and they make a significant contribution to students' personal development.
- Students receive good feedback in lessons but are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own work.

Commentary

113. Standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are below those expected nationally as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Students' musical ability is below national expectations on entry to the college, so their achievement during Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. During the last year, prolonged staff absences caused significant disruption to

students' learning. This has been a key factor in standards being below average for all groups of students, including those whose heritage language is not English or who have special educational needs. There are currently no students studying music in Years 10 and 11. A small number of students took GCSE music in 2003, but there were too few for statistical analysis. Students can refer to musical terms, but because they have considerable gaps in their musical understanding and knowledge they struggle to use words correctly in written and oral evaluation work.

114. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory for students in Years 7 to 9. A strong feature is the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject. They are good musicians, able to demonstrate clearly in lessons so that students learn correct musical techniques in practical work. Students listen carefully to each other and receive structured and effective feedback about their work during lessons. However, lesson planning for students in Years 7 to 9 is a weakness and is in need of revision so that all groups of students, including those who are gifted and talented or have special educational needs, are given work that matches their abilities. At times during lessons, teachers give insufficient time for students to think for themselves and contribute to their learning. Questioning is not used with sufficient rigour so that students can explain and describe what they are doing. Because there is an absence of ICT equipment students are unable to compose and record their work using keyboards or computers. This is a breach of statutory requirements and was noted at the previous inspection.
115. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The latter is due mainly to the considerable support that has been given to the department. Good links have been made with outside music agencies in order to enrich the curriculum. Students benefit considerably from these workshops. They help to raise their self-esteem and improve their musical knowledge. New assessment procedures have been implemented this term, but students' overall progress is still not monitored and evaluated regularly enough to identify how well they are doing. Students do not set themselves targets and do not understand how to improve their work. Because of the significant staff absences since the previous inspection, overall improvement has been unsatisfactory as improvement on the issues has been insufficient.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching inspires students and they achieve well.
- Very good leadership drives forward improvements, well-supported by an effective team.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, and in GCSE results are well above average.
- Accommodation, including outdoors, is unsatisfactory for the current provision, and affects students' opportunities to improve.

Commentary

116. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average and students achieve well. This is the result of improved provision in the department, enhanced by the sports college status. By the end of Year 11 standards in core provision are average. Achievement is good, however, since these older students have not fully benefited during their school career from the more recently expanded and improved curriculum and teaching. In Years 10 and 11 a significant number of students follow GCSE courses. This is a good improvement on provision at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at GCSE, in 2003 were well above average overall. This standard was sustained in 2004. Achievement for this group of students was very good.

117. Good teaching combining energy and enthusiasm supports good learning. Teachers take account of students' differing needs and of their different learning styles. They provide challenges for all students, including higher attaining students, and those with special educational needs who achieve in line with their peers. Well-prepared activities, often using ICT, and a brisk pace, engage students in lessons. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students performed a five-bounce routine on the trampoline, planned as a homework task, videoed their performances and evaluated them for further improvements.
118. Good classroom management and control helps students make good progress. However, in a small number of lessons low-level disruption, mainly from boys, in both single sex and mixed classes, runs through the lesson. The department recognises and has taken some steps to manage boys' behaviour more effectively. The other limiting factor in this otherwise very successful department is the accommodation. Poor drainage outside means lessons are often rescheduled indoors where the cramped room sizes mean that larger classes have too few opportunities to improve rapidly. For example, in the dance studio or squash court students wait for turns to perform in the limited space. This limits their chances to practise and improve. Similarly it means team games are not taught as planned on the field.
119. Very good leadership ensures that the department has a clear view of how it is going to develop further. The head of department provides a very good role model, which is complemented by dedicated and experienced staff. A strong team ethos results in a clear focus on improving provision further and evaluating current provision. Day-to-day management of the department is very good, enhanced through the technician, who ensures smooth organisation of lessons and activities. Very good extra-curricular provision gives excellent opportunities for students to extend their learning. These are well-attended, open to all, and include recreational and team practices.
120. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Sports college status has enabled the department to expand, improve and increase resources. This has raised the profile of the subject in the college and local community. For example, the sports co-ordinator has trained volunteer students to assist in primary school clubs and activities. Resources provided for talented students include specialist coaching. Links with primary schools and the provision of specialist teaching through the college, bridges the gap between primary and high school.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are rising and the subject is a strength of the college.
- Good teaching enables all groups of students to learn well.
- Resources are effective in supporting the learning needs of all students.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

