

INSPECTION REPORT

SIDMOUTH COLLEGE

Sidmouth, Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113503

Principal: Mr David Birch

Lead inspector: Bob Allan

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 4th February 2005

Inspection number: 268910

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Other secondary school
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 869
School address: Primley Road
Sidmouth
Devon
Postcode: EX10 9LG
Telephone number: (01395) 514 823
Fax number: (01395) 578 073
Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Sylvia Martin
governors:
Date of previous 10th May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sidmouth College is a smaller than average, mixed 11 - 18 comprehensive community college with a much smaller than average sixth form. The college has specialist technology status (2005) and holds Healthy Schools (2002), Education Extra (2001) and Sportsmark (2001) awards. It is located on the outskirts of Sidmouth and serves prosperous districts as well as lower income areas in the town and outlying communities. It provides a range of services, including a library, all-weather pitch and courses open to the community. Almost all pupils are of white British background with a very small proportion of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue. Attainment on entry is marginally above the national average but some of the most capable pupils in the area attend selective schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is in line with the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19278	Bob Allan	Lead inspector	
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
19913	Roger Garrett	Team inspector	English
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science Biology
15217	Dave Schofield	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
18006	Sue Kearney	Team inspector	Special educational needs
8530	John Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology
8503	Alf Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design
24026	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	History
10392	Dona Ratcliff	Team inspector	Geography
31540	Alison Edwards	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15971	Mike Pye	Team inspector	Physical education
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
13048	Tony Boyden	Team inspector	Business studies Work-related learning

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sidmouth College is a satisfactory school. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory as pupils reach standards broadly in line with their capabilities. The college has a good ethos in which pupils feel secure. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the college provides sound value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The college provides a good quality of education for the sixth form.
- Results of assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results have risen more rapidly than the national trend.
- English is well taught throughout the college so pupils achieve well to reach well-above national standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Management is unsatisfactory, as the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently good learning and achievement.
- Marking and guidance of pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not provide them with sufficient understanding of their standards or how they can improve them.
- The college makes very good provision for pupils' care and welfare.

Improvement since the time of the last inspection is broadly satisfactory. Results in the GCSE examinations have risen significantly so that they are now close to those of other schools with similar pupils. Arrangements for setting targets for pupils are much more refined and offer good opportunities for tracking pupils' progress. The college has introduced an annual review of teachers' performance. The governing body now meets the statutory requirements for reporting to parents annually and ensuring attendance procedures comply with the law. However, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education in the sixth form do not comply with statutory requirements. Accommodation is much improved but remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11; it is good in the sixth form. Personal development is good throughout the college. Current standards on entry to the college are marginally above the national average, standards have fluctuated a lot in recent years and a few of the most capable pupils in the area attend a grammar school. Consequently, test and examination results have varied and, in some years, there has been less than the national proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels in national tests for 14-year-olds or, subsequently, the highest grades in GCSE and GCE examinations.

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	B	B	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	C	D	

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

Pupils are taught consistently well in English so that the most recent test results for 14-year-olds were well above the national average. They were also well above the average of those schools with pupils who had similar results in the 2001 national tests for 11-year-olds. In 2004, teachers' assessments were above national expectations in geography, design and

technology and ICT. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and geography, clearly above this level in science and design and technology and marginally above in physical education. They were clearly below the national averages in French and German and marginally so in art and ICT. Girls performed better than boys by about one grade. A-level results were below the national average in 2004, reflecting students' previous below average attainment in GCSE examinations. Of the sixth form subjects inspected in detail, students achieve well in English, biology, design and technology and history and very well in business.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a **satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.** Pupils make the progress expected of them and in the main, achieve their targets. In the sixth form, students achieve well because teaching is good. The curriculum is satisfactory. It offers good opportunities for pupils and it has very good features in the sixth form. Some subjects do not teach applications of ICT as they should and the programme of religious education in the sixth form is inadequate. The college provides very good levels of care for its pupils. The college provides a very good programme for the local community, from which its own students benefit.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governance and leadership are satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. This is because there is a common weakness running through management at all levels. The quality of teaching is not sufficiently closely monitored to identify weaknesses and take effective action to improve it. Important initiatives to improve the college and governors' policies are applied differently by different managers and teachers and so they are ineffective. The sixth form is well led and well managed. The courses offered are planned to correspond closely to students' aspirations and, as a result, recruitment has risen significantly.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils and their parents express positive opinions about the college. Parents feel welcome and appreciate the effective steps that the college takes when instances of bullying arise. They speak very highly of the attention that their children receive and the sensitivity shown by most staff in helping them overcome difficulties. Pupils are pleased with the college and are happy in their day-to-day work. Younger pupils are proud to wear their uniform but some girls feel embarrassed wearing their physical education kit. Parents feel that the dress requirements are too inflexibly applied and the inspectors agree, as some girls are discouraged from wider participation in lessons and activities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- effectively monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that initiatives for raising standards are followed through in practice;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of managers in ensuring all policies are effective; and
- improve the quality of assessment in Years 7 to 11, particularly in Years 7 to 9;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- teach ICT as prescribed in the National Curriculum;
- increase the extent of religious education in the sixth form; and
- provide a daily act of collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT SIDMOUTH COLLEGE

Sidmouth College has a small, mixed sixth form. It offers AS, A-level and vocational courses in partnership with other institutions.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sidmouth College has a good sixth form that is cost-effective. Its students achieve well and their results in A-level examinations are broadly in line with national averages. This results from the expert teaching that they receive and their very good attitudes to learning. The curriculum is good, teachers know their students well and generally provide good guidance so students know how to improve their work and are well prepared for higher education and employment.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Effective teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Good management ensures that courses match students' interests and aspirations well.
- Very good teaching in A-level business results in students achieving very well in this subject.
- Recruitment has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection.
- Accommodation for independent study is inadequate for the size of the sixth form.

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	Good. Standards are above national expectations and students learn well because of good teaching, marking, support and guidance. Students appreciate the individual attention they receive, which helps them to achieve well.
Science (Biology)	Good. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject ensures that students are well taught and achieve well. Standards are in line with national expectations.
Humanities (History)	Good. Standards are in line with national expectations and students achieve well in response to good teaching. Leadership and management are good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing (Design and technology)	Satisfactory. Good teaching and students' good attitudes currently are leading to standards that are above national expectations.
Visual and performing arts and media (Art and design)	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with national expectations. Students achieve satisfactorily. Teaching is satisfactory and students overcome

unsatisfactory accommodation by working well at other than lesson times.

Business

Very good. Very good teaching underpins students' very effective learning and standards that are above national expectations.

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'.

In addition to the subjects that were inspected in full, work was sampled in modern foreign languages, theatre studies, physics, chemistry, geography, economics, sociology, ICT, health and social care and personal, social and health education.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Advice, guidance and support in the sixth form are very good. Staff show high levels of concern for students' welfare and closely follow effective procedures to ensure students' health and safety. The college provides comprehensive information on sixth-form courses and strives to ensure that students can be timetabled to study their preferred choices. Opportunities to follow courses within the community programme extend the choices open to prospective students. Their progress is tracked well so students can be given the support they need in sufficient time to benefit. They receive good, well-informed advice to prepare them for employment or further studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is **well led and effectively managed**. Leadership has provided clear direction for those who work with students. The sixth form has grown significantly since the time of the last inspection. Management is good. The interests and ambitions of students are given careful attention and the work of tutors is well co-ordinated. Students' progress is closely monitored so that weak performance is quickly identified and effective action taken to support and guide individual students. Good account is taken of students' developing plans for the future.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are pleased with the college's provision for them. They speak well of their teachers, the opportunities open to them and the careful consideration given to their views. They enjoy the open atmosphere and good relationships that exist between students, their tutors and their teachers. They particularly value the greater independence that they enjoy and the contributions they make by working with younger pupils. Students sometimes find it difficult to find suitable space for their private study as their numbers have increased more rapidly than further accommodation and facilities could be provided.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are broadly **above average** and pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** throughout the main school. Standards in the sixth form are **average** and achievement of students is **good**. All groups of pupils achieve well in subjects where teaching is consistently good. Some boys, who become distracted unless well taught, do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen since the last inspection, so that they are now close to those of other schools with pupils of similar prior attainment.
- Results in GCSE examinations have risen faster than the national rate up to 2004 and results of tests for 14-year-olds have risen above the national rate.
- Achievement in English is good and pupils reach well above expected standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- Standards of A-level work in English, design and technology and business are above national expectations and students achieve well.
- Progress made by pupils between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 in 2004 was less than in recent years and below that made by similar pupils nationally.
- In 2004, in modern foreign languages, results of Year 9 assessments were below national expectations and GCSE results were below national averages.
- In several subjects, teachers' assessments show that the standards achieved by boys are lower than those achieved by girls.

Commentary

1. In 2004, national test results at the end of Year 9 were slightly above the national average. They were clearly above the average in 2003. Results had improved more quickly than nationally from the time of the last inspection until 2003. The latest figures that include the 2004 results are not yet available but the upward trend appears recently to have slowed. The results in 2004 were close to those of schools whose pupils had attained similar results in tests for 11 year-olds in 2001. Even taking account of the lower results in 2004, the college's results have improved since the time of the last inspection.
2. Whilst girls' test results were higher than those of boys in English, the difference was no more than is evident in national results. There is no difference between the results of boys and girls in mathematics or science. However, teachers' assessments of performance in most of the other subjects show girls do better than boys by greater margins than appear nationally. Work and lessons seen during the inspection suggest that girls are more thorough in their work and more prepared to work on extended tasks, whilst boys show less positive attitudes and prefer short, interrelated tasks. In art, for example, boys are motivated by work in three dimensions but lack of space prevents more of this type of work being offered. The differences in attitudes are far less evident in lessons that are stimulating and well taught. Overall standards are marginally above national expectations. In English, they are well above this level because pupils are consistently well taught and they achieve well. Standards are

clearly above national expectations in mathematics, science, ICT and geography. Overall, achievement is satisfactory and corresponds with broadly satisfactory teaching. However, the range of quality of teaching is too wide because managers at all levels pay insufficient attention to raising standards.

- In 2004, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations was above the national average. The average point scores of pupils' best eight results, a better all-round measure of performance, were also above the national average. Results have been rising more quickly than the national figures since 2000. The results in 2004 were barely in line with those of schools whose pupils had attained similar results in tests for 14 year-olds in 2002. Progress made by these pupils, from the time they joined the college, was in line with that made by similar pupils nationally but the progress that they made between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 was below this level. As the college population is relatively stable, this suggests that pupils did not sustain the same rate of progress in Years 10 and 11 as they did in Years 7 to 9. Girls' results are better than those of boys in several subjects. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is more critically dependent upon pupils' willingness to invest time and effort outside lesson times. Boys' attitudes to learning are not so positive as those of girls. Boys' attention wanes sooner than does girls' in lessons where teaching is not good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	63 (57)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (96)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.9 (37.3)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 147 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In Years 10 and 11, the standards of work seen are marginally above national expectations and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards are well above national expectations in English and geography as a result of consistently good teaching. Standards are above national expectations in mathematics, science, music, design and technology and on the full GCSE course in religious education. Standards are below expectations in French and German. In all other subjects they are in line with national expectations. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. It is very good in geography and in the full GCSE course in religious education. It is good in English, leisure and tourism, music and on the short GCSE religious education course.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. They make steady progress toward their targets. Pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as autism, make good progress because of good support from skilled teaching assistants and a structured programme that develops their literacy skills and helps their organisation. Pupils often make good progress towards the development of their personal skills because of the very good relationships they have with other pupils and staff.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	89.9 (94.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	17.4 (31.3)	36 (35.6)

Average point score per pupil	207.9 (231.0)	265.2 (258.2)
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There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. In 2004, A-level results were below the average for all maintained schools. This represents a fall since 2002 when they were above that average. However, this does not represent a lowering of achievement, as students' results in 2004 were broadly in line with expectations based on their GCSE results in 2002. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades fell significantly between 2003 and 2004 but this reflected the lower proportion of pupils with grades of A* or A in GCSE examinations. The standards of work in the subjects inspected in full are broadly in line with national expectations. They were above expectations in English and business. This represents good achievement in relation to students' GCSE results. Achievement in business is very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to school and their behaviour is good. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory. Sixth form students' attitudes and behaviour are very good; their punctuality and attendance are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good because the college successfully promotes a strong community spirit.
- Pupils are positive about college life. They are enthusiastic learners and enjoy taking part in out-of-college activities.
- Pupils behave well because most staff have a clear and consistent approach to promoting good behaviour.
- The college's improved procedures for monitoring absences have led to increased levels of attendance.
- Sixth form students hold the college in high regard and relationships with staff are very good.
- Pupils work hard in lessons.

Commentary

7. Pupils say that one of the best features of the college is that it is a very friendly place. They are very supportive of each other in lessons and work well together in groups. Many teachers and tutors create an atmosphere where pupils are confident to voice their opinions and ask for help without fear of ridicule. Activities such as the Youth Theatre productions and sports events help to foster a sense of community. The college's good provision for social development enables pupils to develop into articulate and mature citizens and this has a positive impact on their achievements.
8. Pupils are generally interested in their work and are keen to take part in activities outside lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers, are eager to answer questions and settle to work quickly. They respond particularly well when the teacher sets a series of short challenging tasks where pupils can use what they have just learnt to achieve their next step. However, in lessons where teaching is dull and the pace is too slow, pupils, often boys, soon lose interest and do not achieve their best. A significant minority of girls in Years 7, 8 and 9 have negative attitudes towards physical education. This is because they feel embarrassed and uncomfortable in the prescribed kit. Most teachers try to apply the behaviour policy fairly but some teachers do not consider that the management of misbehaving pupils is one of their responsibilities and too readily refer such pupils to other managers for minor infractions.

9. Moral development is good and staff are good role-models. Pupils, especially in Years 7 and 8, respond well to the praise and rewards given by staff and say that they are treated fairly. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and pupils with behavioural difficulties receive some good support when they are withdrawn from lessons. However, when these pupils return to the classroom, teachers and support staff are not always given enough guidance about how to continue the support. Pupils say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Sanctions are generally used appropriately, but there is a lack of consistency amongst some staff. For example, pupils are sometimes removed from lessons for reasons other than disruption, such as not wearing the correct uniform. The college does all it can to keep its pupils but there has been one permanent exclusion in the past year and two in the current year. Fixed-term exclusions are used appropriately as sanctions against actions such as violence and verbal abuse.
10. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. However there are significant differences between the planned contributions made in subjects and across the curriculum. Music and art make some good contributions to spiritual development, with pupils encouraged to reflect on the meaning and emotional effect of their own and others' work. Teachers value pupils' ideas and successfully promote pupils' feelings of self-worth. In assemblies, there are appropriate opportunities for pupils and students to reflect on life and its meaning. For example, two sixth formers talked about their feelings when visiting Auschwitz. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is developed effectively through the curriculum and, in religious education lessons, pupils gain valuable insights into other world faiths.
11. Levels of attendance and unauthorised absence for the year 2003/4 are broadly in line with those found in other secondary schools. The issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed and the college's attendance officer now contacts home on the first day of an unexplained absence. Recent initiatives introduced in conjunction with the educational welfare officer have had a positive impact on attendance and rates for the first term of the current year have improved considerably.

Sixth form

12. Students are very positive about the sixth form and an increasing number are keen to stay on for their post-16 education. Relationships are very good and students and staff treat each other with respect. In lessons students are eager to do their best and tackle work in a confident and mature manner. They are willing to undertake responsibilities, for example helping with lower school tutor groups and raising funds for charity. Others take part in sex education talks to Year 9 pupils or act as marshals for sponsored walks. These activities help students develop their social skills as well as benefiting the life of the college.
13. There are clear systems to ensure that Year 12 students are registered at each lesson they attend. Year 13 students use a computerised system to log in and out of the college building, ensuring that all students can be accounted for in the event of an emergency evacuation. Tutors encourage regular attendance and quickly follow up any absences.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
817	65	1
4	0	0

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	12	0	0

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

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.6	School data	0.6
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The college provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in the sixth form. The curriculum is satisfactory, being a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good but, overall, management is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and pupils' learning is sound. In the sixth form, teaching is good and students learn well. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the best lessons and consistently in English, teachers plan well and structure lessons carefully to ensure learning is effective.
- In a significant minority of lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, teaching is based on loosely defined objectives for pupils' learning so pupils are unclear what is expected of them and learn at a slow pace.
- Imaginative teaching, more prevalent in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, stimulates pupils and students to rise to demanding challenges and work at a brisk pace.
- In Years 7 to 9 and to a lesser extent in Years 10 and 11, assessment is not used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses or to provide pupils with a sound basis for improving their work.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and the requirements of the examination courses that they teach, particularly so in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching varies too widely, from excellent to poor and too often fails to capture pupils' interest, especially that of boys.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 147 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1%)	20 (14%)	65 (44%)	54 (37%)	5 (3%)	1 (1%)	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.