Commentary

121. GCSE results have risen in recent years. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 is improving because effective teaching helps students in the development of their study skills and the acquisition of subject knowledge. Consequently, achievement is good. The curriculum supports a wide range of abilities through offering both a vocational GCSE at the local further education college and a GCSE in business and communication systems. Overall standards are in line with the national average, with those of the GCSE in business and

communication systems above the national average in 2003, with a significant further improvement in 2004.

122. Teaching and learning are good in both Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well prepared and structured with learning objectives carefully selected by the teacher and shared with students. Working relationships between teacher and students are good and as a result students are motivated to succeed. The good subject knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of the teacher are communicated effectively to the students, which fosters their commitment to business education. High levels of expectation and challenge are set for students of all abilities and feedback is supportive. Assessment helps students to know how they can improve, and raises expectations. There are new opportunities for students to take their GCSE at the end of Year 10 and to embark upon double GCSE entry, thereby catering for a range of abilities.
123. Resources are varied, appropriate and stimulating. ICT is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. The college intranet and Internet resources are valuable in supporting and extending both classroom and home study. There are good displays to provide information for students and to celebrate their achievements. Learning is enhanced by the opportunity to participate in enterprise schemes, revision classes and visits to businesses.
124. The department is well led with a clear sense of direction. The subject leader has worked tenaciously to raise standards including close monitoring of achievement on the vocational GCSE delivered in partnership with the local college. Management is good and is reflected in good standards of policy documentation, schemes of work, audit, assessment and resource provision. The department works in close partnership with the local further education college, Enterprise Pathfinder and the Open Industry to enrich the learning opportunities for students.
125. The department has addressed the issues in the previous inspection report effectively. Retention rates within post-16 business education have risen as a result of effective teaching and learning. The curriculum on offer is appropriate to the needs of students, with vocational programmes of study offered through the cluster arrangements.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students benefit from the provision of a wide range of curricular experiences.
- At present the college cannot judge students' attainment accurately.
- Leadership and management are good, and they have moved the subject forward significantly.

Commentary

126. During the inspection it was not possible to observe any citizenship lessons and there were no examples of students' work available. In tutorial sessions observed, some reference was made to citizenship objectives. As a result it is not possible to reach a judgement on the attainment and achievement of students in Years 7 to 11, nor is it possible to reach an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning.
127. From documentary evidence, discussions with staff and also with students, it is clear that the curriculum for citizenship and personal, social and health education provides all

students in college with access to a broad range of worthwhile experiences that provide them with good opportunities to become independent and informed citizens.