14. The observations summarised in the above table include the predominantly good sixth form teaching that masks the weaker teaching in Years 7 to 9 where half the proportion of very good lessons were seen and a little more than half were good or better.
15. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan carefully and focus on well-defined objectives. Teachers explain these aims to pupils so that they understand what they are expected to learn, not just what they are going to do. Teachers direct pupils towards the objectives through well-structured, well-timed activities and probing questioning that requires most pupils to respond. Pupils' good attitudes to learning ensure that they readily invest the efforts required to master skills, acquire knowledge and deepen their understanding effectively. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher set pupils precise objectives for the focus of their analysis. As a result, after close reading of a Browning poem and probing questioning by the teacher, pupils responded with perceptive comments. By being encouraged to discuss their views succinctly, in pairs and in the whole group, pupils learnt to work more independently; a good preparation for sixth-form study.
16. One of the main weaknesses, mainly in Years 7 to 9, is that the objectives for lessons are too vague or broad to be realistically achieved within the span of a single lesson. Pupils therefore have little understanding of what they are trying to learn. They confuse their learning with simply finishing whatever the teacher sets for them to do. As a consequence, they do not work purposefully towards a common, learning outcome. In some cases, the work is not demanding enough as the teacher's assessments are unreliable and take little account of pupils' prior learning. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils were revising the use of decimals at a level that many of them had already mastered. Pupils were set questions that offered them little challenge. Most pupils, some of whom were capable of work at GCSE level, worked half-heartedly at a National Curriculum level expected of much younger pupils. Some pupils, mainly boys, showed their frustration and were chastised for their poor concentration.
17. Very good or excellent teaching is widespread. Examples were seen in almost all curriculum areas. This is particularly so in Years 10 and 11. In these years, there is also more good teaching generally. In these lessons, teachers use their very good knowledge of their subjects and understanding of the requirements for GCSE examinations or coursework to good effect. In the best lessons, this is done by means that capture pupils' interest so they concentrate for sustained periods. In a large Year 10 music group, despite scant resources and the wide range of pupils' capabilities, the teacher very successfully engaged everyone in listening and composing. Pupils worked individually and in small groups to perform their work and evaluate each other's. In doing so, they made very good progress towards the assessment objectives of the course and grew in confidence.
18. Whilst achievement is satisfactory, some pupils do not experience good, interesting teaching sufficiently frequently for them to attain higher standards. In some lessons,

boys lose interest more quickly than girls, so do not achieve as well. This situation endures in part because there is too little monitoring of teaching for the college to identify accurately where its initiatives to improve teaching are not being put into action. In some cases, it endures because the college does not provide the necessary support for less experienced or temporary teachers.

19. The quality of specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The specialist teachers and assistants have very good relationships with the pupils and have their care and welfare at heart. However, there is insufficient planning for the needs of such pupils across the college. Too few teachers are aware of pupils' individual learning targets. In classrooms, the quality of pupils' learning is often good but this also varies from very good to unsatisfactory. When skilled teaching assistants support pupils, for example those with specific difficulties, such as autism, they learn well.
20. The quality of assessment varies from good to unsatisfactory. It is barely satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In English in all years, in mathematics, religious education and geography in Years 10 and 11, assessment is thorough and teachers mark pupils' work constructively. Some teachers mark thoroughly with detailed corrections and helpful comments, but not all. In many subjects, assessment is better in Years 10 and 11, using the GCSE examination criteria, but in Years 7 to 9 it is weaker. Many pupils in these years and a few in Years 10 and 11, do not understand how well they are doing, nor know exactly what to do to improve. In some cases, marking is too infrequent and superficial and this, along with weak planning, passes undetected and unremedied in the absence of effective monitoring.

Sixth form

21. Teaching is good in Years 12 and 13. Strengths are in business, where it is very good, English, history and biology. Good individual lessons were seen in other subjects, including several not being inspected in full. Teachers have very good knowledge, both of the subjects they teach and of the specifications for the examinations for which they are preparing students. This enables them to prepare lessons that are effective. It also provides them with clear insights into students' likely misconceptions so that they can anticipate these well. Stimulating teaching, more prevalent in the sixth form, captures students' interest so they readily rise to demanding challenges and work at a brisk pace. However, many students struggle to learn effectively in the early stages of their courses. For some, these difficulties persist, as they are unprepared for the demands of A-level studies, particularly the need for them to work independently.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It offers a good range of opportunities for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 and has some very good features in the sixth form. However, there are some limitations, such as restricted provision of ICT for many pupils and the college does not meet the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship. The extra-curricular programme is very good but accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 have good opportunities in modern foreign languages, drama and vocational courses.
- Pupils with statements of special educational need are well supported.

- There is a good range of courses within the sixth form, some in partnership with other schools and colleges in the area and a good programme of personal, social and health education.
- Some subjects do not employ ICT in their teaching, as required by the National Curriculum.
- Activities for learning outside lessons are extensive and well attended.
- The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship, nor sufficient religious education in the sixth form.
- Accommodation and resources, although much improved, are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

22. The college's curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 are offered some good opportunities. For example, most pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two modern foreign languages and are encouraged to continue to do so in Years 10 and 11. Drama is taught to younger pupils and is also a successful GCSE option. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can study either a short or a long course in GCSE religious education. Pupils studying vocational courses benefit from good business links. The programme for personal, social and health education is well organised. However, there are also some restrictions on the range and quality of the curriculum. Although there is a good balance of performing and composing in music, Year 11 pupils are taught music outside usual college hours. There is limited application of ICT in several subjects and this inadequate provision is in breach of statutory requirements. The creation of three-dimensional and larger-scale work in art is restricted by cramped accommodation. In design and technology, there is insufficient provision of computer-aided manufacture and design for younger pupils and limited access to ICT generally.
23. The specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. It is good for those pupils who need additional support. The special requirements of these pupils are largely met through skilled support provided by trained assistants. The small groups of pupils withdrawn from normal lessons in the lower school have good support for literacy and benefit from a good range of ICT resources that help them learn in a way that they enjoy. The college offers pupils in Years 10 and 11 alternatives to the main curriculum such as courses at local colleges although the work of these pupils is not monitored sufficiently to identify and rectify weaknesses, such as provision for the core subjects.
24. A wide range of activities provided out of the classroom make valuable additions to the formal curriculum. Sports clubs are regularly well attended and there is a very extensive fixture list for teams. The choir and the band are increasingly popular and very many pupils participate in musical and drama productions. Foreign visits promote language learning and cultural understanding. Visits to museums, galleries and other places of interest all make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Regular 'catch-up' clubs are run by the mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, history, technology and textiles departments. Some subjects, like technology, use computer links to support pupils when they are working at home.
25. Very good progress has been made to improve the accommodation since the last inspection. An attractive new block now houses the English suite, assisting good communication between staff and easy access to shared resources. Modern foreign languages are also mainly taught in the same building, with the exception of one classroom. Resources for special educational needs, now very good, are located in the same area, which has improved the efficiency and quality of the support provided. A new computer room, a lift to upper floors and an all-weather pitch have been provided. However, design and technology and art are still taught in small, overcrowded rooms that restrict the activities that can be provided. A lack of small rooms hampers ensemble work in music and some science teaching takes place in a general classroom. Resources are good in religious education. There is good, well used access to

computers in English and business studies. Resources for ICT within the specialist computer rooms are good, but there are insufficient specialist applications for music, art, science and design and technology, which prevents teachers in these subject from meeting the full requirements of the National Curriculum.

Sixth form

26. The sixth form curriculum is good. Despite the relatively small size of the sixth form, there is a good range of academic and vocational courses, all of which are very popular with students. Successful partnerships with other local sixth forms increase the curricular opportunities available. There is an extensive and well-organised personal, social and health education programme. The college offers two modern foreign languages. History is increasingly popular. There are some weaknesses. For example, accommodation is limited in art and some courses are hardly viable as classes are very small. The inadequate provision for religious education is in breach of statutory requirements.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for health, safety, care and welfare is very good. Provision for support, advice and guidance is satisfactory in the main school and very good in the sixth form. The college has satisfactory arrangements for involving pupils and students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff show high levels of care and concern for the pupils' welfare.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always given enough guidance about how well they are doing or what they are aiming for.
- There are very good procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils and students.
- There are good arrangements for ensuring that new pupils settle into the college well.
- Careers advice is good.
- Students have very good relationships with staff and feel that they can ask for help if they have concerns.
- Staff give sixth form students very good guidance about their work and the options open to them after leaving the college.

Commentary

27. The college's pastoral system provides pupils with good support for their personal development. Continuity of care is maintained by heads of year and tutors. They remain with their tutor groups as the pupils move through the college. Tutors know the pupils and their families very well and pupils interviewed during the inspection felt that they could turn to adults working in college if they were worried. A typical comment from a pupil on the pre-inspection questionnaire was, '*If there is a problem they sort it out straight away and I really enjoy coming to school*'. Parents value the way new pupils are quickly settled into college. Students benefit from the structured programme of 'taster days' and support from tutors and sixth formers during induction.
28. Tutors closely monitor pupils' personal development through informal discussion and formal interviews, setting targets and offering helpful advice. Staff work with external agencies to offer some good support to pupils with particular difficulties. For example, a valuable social

skills programme was set up in conjunction with the youth services and the college nurse conducts a weekly drop-in clinic.

29. Although teachers give pupils in Years 7 to 9 positive encouragement in lessons, they do not always give them enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Marking does not often show pupils what they need to do to make their work better. However, there is some good practice, for example in English. Advice and guidance in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory in all subjects and often good. Pupils with behavioural problems often have individual educational plans, but the targets for improvement in behaviour are too vague for pupils or their parents to know exactly what is expected.
30. Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for. They are well integrated into the college and form good relationships with other pupils. Teachers and support staff ensure that all pupils feel secure in the college, whatever their specific difficulties. However, not all subject teachers are fully aware of these pupils' specific learning needs. Pupils' learning targets are appropriate and reviewed regularly in consultation with pupils themselves. In many cases, these targets could be more demanding in order to encourage pupils' progress more effectively.
31. Procedures for first aid are very good. Pupils who are ill or injured receive very good care in a well-equipped medical room. However, this room also serves as an office and conditions are cramped. The arrangements for recording accidents and administering medication are very good. Pupils with serious medical conditions are supported very well. Staff ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment. Risk assessments are undertaken and there are appropriate arrangements for testing electrical equipment and emergency evacuations. The principal has received relevant training in child protection and fulfils his duty of care effectively. Adults working in college are well aware of the correct procedures and understand the importance of reporting any concerns. The college has good arrangements for pupils in public care.
32. Pupils value the careers programme. There are very fruitful links between the careers programme and the local careers advice service and many pupils have a careers interview with the careers advisor. However, the college gives less than the usual time to this programme and to work experience.
33. In lessons, teachers value pupils' views and take notice of their opinions. Members of the college council discuss improvements to the premises and raise money for charity. However, there is some inconsistency in the arrangements for year forums and in the priority given by tutors for canvassing pupils' views so not all feel they have the same opportunities to express their views.

Sixth form

34. Because of the high levels of mutual respect between sixth formers and staff, relationships are very good. Teachers value students' views and in lessons, teachers and students often negotiate over work and deadlines to ensure that everyone can achieve their best. Students benefit from the close monitoring and support of both form tutors and subject teachers. They are given very good advice on how well they are doing and what they are aiming for. Students are well prepared for university applications, as well as opportunities for training and employment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college's links with parents are satisfactory. Including the sixth form, the college works very well in partnership with the local community. Links with other schools are good. Links with local colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college works hard to reach out to its local community.
- The college has developed beneficial partnerships with local employers.
- Students' reports do not always give parents enough information about how their children can improve their work.
- The college has established valuable links with the local primary schools which help students to make a smooth transition from one stage of education to another.
- The college offers students good opportunities to become involved in the community.
- The college's links with other local schools and colleges extend the choices open to pupils and students.

Commentary

35. Pupils and local residents benefit from the college's community provision, particularly through the dual use of the library and the adult education courses. The college's drama department runs the local Youth Theatre, which is open to all young people in the area. The college received very good support from local employers and voluntary groups in its successful bid for 'Specialist School' status which included a strong community element.
36. The college has established good links with local employers, particularly in leisure and tourism. Many local businesses offer work experience and vocational pupils take advantage of valuable work placements, for example in local hotels and sports centres. The college welcomes outside agencies, such as a counsellor and the college nurse, to provide specialist advice for pupils.
37. Parents are welcome in college and they feel that staff are approachable, although occasionally there are difficulties when telephone calls are not returned. Staff contact parents, not only when there are concerns but also to celebrate success. New parents receive good information about the college and newsletters give a detailed picture of college life. The college provides parents with satisfactory information about their children's progress. Interim reports give parents a useful snapshot of how their children are getting on, but the annual reports do not always give parents enough information about what their children should be aiming for next. Reporting of citizenship in Year 9 does not conform to the format of other reports. The college encourages parents to support their children at home and offers them useful sessions on topics such as accessing the college's intranet at home and supporting coursework. Parents are generally supportive of the work of the college. The active parent-teacher and friends' association works hard to raise funds. Its events, such as awards evenings, are well supported.
38. The college works closely with the local primary schools to ensure that transition from one stage of education to the next is as smooth as possible. The college also provides primary schools with technical support for ICT. Those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have an alternative curriculum benefit from attending courses at local colleges. The college is an active member of the local academic council and headteachers meet regularly to share experience and provide mutual support. In some subjects, such as music, drama and technology, staff are working together on topics which are started in primary school and completed at college. This gives pupils confidence and helps them achieve well. The college provides some useful advice to parents of pupils with special educational needs so that they can help their children at home.

Sixth form

39. Students are keen to think of others and undertake voluntary work through organizations such as 'Millennium Volunteers'. Sixth form students work with primary pupils as part of their community sports leader award course. They have organized and raised funds for events such as a Christmas party for pupils from a local special school and are involved in the Youth Theatre productions. Increased options are available to students through attending the adult education courses in subjects such as law and vocational students benefit from links with local hospitals and residential homes. The college's good relationships with neighbouring colleges provide access to a much-extended choice of courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The leadership provided by the principal and other key staff is satisfactory. Management is unsatisfactory. The governing body helps shape the direction of the college and fulfils its main statutory duties but its otherwise good work is marred by some breaches of its responsibilities. The college does not comply with the full requirements for ICT in Year 11 or for religious education in the sixth form and does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.
- Leaders analyse performance, identify areas of concern and establish appropriate priorities for improvement so standards have risen steadily in recent years.
- Monitoring is not sufficiently well established or widespread to secure the consistently effective teaching, learning and achievement to which the college aspires.
- Lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of managers leads to the unsystematic application of some key policies across the college.
- The principal, other senior leaders and the governing body work well together with a clear sense of purpose.
- College development planning is now well linked to department planning, so has improved since the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

40. The principal pays close attention to measures of college effectiveness using the resources of the local education authority and independent analysts to identify priorities for improvement. Whole-college development planning is linked to subject developments so that initiatives for improvement are better co-ordinated than at the time of the last inspection. As a result, performance in tests, assessments and examinations has risen more rapidly than the national rate. The performance of boys has been identified as a cause for concern. As a result, attention is being given to the quality of their independent work, principally in their GCSE coursework, so that more boys complete their assignments to a higher standard. Meetings with parents have enabled the college to explain their actions and to call upon their support to this end.
41. The college has a widely understood annual review of teaching and performance from which targets for improvement are set. Training has focused on aspects of teaching that have been nationally recognised as very effective and the college expects subject leaders to incorporate these in the work of their teams. However, the absence of sufficiently regular and rigorous monitoring means that managers are largely unaware

of the limited extent to which their expectations are being met. Their good intentions are not being followed through. Within almost all departments, the strengths of management balance the weaknesses. However, taken together, the common weakness in monitoring, especially of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning by most departmental managers and by senior managers is preventing a clear picture of effectiveness being obtained. Consequently, the quality of teaching varies too widely for the college to improve pupils' achievement in all areas. The work of new teachers and especially those who are newly qualified or appointed for a fixed period, is not sufficiently monitored to reveal areas of weakness. As a result, these go unaddressed and hamper some teachers' smooth transfer to the college and their contributions to its effectiveness. The failure to support and monitor a succession of temporary teachers closely enough has led to lower standards and achievement of some pupils.

42. The roles and responsibilities of managers, subject and year leaders and their teams are too loosely defined. Lines of accountability are not all clearly established and, where they are, wide divergence from them is too readily tolerated. Hence, some aspects of the college are not sufficiently well organised to be efficient. The understanding and interpretation of some central policies, such as those regarding assessment or behaviour, vary too widely for them to be systematically applied. In the absence of regular monitoring, these deficiencies are not brought into the light so remain unresolved. For example, the respective responsibilities of staff managing pupils with special educational needs and those working in the referral unit are blurred. Those pupils whose special educational need is of an emotional or behavioural nature need the co-ordinated efforts of both. The work of the referral unit, in seeking to improve behaviour of pupils disrupting lessons, is hampered by referrals being made, contrary to the governors' policy, for trivial reasons. In this way, it is too widely seen as a convenient sanction for minor misconduct. Some teachers do not recognise their responsibilities for managing behaviour, do not follow the proper procedures and rely inappropriately on procedures intended for acute circumstances. Such teachers, including some managers, refer pupils who are not a source of disruption in lessons and sometimes fail to provide suitable work for them to do whilst out of the classroom. Under the current weakly defined and unmonitored system, this persists. This is a distraction from the essential work of the unit and unnecessarily disrupts the learning of the pupils concerned. In the absence of rigorous monitoring of its policies and their effectiveness, the college's self-evaluation does not provide a sufficiently clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, there is a risk that standards may slip.
43. The governing body has worked closely with key college leaders to achieve 'Specialist School' status and is already looking forward to future very appropriate additions to its specialisms. The governors have led and sustained a long and successful initiative to provide an outstanding sporting facility for the clear benefit of pupils, students and the local community. Governors routinely review their policies and refine them to take account of emerging needs, such as the establishment of the referral unit for providing support and guidance for vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion from the college. They have revised the curriculum to ensure that all pupils have specialist ICT provision although a few current Year 11 pupils still do not receive their entitlement and ICT is not used as it should be in other subjects. Religious education in the sixth form does not fully meet statutory requirements but refinements to the sixth form personal education programme for next year will take full account of this.