128. Curricular provision is good where the use of designated days effectively draws into college a wide range of outside expertise to partner the work of the staff. Students clearly enjoy many of the topics covered and gain valuable knowledge and understanding of the world about them. They particularly enjoy good quality speakers and stimulating tasks. This substantial programme ensures adequate coverage of the statutory curriculum. It is supplemented in tutorial groups and subject areas, though provision here lacks consistency, because citizenship objectives are not always clearly identified in departmental schemes of work. There is good provision in English, physical education and design and technology. The very good community links provide increasing opportunities for all students to actively engage with the subject.
129. The college does not yet have sufficiently robust procedures to reach clear judgements upon student attainment, especially in Years 9 and 11. There are no clearly established procedures that support students in recording their work on a regular basis. This restricts opportunities to inform students of how to improve their work. Improved systems of self-assessment are being developed, to build upon the already established opportunities for reflection, following the designated days.
130. Leadership and management are good. The governing body and senior leadership of the college took a strategic decision to upgrade provision, ensured it was appropriately funded and that staff training was available. The co-ordinator has successfully supported staff and provided a good lead in planning the designated programme. He has also carefully managed the budget to ensure the curriculum is appropriately resourced. As a result the college has made significant progress in developing the curriculum and reviewing it. This includes the use of an outside consultant to provide objective feedback.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, four subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	6	17	80.1	0	23.7	3.3	29.9
Biology	24	33	65.2	8	11.1	11	20.6
Business Studies	0	0	76.4	0	16.3	0	26.2
Chemistry	14	42.9	72.7	7.1	13.9	14	24.1
English Literature	14	85.7	85.9	8.3	19.1	26.0	30.2
French	0	0	78.2	0	18.9	0	27.6
Design and Technology	0	0	74.9	0	15.1	0	25.3
Geography	12	83.3	74.3	8.3	19.8	28	26.5
History	10	80	80.7	10	19.5	21	28.6
Home Economics	0	0	78.4	0	17.6	0	27.0
Mathematics	4	50	61.9	0	17.1	20.0	22.1
Other Social Studies	2	50	69.7	50	16.7	25.0	24.1
Spanish	5	80	78.5	0	17.7	22	27.3
Sports/PE Studies	9	55.6	73.2	0	11.4	17	23.1
Physics	7	42.9	68.6	14.3	14.4	13	22.7
Law	3	33.3	n/a	0	n/a	6.7	n/a

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	8	88	98.6	25	50.2	38	87.5
Biology	6	50	96.4	17	39.2	60	78.6
Business Studies	1	100	98.7	0	36.8	60	80.1
Chemistry	5	0	97.6	0	49.0	0	84.9
English Literature	11	100	99.5	36.4	46.5	73	86.5
French	3	33.3	98.8	0	51.5	13.3	87.6
Design and Technology	7	100	97.8	0	35.0	71.4	77.9
Geography	5	80	98.7	0	44.5	48	84.0
History	6	100	99.0	50	44.6	90	84.6
Spanish	2	100	98.1	0	51.3	80	87.4
Sports/PE Studies	6	83	98.7	0	41.4	56.7	82.3

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health & Social Care (Intermediate)	14	71		7		0	
ICT (Intermediate)	10	40		10		0	
Engineering (Intermediate)	6	17		0		0	
Home Economics	2	100		0		60	
Russian	1	100		100		120	
Hebrew	1	100		100		120	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress and a majority attain better than expected results.
- Continuity in teaching after recent staffing difficulties is raising standards in Year 13.
- The irregular attendance of some students, combined with their poor independent learning skills, has led to their underachievement.

Commentary

131. English literature is taught as a one year Advanced Supplementary course and as an Advanced level course over two years. The subject is popular but there has been a fluctuation in the number of male students over recent years.
132. All students who entered the 2003 Advanced level examinations passed. The results were below average but the majority of students attained better than expected results and achievement was good. They performed better English than in their other subjects. The examination results in 2004 showed a similar pattern of attainment above expectations and above that in other subjects. Performance in the 2003 Advanced Supplementary examinations was below average and achievement was unsatisfactory. This was because of staffing difficulties and the irregular attendance of some students. This, combined with their inability to work productively and independently outside the classroom, accounts for the fall in standards. An improvement in performance is now seen with those students at the start of their Year 13.
133. The quality of the work seen in Year 13 is at the level expected nationally. Achievement is good given the progress they have made since the start of the academic year. The improvement in students' performance compared to their Advanced Supplementary results is because of greater stability in staffing and the good teaching. The students themselves have a more mature approach to their work, which is reflected in the quality of their analytical writing. They learn well from the teacher. A small number of students have still to develop an independent and critical approach to their work. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is above that expected nationally and reflects the students' above average GCSE results. Students are adapting well to the disciplines of sixth form study, they demonstrate good analytical skills and are developing a personal response to literature. The improving trend in standards over two years is because of the students' higher levels of attainment in GCSE examinations and because of good teaching.
134. Teaching is good and there are many strong features which are driving up standards. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and they have built very good working relationships with the students. Their encouraging and supportive approach builds confidence and raises aspirations. Strategies are in place to encourage students to

become more independent in their learning. The marking and evaluation of students' work are done thoroughly and contribute significantly to the improving trend in standards.

135. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The leadership provided by the head of department is very good and is evident in his focus on improving both teaching and learning. He is supported by a team of knowledgeable and skilled teachers and they work effectively as a team. They understand the learning needs of the students and regularly review their teaching strategies to ensure those needs are met. Management is good. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' progress over time and effective action has been taken to address the recent underachievement of some students. Improvement over time has been good because standards have now been brought back to the high level of the previous inspection after a fall in attainment. There is the capacity for further improvement because teachers are self-critical, committed to their own professional development and seek ways to improve further their teaching practice.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

136. Literacy standards overall are average and there are areas, in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, for example, where students' command of the spoken and written language enables them to progress well. In some other subjects, however, students do not have the linguistic and analytical skills to enable them to benefit fully from the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of current Year 12 students is well above that seen nationally.
- GCE A-level results in 2003 showed satisfactory achievement.
- Current Year 12 students are achieving consistently well.
- Good teaching promotes good learning and good attitudes in students.
- Leadership and management are now good.
- Retention rates have been disappointing in recent years and numbers on advanced courses remain low.

Commentary

137. In 2003 there were a small number of students, all male, who completed the GCE A-level course. Results included a higher grade, and all students did as well as could be expected. This followed a similar picture of satisfactory achievement from 2002 where entry was also too low to make national comparisons. In 2004, numbers were again low with GCE A-level grades in line with predictions from prior attainment at GCSE. However, GCE AS-level results were disappointing, considering prior performance.
138. Currently, the students in Year 12 are much further on in their course than could be expected. All are male. They are confident learners and enjoy the challenge that teachers provide. Impressively, they can recall formulae, because their understanding is deep. They do not need to rely on memory alone, but visualise how and when they are used. All students are working at or near the highest grade. They are very good with all forms of algebra and are now working on co-ordinate geometry. They know how the gradients of perpendicular lines are related, and use this knowledge to work out the formulae to represent straight lines given these conditions. They calculate the lengths of lines between two points accurately and use graphic calculators meaningfully. Half of the students are repeating the course having disappointed in earlier years. However, these students are achieving consistently well and developing as conscientious independent learners. There

are currently no students who have progressed to the second year of the advanced course because of the high rate of ungraded in GCE-AS results in 2004. Students in Year 12 following a GCSE resit course understandably lack the confidence of the advanced students but are achieving well considering their GCSE grades in Year 11.

139. Teaching is good. It is aimed at challenging these students to understand deeply and the students readily accept and succeed in meeting this challenge. It is currently a no-frills approach with as yet little evidence of teachers using ICT or resources other than textbooks, worksheets or past papers. This approach is effective. Questioning is sharp. It ensures that students reflect and think for themselves. This was typified in an excellent lesson where students found formulae describing the paths of perpendicular lines on a grid. It focuses on individuals when necessary. However, usually, the group are able to work at the same fast pace and this increases the already high level of motivation. The students are delighted with this approach and give their utmost in lessons without being openly enthusiastic. They also learn consistently well because homework is regular and demanding. Teaching is ensuring that students are developing good study skills and improving rapidly as independent learners. Assessment is satisfactory. Marking is good for homework and students are made well aware of their potential. However, formal tracking systems are just now developing.
140. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has created a learning environment where students feel secure, are hardworking and committed. Timescales for units of work are in place and students are well aware of these. There is a new found sense of confidence in the department. The head of department accepts that numbers are low and is now raising the profile of advanced mathematics within the college to attract more students to the course for the future. As students now achieve consistently well and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

141. Students in the sixth form are sufficiently skilled in mathematics to make suitable progress in other subjects. In geography they use algebraic formulae accurately when studying river beds. In chemistry and physics they work comfortably with relevant formulae. In all three of these subjects, data handling, including graph work, is done competently. Art students use scaling confidently to draw in three dimensions.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. In physics, results have been below the national average, but in 2004 students did as well as expected at AS-level. A very good Year 12 lesson was seen. Very skilful, enthusiastic teaching that made imaginative use of activities and resources enabled all students to learn well and make good progress. Students are achieving good standards in their work in this subject. In biology, results have been well below average but in 2004 improved so that they were in line with expectations. In one lesson seen standards were average. Teaching was satisfactory and students' understanding of temperature control was satisfactory, but the discussion in class did not challenge the students sufficiently.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving.
- Leadership is good and committed to student success.
- Students are too dependent on their teachers in Year 12.

- Some aspects of practical investigations are not developed sufficiently in Year 12.

Commentary

142. Only small numbers have taken the subject in Year 13 and results in 2003 were well below average. Previously students with low grades at GCSE were allowed to take the subject, but current students have better grades. However, this has further reduced numbers. Standards at AS-level have been below average, but the proportion achieving pass grades increased in 2004. Standards seen during the inspection have improved so they are now average. Students currently in Year 12 have made good progress from GCSE in their work on atomic structure and calculations. Students in Year 13 have good practical skills and good knowledge of rates of reaction that they apply well to solving problems. Achievement is satisfactory for both male and female students.
143. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features and so students' learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and of its assessment requirements. Lessons are carefully planned and provide good learning activities that cover the subject specification well. Teachers make good use of clearly presented worksheets to direct and support learning. Opportunities to consolidate learning during lessons are sometimes missed. This happens when teachers move on to other activities too quickly or do not adapt their teaching to the circumstances in the lesson. Teachers use examination questions effectively so that students know the standards they are achieving. Marking of coursework, homework and tests is done thoroughly with helpful comments for improvement but these are not always followed up to ensure effective learning. Practical skills are developed well for assessment but insufficient time is devoted to practical work in the courses. Evaluation of practical work and considerations such as risk assessment are not sufficiently well developed in Year 12.
144. Students' behaviour is very good. They have positive attitudes to the subject and to their teachers but believe there is too much learning required. They work co-operatively and help each other well both in and out of lessons. Teachers are able to give students good individual attention in the small teaching groups and also provide good additional support out of lessons. However, this means that students do not develop their own learning sufficiently. Students in Year 13 use independent methods of learning more effectively. They research topics using a range of sources and produce useful summaries of topics, presenting their work well using ICT.
145. Leadership in the subject is good and improving. There is a clear commitment to student success in the department. Management of staff and teaching resources is good. Teachers and technicians form an effective team. Teachers have good links with local universities that enable students to obtain good first hand experience of instrumental methods of analysis. Currently in Year 13 there are too many lessons on one day each week. Some equipment is too old and unfit for its purpose. Provision of ICT equipment is adequate, but it is not used enough by students to collect data. Retention of students within each year is good, but only about half of the students that take AS continue with A-level. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Students in the sixth form are following a course in GNVQ at intermediate level. In the lesson seen, planning was good, students understood what they had to do and progress was satisfactory. Students were able to identify errors in their work and describe how improvements could be made.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography, but lessons in history, law and psychology were also sampled.

147. One history lesson in Year 13 was sampled. Students discuss topics in a mature manner. They display sound knowledge and understanding of the topic under discussion. Teaching is secure and knowledgeable and relationships are good. All students have a clear view of why they chose to study history at advanced level. Three of the group hope to continue studying some aspects of history in higher education and two identify skills to support future career aspirations. Overall, all students identify benefits in studying history and clearly enjoy their work.
148. One year 12 lesson in law was sampled. Standards are in line with the national average. Teaching and learning were good. The knowledgeable teacher structured the session well and used an effective range of resources in support of learning. The use of case-study material, from the college's intranet, supported the application of theoretical models in a practical way thereby consolidating student learning. Working relationships between students and teacher were positive with good levels of care, guidance and support. As a consequence of the quality of the learning environment student achievements were good.
149. Psychology lessons are provided at the partner (Burnside) High School. In the one Year 12 session seen teaching and learning in this lesson were both very good. A combination of theory and paired practical work provided insights into the effect of light stress on heart rates. This extended students' understanding of links between anxiety and aspects of human physiology. Students are enthusiastic about their course and are very appreciative of the support and guidance from their specialist teachers.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and students recognise the dedication of their teachers and the considerable support they provide.
- Learning is good but students have not sufficiently developed the literacy skills necessary to explain and extend their knowledge and so do not achieve the higher grades.
- The wide range of fieldwork opportunities is a strength of the department.