44. The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has good relationships with her team and the day-to-day management of the department is effective. However, monitoring, evaluation and review of procedures are inadequate to ensure the good practices within the department are effectively operated across the college. The separation between pupils who have learning difficulties and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties prevents the needs of some pupils being dealt with well.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,864,194
Total expenditure	2,940,170
Expenditure per pupil	3,479

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	86,635
Balance carried forward to the next year	10,659

45. The college has established a much-improved common means of identifying priorities through annual reviews that are monitored by the governing body. These link with professional development and with departmental and college development planning. In recent years these plans have included overall performance targets for the college. The means by which planned initiatives are expected to address these are now clear in the new specialist college development plan. However, priorities for expenditure on ICT facilities have not taken account of essential resources for some statutory National Curriculum requirements. High staffing costs, due to the length of service of many teachers, have severely limited the finances available to improve resources. This and the reluctance of some teachers to accept the need to change established practices, present a barrier to improving teaching.

Sixth form

46. The sixth form has grown significantly since the time of the last inspection. This is mainly due to better management of the options offered to prospective students. Courses now correspond closely with their aspirations and interests. The sixth-form leaders carefully monitor students' progress so that weak performance is quickly identified and action taken to support and guide individual students well. Good account is taken of students' plans for the future so that they are well prepared for higher education or the world of work. Consequently, students are pleased with the college's provision for them and achieve well.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistency in the quality of teaching ensures that most students make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills and fulfil their potential.
- Good leadership ensures that the department is looking forward and embracing new developments and good management ensures that there are effective systems to meet the needs of individual students.
- Sometimes teachers do too much for students so that they do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above national expectations	Well above national expectations
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Test and examination results

47. In 2004, results of national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above both the national average and the average for schools where pupils were of similar prior attainment. Girls did better than boys, but both boys and girls did better than their counterparts nationally and the difference between girls' and boys' performance was about the same as nationally. The trend of results in these tests is upwards and above the national trend. In 2004, results of GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were significantly above the national average in English and English literature. Boys did significantly better in English, particularly English literature, than in their other subjects. In relation to the national picture, girls outperformed boys by a greater margin than they did nationally in English, but not in English literature, where the difference was about the same as it was nationally.

Standards and achievement

48. Pupils' standards represent good achievement in relation to their prior attainment and capabilities. They achieve well because teachers provide an interesting range of activities and use varied and effective methods so that pupils are engaged in learning and enjoy their work. Pupils' work is assessed constructively with pointers about how they should improve. Teachers also use diagrams and other visual approaches well to help pupils develop ideas and analyse texts successfully. As a result there is evidence

of personal involvement and enjoyment in pupils' work at all ages. Pupils' writing is well organised and increasingly successful in substantiating their views with references. Some higher attainers' work is sophisticated, fluent and perceptive. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are strengths of their attainment. Pupils often speak with confidence and at some length as a result of frequent opportunities to take part in question and answer sessions, paired and group work, leading the work of a group or representing its findings to the rest of the class.

Teaching and learning

49. There are several strong features of teaching and learning. Teachers work to a careful framework provided in schemes of work so that pupils receive a consistent and coherent experience in English. Teachers use effectively a variety of methods and approaches (including effective use of ICT) to help pupils learn well. They provide opportunities for quiet periods of concentrated writing that help pupils to discipline themselves and work independently. They make good use of homework, marking and assessment information to ensure that pupils extend their learning and know what to do to improve. Occasionally, teaching is not so effective when teachers over-explain or over-prolong or interfere in an activity. This causes pupils to become passive. Sometimes the pace of learning slows, pupils become distracted and the potential benefit of continuing writing or discussion is lost.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership provides a clear direction with a strong focus on improvement. The head of department is open to innovation where it can help support learning. He fosters good supportive relationships with his team so that teachers have a common approach and common purpose. Management is good. Teachers are deployed effectively and a very thorough approach to assessment and moderation ensures that standards are consistent and pupils' potential is known. Behaviour is managed well throughout the department so that pupils enjoy their work and achieve well.
51. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because examination results are better, standards in work seen are higher, pupils' achievement remains good and the quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. Accommodation for the department has improved significantly.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Standards are above national expectations. However, the contribution made in different subjects to the development of pupils' skills is just satisfactory. Good work is done in modern foreign languages where 'key words' are available and teachers make explicit reference to these. Appropriate literacy objectives appear in schemes of work and lesson planning. Geography teachers provide good opportunities for spoken work and develop pupils' subject-specific vocabulary well. Teachers in religious education encourage wide-ranging discussion and provide opportunities for a wide variety of writing so that pupils develop speaking and writing skills well. In art and design, pupils use specialist vocabulary well and are encouraged to speak and write evaluatively about their work. Other subjects have an inconsistent approach to the development of literacy skills. Teachers in these subjects do not sufficiently emphasise key vocabulary or pay attention to supporting pupils' writing or to checking its accuracy afterwards, nor do they provide sufficient opportunities for speaking in class. Although there has been training in approaches to literacy these approaches have not been consistently written into departmental schemes of work and there is no literacy policy

for the college as a whole. As a result, development of skills takes place on a piecemeal basis and lacks a coherent framework.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects (more than one language).
- Teachers offer a good variety of different learning opportunities to pupils. Resources used are varied and effective.
- The National Framework for Modern Foreign Languages has been effectively implemented and is beginning to have a positive effect on teaching and learning.
- Pupils are not actively involved in their learning.
- Activities in class need to be better matched to pupils' abilities.
- Some aspects of the subject are not closely enough monitored.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	Below national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

53. The results of teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average. The girls performed far better than the boys. Overall performance and girls' performance were better than in 2003. The proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining a grade of A* to C in French in 2004 was below that of pupils nationally, with the boys performing less well than the girls, but by a similar margin to that seen nationally. Results were also better than in 2003. In German, the overall GCSE performance was significantly below that of pupils nationally. Girls' results were in line with girls' results nationally. Boys' results were well below those of boys nationally.

Standards and achievement

54. By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to use languages to express their feelings. They have good pronunciation patterns and are confident when working in pairs and

groups. A lower-ability Year 9 group worked very effectively to solve language puzzles together. The achievement of Year 9 pupils is in line with their capability. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making the progress expected of them. However the recently established good teaching and learning have not been sustained over a long enough period to raise standards to the level of the national averages. Some pupils are not yet able to develop and use more complex sentence structures and their vocabulary and expressions are not sufficiently developed.

Teaching and learning

55. Most effective lessons are characterised by imaginative beginnings that capture the pupils' interest, for example, when teachers set puzzles which require pupils to analyse vocabulary. Clear objectives are shared with pupils so that they have a good understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and ability to use the foreign language enable pupils to learn effectively. The variety of activities on offer and the good use of resources mean that pupils remain motivated in almost every lesson. Year 11 German pupils worked very hard to complete a role-play and Year 11 French pupils worked with determination to practise examination skills. ICT is used to add interest to the curriculum and pupils are very enthusiastic about working on computers. They are also highly motivated by the very good range of trips on offer. Where the teacher does not ensure that pupils are actively involved or where they are not expected to review their learning, or when the teacher does not set work that reinforces pupils' understanding, their learning is insecure. Assessment procedures are not well established. Pupils are not always clear about the level at which they are performing, nor how they can improve their standard.

Leadership and management

56. The subject leader organises the work of the department well and ensures that good use is made of accommodation and resources. He has incorporated the national guidance into the work of the department well so that standards are clearly rising. Teachers work effectively as a team with helpful schemes of work to assist them in their planning. Teachers have the linguistic knowledge and skill to teach the programmes of study well and the department's priority in seeking to secure the appointment of foreign language assistants is most appropriate. The teachers have identified a need to improve speaking skills and this would help to address that issue. Teachers are committed to improvement. Little monitoring takes place but the subject leader is keen to ensure that all teachers adopt the latest national guidance on best practice. The priorities of greater consistency in lesson planning, incorporating different activities matched to different pupils' abilities, marking and assessment practices are appropriate.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work seen are above national expectations, with GCSE results well above average in 2004, although there were too few A* and A grades.
- Teaching and learning are good but inconsistent across the department, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes, are interested in mathematics and work hard,

- Leadership of mathematics is good; it is an effective department with many innovative features.
- Management is not effective as there is insufficient monitoring to reveal inconsistencies in teaching and assessment.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above national expectations	Above national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Test and examination results

57. In 2004, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 was close to the national average but below the average for schools where pupils were of similar prior attainment. Though the results were lower than those of 2003, the trend in recent years has been upward and above the national trend. Boys' and girls' results were not significantly different from those expected of them, taking account of their prior attainment. Mathematics results were below those in English but above those in science. In 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was well above the national average and was significantly higher than in the previous year, although there were fewer A* and A grades. Girls' results were better than boys', although both were well above the respective national results.