Commentary

150. Standards are satisfactory. Many students enter the course having obtained C grades at GCSE. They make satisfactory progress so that, in 2003, all achieved a pass A to E grade. This represents satisfactory achievement. This occurred again in 2004. However, no student achieved a higher A or B grade in either year. The quality of course fieldwork is good and students benefit from the wide range of opportunities provided by the department.
151. Teaching is very good. Detailed subject and syllabus knowledge means that teachers plan interesting and challenging lessons. They are alert to areas of potential misunderstanding and good questioning helps students develop awareness of links between places and geographical processes. There is a good range of teaching styles but the department does not have ready access to computerised projection. In one Year 13 lesson, students had to cluster round a single laptop to view a weather forecast website. This limits the amount of interactive work students do. Regular marking provides students with very good advice on how to improve their work and they understand how well they are doing. Students feel very well supported by their teachers and by the facilities in the Learning Resources Centre.

152. In spite of very good teaching, learning is only good. This is because literacy skills are not highly enough developed. The highest standards require students to evaluate evidence and make cogent cases to support their judgements. These linguistic skills are not well developed. Although teacher/student relations are very good, students lack confidence when discussing issues. They rely heavily on teachers providing supplementary questions or supplying additional information. This results in limited independence and prevents otherwise able students from reaching the highest grades.
153. Leadership and management are good. The head of department encourages good working practices and there is an effective sharing of teaching styles. Fieldwork is well developed and students undertake detailed studies in five localities with very different characteristics. Students are very well supported and the number going on to take geography related courses at university is growing.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Product design

154. A Year 12 lesson was sampled and this was good. Students were researching the work of Rennie McIntosh to help them in their designing of lamps. Standards were average and progress good. Students enjoyed the lesson and talked enthusiastically about their work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

155. One lesson in art and design was sampled. Very few students study the course at AS and A2 levels. Because of the very small numbers it is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards and provision. The quality of teaching is good and supports the good learning and achievements of the students. More able students are in line to attain above average standards.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

156. One Year 12 physical education lesson was sampled where students considered the differences between play and sport. Teaching was good, maintaining a good pace through a combination of energy and varied strategies to maintain students' interest. Learning was only satisfactory because students' weak literacy skills made it difficult for them to express their ideas in writing.

BUSINESS

157. In the business lessons sampled, teaching was good. The students achieved well due to the structure, rigour and challenge provided within the lessons. Effective use of a wide range of resources, linked to positive student attitudes contributed to good learning. The use of modelling techniques and the subject knowledge of the teacher enabled all students to understand the structure and application of business concepts. Good use is made of intranet and Internet resources as an integral part of the structure of the lesson which effectively supports learning. The department is well led with a clear sense of direction, in terms of teaching and learning strategies and business education provision. Retention rates, within post-16 business education, have risen as a result of effective teaching and learning. The curriculum on offer is appropriate to the needs of students, as reflected in high retention rates and student achievement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

158. One year 12 lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were good in that they were well planned, supportive and challenging. Resources are varied and appropriate and good use is made of Internet materials. Relationships are positive and students work collaboratively, with enthusiasm and commitment. Students are making good achievement in their learning, as a result of effective teaching and learning.

GENERAL EDUCATION

159. One Year 13 lesson in basic skills was sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory as some of the group were supported to complete university admission forms, and others worked with a Connexions advisor to gain a better understanding of the job market.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>College grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the college	4	3
How inclusive the college is		2
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the college	4	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		2
Attendance	4	5
Attitudes	4	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the college		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the college seeks and acts on students' views	3	3

The effectiveness of the college's links with parents		3
The quality of the college's links with the community	2	2
The college's links with other schools and colleges	2	2

The leadership and management of the college		3
The governance of the college	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	4	3

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