Standards and achievement

58. Standards are above national expectations. Pupils enter the college in Year 7 with above average ability. Weak basic number skills and insecure number bond recognition affect the standards of a significant minority of pupils who otherwise develop good understanding of mathematics topics. For example, difficulties with combining negative numbers affected the successful solution of simultaneous equations in a Year 9 class, although they understood the method of elimination. Calculators are used too readily by many pupils, although the regular mental practice adopted now by teachers is improving the situation. For example, pupils in a Year 7 class enthusiastically developed the skills of halving in a 'Bingo' starter, to lead in to calculating the areas of triangles accurately. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils are achieving well when taught in very small groups and given individual attention from the teacher. A Year 7 group of four pupils with extreme needs were successfully using the terms 'perpendicular' and 'parallel' and five pupils in Year 9 bottom set were constructing rectangles successfully owing to the teacher's skill and patience. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 are offered a GCSE statistics lesson at lunchtimes and after college and those in Year 8 can attend a 'Talented

Mathematicians' day each year. Two or three pupils in Year 9 regularly attend master classes at Exeter University.

Teaching and learning

59. The quality of teaching is good although it is inconsistent across the department, varying from very good to unsatisfactory. Most teachers plan lessons well, even if they do not produce a detailed written lesson plan. Most lessons offer a variety of learning activities but, too often, lengthy expositions by the teacher or written exercises from textbooks dominate. Starters vary from excellent short sharp thinking activities to mundane assessments and are sometimes too long and protracted. Some lessons end inconclusively without focused activities or summaries of learning by teacher or pupils. Most teachers give good explanations of concepts, skills and methods, using precise mathematical terms which pupils then learn to use in meaningful contexts. In the best practice, teachers emphasise to pupils that mistakes are not a failure but a means to learning and encourage pupils to correct themselves, orally or in writing. Some teachers are encouraging pupils to evaluate their own work but this is at an early stage and pupils do not yet understand sufficiently the meaning of levels and grades, nor are they given sufficient guidance on how to improve. Marking of work is also inconsistent, but there are some very good examples of detailed corrections and constructive comments. Teachers usually set relevant homework that most pupils complete. The majority of teachers know their pupils very well and relationships are good. However, poor attitudes or distracting behaviour can disrupt the pace of learning, even with the best teachers. On the whole, teachers have very good class control and the new teachers, in particular, use successful strategies to retain the interest of potentially difficult pupils.

Leadership and management

60. The head of department has appropriate vision and purpose to develop mathematics, but staffing difficulties in the four years since she was appointed have hindered development. This year, the appointment of a second in department is assisting the drive for improvement, helping to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Aspects of current best practice (the Key Stage 3 Strategy) are now well established and have also been introduced into Year 10 and 11, improving the quality of teaching. Funding for resources is too limited to extend the new textbook scheme required, or to provide further ICT resources. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. There is not sufficient consistency and quality in marking. Pupils do not understand assessment criteria or know exactly what to do to raise their own standards. Examination results are analysed in detail and the electronic records being developed help to track the progress of individuals and groups. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, with improved standards, although many features mentioned still need further development. The head of department has too little time to monitor the department rigorously, to evaluate and take appropriate action, or to raise the profile of mathematics in the college.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. At present, there is no numeracy co-ordinator, or whole college monitoring, evaluation or development. This is unsatisfactory. A numeracy policy was written and a training session led by the head of mathematics a few years ago. It was well received by staff, but no formal action has been taken since. Informal contacts now exist and the head

of mathematics gives appropriate advice when approached, such as on statistical methods for A-level biology. Very good use of numeracy was seen in A-level business and economics, the students showing high levels of skill. Good examples of calculation and graphical work were seen in geography at all stages, with much statistical work in the GCSE coursework. The usual amount of graphical work was seen in science lessons, though the work was not developed or extended. Mathematics was used very little in all other subjects, with no evidence of numeracy policies in schemes of work or lesson plans. However pupils' mathematical skills generally match the demands in all subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in external tests and examinations are above the national averages.
- The work of the department is not monitored sufficiently.
- Most pupils work hard in lessons.
- The development plan is well considered and is beginning to be implemented successfully through improving teamwork.
- The quality of marking varies too much and does not inform pupils sufficiently about how to improve their work.
- Too little use is made of ICT in lessons; pupils do not have experience of data-logging or remote sensing.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above national expectations	Above national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

Commentary

Test and examination results

62. In 2004, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. The average point score of pupils was marginally below the average for schools where pupils were of similar prior attainment although the proportion reaching the expected level was above that of similar schools. This suggests that either lower-attaining pupils did not do as well as those in similar

schools or that, of those pupils who did reach the expected level, few reached the highest levels. Girls' attainment was similar to that of boys'. Results were lower than the previous year's and below those in mathematics and English. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, most pupils were entered for GCSE double-award examinations. Results were above the national average. Girls' attainment was higher than that of boys. Girls' results improved while those of boys declined. The few pupils entered for the single award all achieved at least grade G, which was above the national average.

Standards and achievement

63. Work seen during the inspection reflects last year's examination results. By the end of Year 9, pupils make good links between different aspects of the subject. Their knowledge and understanding show satisfactory improvement since entering the college. Progress is similar for boys and girls, but a significant number of higher-attaining pupils do not do as well as might be expected because their thinking is not extended enough. By the end of Year 11, most pupils have good understanding which they gain from better organised teaching. Pupils' investigative work is improving and progress is satisfactory. Some higher-attaining pupils still do not achieve as well as they might and some boys underachieve because their attitude is too casual. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but teachers do not take full advantage of support assistants. Most pupils co-operate well in lessons and work hard. They often enjoy what they are doing, but their attention easily wanders when teaching fails to capture their interest enough. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not motivated well by the courses the college currently offers. While many pupils are confident and very willing to contribute orally in lessons, their written work is not as good because of poor presentation.

Teaching and learning

64. Teachers generally organise lessons well, although planning, particularly in Years 7 to 9, does not take sufficient account of individual needs. Lessons are usually well prepared with a range of activities, but not all the work actively involves pupils or provides effective challenge. In particular, the start and end of lessons are too rushed and not designed to develop learning sufficiently. Teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 because teachers are more secure with the lesson content. They use their good knowledge of the subject to develop and reinforce ideas appropriately. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils are unclear about what they are intended to learn and the work lacks structure. Marking often lacks detail and gives pupils too little information about how well they are doing. Pupils gain satisfactory understanding, but they do not always know how to improve. Some resources are inadequate. In particular, there is a lack of scientific equipment. Pupils do not gain the required skills in data-logging because of insufficient ICT facilities. Some classes have limited opportunities to carry out practical work effectively owing to a shortage of technician time and too few laboratories.

Leadership and management

65. While progress was slow immediately following the last inspection, improvements are now being introduced at a faster rate. The recently appointed head of department provides a clear sense of direction and has introduced an appropriate development plan. Schemes of work have also been improved. While continuing weaknesses still hinder progress, a more co-ordinated approach across the department is beginning to raise standards. There is potential for further improvement and the pace of change is still rather slow. The good practice in the department is not fully recognised or shared because monitoring of teaching and assessment is unsatisfactory. As a result, there are inconsistencies in marking and in implementing planned improvements in teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communications technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching incorporates good strategies for raising achievement, using national guidance.
- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations.
- Standards of girls at GCSE are above national expectations.
- Potentially high-attaining pupils and many boys are not challenged sufficiently in lessons.
- ICT is not used sufficiently across the curriculum.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

66. In 2004, the results of teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils were above the national average. Girls' results were judged to be above the national average for girls whilst boys' results were in line with the national average for boys. No pupils reached the higher levels. In the 2004 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades was marginally below the national average. Girls did far better than boys, scoring higher than the national average for girls, whilst boys' results were well below the average for boys.

Standards and achievement

67. In Year 9, standards of work are above those expected of 14 year-olds and pupils achieve well. For example, they design web pages and use spreadsheets and databases effectively. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and are keen to do well. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work is broadly in line with national expectations and shows satisfactory achievement in relation to their standards when they were in Year 9. Girls are particularly well motivated and more conscientious in their coursework than boys, so their work is of a higher standard and they achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Teaching and learning

68. Where teaching is good, the teacher captures pupils' interest with challenging tasks and sets clear times for them to be completed. Consequently, pupils are required to work at brisk pace. Teachers draw on their good knowledge of the subject to supplement standard resources well. Also, questioning is effective in probing pupils' learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen but, in some lessons, the pace slackened when teaching was not based on high enough expectations. This arose

when only a few pupils were called upon to answer questions, allowing the majority to listen passively and the attention of a few to lapse. Pupils work confidently and are fully engaged when at the computers. The accommodation for specialist teaching is good. Well chosen computers and software make a strong contribution to learning. However, accommodation is cramped in some rooms and computers have to be shared between pupils.

Leadership and management

69. Progress since the time of the last inspection is a balance of strengths and weakness as some statutory requirements are not fully met. A few pupils in Year 11 are not taught the full programmes of study. This will not be the case for the current Year 10 pupils, all of whom are studying at least a short GCSE course. The subject leader has identified other shortcomings and has introduced practices aimed at improving the standard of boys' work. Monitoring is not sufficiently searching to identify weaknesses in assessment. Technical support is good and contributes to the smooth running of departmental and college-wide ICT systems.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. Most departments have planned schemes of work, which address the requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT, but few teach these to a satisfactory degree. Some do not book the specialist rooms in sufficient time to ensure access during the terms that correspond with their schemes of work. In some subjects, whilst new, general resources have been provided, the college does not have sufficient resources to teach the specialist requirements. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use word-processing and graphing skills to complete and present coursework. Recently installed data-projectors are used effectively, for example to give presentations that increase pupils' interest in geography, business studies and in leisure and tourism. Good use is made of the Internet for research in German. Some reference resources are used in science but data logging is not done. Opportunities for composition in music are very restricted by the fact that there is only one machine with an electronic keyboard and most pupils have scant opportunities to record and play back their work electronically. There are no facilities for computer-controlled design or manufacture in design and technology.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Girls achieve well by the time they leave college.
- A significant minority of boys underachieve because they have negative attitudes towards learning or because the teaching is inconsistent in quality.
- There are good arrangements for reviewing progress and recognising strengths and areas for improvement.
- The marking of work, especially that of younger pupils, is insufficiently informative and constructive.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Tests and examination results

71. The 2004 teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average although girls attained higher levels than boys. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades of A* to C was in line with the national average, although boys were slightly below the national average for boys and girls were slightly above the national average for girls.

Standards and achievement

72. Pupils in Years 9 and 11 attain standards in line with national expectations in their knowledge and understanding of history and in the skills of evaluating historical evidence. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys, although the gap in attainment narrows as pupils move up through the college. Achievement is satisfactory for pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs. Girls achieve well by the age of 16, but a significant number of boys, particularly by Year 9, do not achieve sufficiently well owing to negative attitudes or to teaching which is insufficiently challenging or appropriate to their needs.

Teaching and learning

73. The teaching is inconsistent in quality, particularly for younger pupils. When it is good, the teaching is lively, engaging and involves the pupils in active learning. For example, a group of pupils in Year 10 were very interested when they simulated a nineteenth-century surgical operation. Where the teaching is satisfactory, pupils make some progress but learning is often limited by weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the subject, by limited strategies for managing behaviour or by the insufficient involvement of pupils in activities. The marking of younger pupils' work is insufficiently constructive or helpful in highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

74. The head of department reviews progress and has a clear perception of strengths and areas for improvement within the department. Management is satisfactory. Although there is good teamwork within the department, there is insufficient monitoring and sharing of good practice, leading to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. There is limited attention to developing language and literacy in the subject. There are good opportunities for talking, but written work is not assessed constructively enough. Pupils have limited access to ICT in history and its use is underdeveloped. Overall standards are in line with national expectations and progress is satisfactory as at the

previous inspection. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching, although there are now no non-specialists teaching history. There is better standardisation of pupils' work. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Geography

PROVISION IN GEOGRAPHY IS **GOOD**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and teamwork have sustained high standards over time.
- Good teaching stimulates interest and leads to high achievement.
- There is not enough monitoring to ensure good practice.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough in Years 7 to 9.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above national expectations	Well above national expectations
Achievement	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examinations

75. The results of the 2004 teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and, given average standards in geography in Year 7, were better than those in similar schools. Pupils, including those with special needs, do well. Girls' results were well above those of girls nationally and boys' results were above those of boys nationally. GCSE results continue to rise over time, with the 2004 results at the end of Year 11 being well above the national average. Both girls and boys do better than their peers nationally but girls continue to outperform the boys. A significant number of pupils reach the highest grades.

Standards and achievement

76. By the end of Year 9, written and oral answers reflect good understanding about physical processes, human activities and the contrasts between countries and peoples. Most pupils work well and enjoy what they do. Standards rise steadily over time. Achievement for most pupils is good but some underachievement is evident among pupils who have been taught by a succession of teachers. Pupils with special educational needs work hard, often without modified resources. The written work of a significant minority, mainly boys, lacks depth and care and pupils do not make enough use of ICT. In Year 11, positive attitudes and interest contribute to high achievement. Most pupils can bring together a good range of geographical skills, knowledge and understanding and apply these confidently to coursework, raising their examination standards. Good notes, given a shortage of books, support revision. Most pupils do not know how to improve their work.

Teaching and learning

77. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject stimulates interest and their planning ensures that pupils are offered a variety of activities that extend and consolidate learning. Questioning is very good, probing understanding and developing thinking skills. Class management in most lessons is good and independent learning opportunities, including group work, promote good social development. Regular assessments progressively develop mapping skills, fieldwork techniques and data-analysis. Success is celebrated, work is attractively displayed and pupils achieve very well. The use of ICT is encouraged for presentation but its use for learning, such as research, is patchy. Appropriate resources for higher and lower attainers within mixed ability groups are not always provided. Marking is weak in Years 7 to 9 and comments are supportive rather than informative. Different teachers' expectations about the quality and quantity of work vary too widely.

Leadership and management

78. The department has an experienced leader who, together with a competent team of teachers, has driven up and sustained high standards over time. Despite current staffing problems, teamwork is very good. Individual skills are recognised and appreciated and collaborative planning and decision-making are the norm. The subject continues to be successful and is a popular choice at GCSE. Day-to-day management is good. There is a shortage of GCSE textbooks, but otherwise, resources support teaching and learning well. A start has been made on a central record keeping system to track pupils' progress and ICT resources have improved. However, monitoring of standards of teaching is weak. Infrequent monitoring of teaching and learning has allowed some weaknesses in practice to persist. The lack of forward planning has not ensured adequate access to ICT. Therefore improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the subject is very good.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work.
- Progress since the last inspection has been very good.
- There is insufficient time in the core GCSE classes to teach the syllabus in a more effective way.
- The limited number of specialist teachers is having an adverse effect on some of the pupils' learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with those indicated in the agreed syllabus	Above national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good on the GCSE short course and very good on the full course
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership of the subject	Very Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very Good

COMMENTARY

Assessment and examinations

79. In 2004, GCSE results were broadly in line with national averages and in line with expectations based on pupils' prior attainment. Results were similar to those of previous years. Girls' results were better than those of boys.

Standards and achievement

80. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils have a strong knowledge and understanding of many aspects of world religions, such as the use of holy books in Sikhism. Pupils can use this information to see what relevance it might have to their own lives and experiences. This arises as a result of expert teaching. Where the teaching is less strong or unsatisfactory, the learning is less effective and so standards are not so high. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 on the full GCSE course is good and, in some classes, it is very good. The variation in standards reflects the different quality of teaching that the pupils receive. Where the teaching is good or better, pupils gain a strong knowledge and understanding of the world religions that they are studying and they can relate their beliefs to a range of moral and social issues. This is noticeably less so where the teaching is weaker. The quality of the written work of pupils in the full course GCSE classes is strong. It is less so for some of those on the short course GCSE programme. Pupils can competently use ICT to find and process the information needed for their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the support that they receive in class.

Teaching and learning

81. TEACHING IS GOOD OVERALL, BUT THERE ARE WIDE VARIATIONS IN QUALITY FROM EXCELLENT TO UNSATISFACTORY. A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE TEACHING IS DONE BY TEACHERS WHO HAVE INSUFFICIENT EXPERTISE. THIS IS HAVING A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON SOME OF THE PUPILS' LEARNING. WHERE TEACHING IS GOOD OR BETTER, LESSONS ARE WELL PLANNED AND INCLUDE A WIDE RANGE OF OBJECTIVES THAT ARE TAUGHT CONFIDENTLY AND CLEARLY. IN THESE LESSONS, PUPILS LEARN EFFECTIVELY ABOUT WORLD RELIGIONS. THE BEST TEACHING INCLUDES ALL THESE QUALITIES AND HAS IN ADDITION, A FAST PACE AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS. CONSEQUENTLY THE LEARNING IS VERY GOOD. WHERE THE TEACHING IS SATISFACTORY OR UNSATISFACTORY, THE CONTENT DRAWN FROM WORLD RELIGIONS IS LESS PRONOUNCED AND THE LEARNING REVOLVES MORE AROUND THE 'FACTS AND FIGURES' OF RELIGIONS THAN THE REASONS AND PURPOSES THAT LIE BEYOND THEM. SOME LESSONS HAVE NO CONTENT DRAWN FROM WORLD RELIGIONS. AT TIMES, THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PUPILS IS INSUFFICIENTLY FIRM. IN SOME CASES, THE MARKING OF PUPILS' WORK IS UNSATISFACTORY. OVERALL, PUPILS RESPOND VERY POSITIVELY TO TEACHING AND THEY WORK HARD AND SHOW AN INTEREST IN THEIR WORK.

Leadership and management

82. The management is good. The leadership is very good. A well-developed assessment policy is in place and a range of new courses has been introduced. In this sense,

progress since the last inspection has been very good. Staffing is satisfactory. The head of department is very experienced and well qualified, but a very high percentage of lessons is being taught by non-specialist teachers and this is having a significantly adverse effect on some of the pupils' learning. The accommodation is satisfactory. The resources are good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in food and textiles are well above national expectations.
- Teaching is consistently good and it is very good in food and textiles.
- Teachers give attention to detail in planning and making products so standards are good.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment to ensure pupils achieve their full potential.
- Teacher's planning for Years 7 to 9 fails to build sufficiently on previous learning.
- Standards of computer-aided design and manufacture are well below national expectations.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	Above national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results and assessments

83. In 2004, results of teacher's assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were above the national average. However, inspection evidence suggests that these assessments were generous and that standards were closer to average, as they were at the last inspection. In 2004, GCSE results were above the national average, as they were at the last inspection. Standards were high for textiles, well above average for food and average for resistant materials and graphics. Most pupils did at least as well as they should. However, some underachieved in graphics, but fewer than in 2003.

Standards and achievement

84. Pupils enter the college with standards in line with national expectations. By Year 9, standards in lessons are above national expectations in food and textiles and achievement is good. They are barely in line with national expectations in resistant materials, graphics and systems and control and, here, achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils have good knowledge and skills in manufacturing. Standards of designing are

above national expectations in food and textiles, but are below in resistant materials. Also pupils' ability to use mechanisms and structures to design products is weak. Year 11 pupils are currently attaining well above the expected standards in food coursework, with particularly detailed and systematic approaches to product development. In textiles, the pupils are on course to attain well above average results with imaginative and well made products. In graphic products, the higher attainers show excellent attention to detail in modelling and developing ideas. However, some pupils are behind in their coursework and have much to do if the results predicted for graphics are to be achieved. Pupils are generally on track to achieve results that correspond with national expectations in resistant materials. Overall, the pupils are attaining standards that match their ability.

Teaching and learning

85. The quality of teaching and learning varies. It is consistently best in food and textiles and in Years 10 and 11 where teachers' planning is better. Progress is often reduced in Years 7 to 9 by lessons that fail to build sufficiently on previous learning. This limits the development of design and graphical skills in particular. In GCSE courses, good teaching raises standards from Year 9 to Year 11. In the best lessons, teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm inspire pupils who are very clear about the standards they should reach. There are instances where assessment is used well to ensure pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve. However, the impact of assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils who enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes to learning.

Leadership and management

86. The head of department has a good understanding of where improvements are needed, which has resulted in the successful bid for Technology Status. Good progress has been made in beginning to bring the two parts of the subject together and in introducing common systems. However, in some instances, change has been slow owing to a lack of a common will to embrace initiatives and to move forward quickly. There are instances where performance data are used well to monitor pupils' progress and influence planning but this is generally not well done. Accommodation is poor for textiles and small, overcrowded rooms throughout the department limit the opportunities that the teachers can safely provide. Poor access to ICT results in standards of computer-aided design and manufacture that are well below national expectations

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Drama was sampled. This subject is taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and as an option in Years 10 and 11. In the Year 9 lesson, the teachers' high expectations helped pupils to achieve well. They improved their skills in group working, planning, awareness of audience, characterisation and movement well. Speaking and listening skills were particularly well developed through practising changes in volume and pitch. Pupils in Year 11 were able to present challenging themes with maturity and seriousness. They were enthusiastic about their work and showed consistently good attitudes that contributed to their achievement. They were aware that drama gave them self-discipline, empathy for others and skills in working together that benefited them elsewhere. Examination results in drama have been above or well above the national average in recent years. In 2004, the performance of girls was particularly high, with almost all obtaining the higher grades A or B. Drama makes an important contribution to enriching pupils' experience through theatre visits and productions. Furthermore, the

drama department makes a significant contribution to the community, by running Sidmouth Youth Theatre.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sketchbook work of older pupils, particularly that based on first-hand observation, provides very good starting points for finished work.
- In lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9, short interconnected tasks are used well to promote a good learning pace and improve standards.
- When pupils reach the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments are made independently with no checks being made against national standards.
- There is no regular monitoring of the department by senior staff to help identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

87. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average. Girls' results were close to the national average of girls but boys' results were well below the average for boys. In 2004, GCSE results were a little below the national average. Girls' results were above average and boys' well below. Girls did less well in art than in their other subjects. Boys reached levels in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. The number of pupils who gain the higher A* and B grades has improved in recent years.

Standards and achievement

88. Pupils in Year 9 are able to research ideas and themes and collect visual information from a variety of sources. Girls do this in a more thorough way than boys and generally produce more detailed work. The drawing skills of all pupils is weak, their work often lacking life and vitality. When provided with stimulating starting points, such as those offered by a visit to the Eden Project, much more lively and exciting work results and finished work shows a good use of colour and shape. The expressive ceramics work undertaken with the artist in residence shows that boys do better when working in three dimensions. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line

with their peers. The work of pupils in Year 11 is in line with national expectations, with the difference between boys and girls being similar to that seen in the examination results. Sketchbook work is a strength and work done from observation, such as that based on a visit to Lyme Regis, is particularly successful. Pupils are less good at translating the particular qualities of these drawings into finished work. Some boys, who previously achieved well when working in three dimensions, are now achieving less well because lack of suitable accommodation prevents them from continuing to work in this medium.

Teaching and learning

89. The best lessons are well planned with objectives explained to pupils. Younger pupils respond well to lessons which are well paced and contain short, interconnected tasks. Boys' learning particularly benefits from this approach, but this is not a common feature of all lessons for younger pupils. The importance teachers place on visual research and the development of ideas promotes effective learning, particularly for older pupils. However, the potential of this good quality research is not always realised because pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to identify the visual qualities in their work which need to be carried forward into finished pieces. Learning is also less good when time taken to finish tasks is not well judged and pupils mark time waiting for the next step. The assessment of the work of younger pupils lacks rigour because there are no procedures for checking assessments against national standards, leading to inaccurate assessment. Older pupils are well supported by assessment procedures which make good use of examination criteria. End-of-project assessments provide clear guidance about how well these pupils are doing and how improvements can be made.

Leadership and management

90. Teachers have a satisfactory understanding of what the courses for younger and older pupils should contain and they reflect on strengths and weaknesses in this provision. Other than the minimum monitoring to meet statutory requirements, there are no procedures for the routine monitoring and evaluation of the department's work by senior staff, which means that opportunities for further development are not being identified and acted on. Teachers are unclear about how to use the assessments they make of pupils' work to track performance, identify underachievement or review the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Better monitoring would help them do this. At the time of the last inspection, accommodation was judged to be a weakness; this is still the case. The art rooms are too small, a factor which, coupled with very large GCSE groups, limits the breadth of the curriculum. Otherwise there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9 since the last inspection.

- Above average standards have been maintained in Years 10 and 11 and numbers of pupils on the GCSE course are increasing.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good and pupils enjoy their music lessons.
- The department is under-resourced in several areas of the curriculum.
- More practice rooms are needed to support small group work.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	Above national expectations
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

91. In 2004, the results of teachers' assessments were in line with the national average. Girls' results were well above the average of girls nationally, whilst boys' results were below the national average for boys. There were only two candidates for the GCSE examinations in 2004 and they both gained very high grades.

Standards and achievement

92. Despite some disruptions in teaching since the last inspection, standards have improved recently in Years 7 to 9 and standards above the national expectations have been maintained in Years 10 and 11. Pupils make good progress in lessons, developing performing skills and understanding. They listen with concentration and develop wider understanding of different cultures and of the emotional meaning of music. Although pupils have good ideas for compositions, they have no opportunities to use music technology and this restricts the development of their composing skills. Standards in instrumental lessons are mostly good. A very good performance of 'Les Miserables', the product of extra-curricular activities organised and rehearsed outside formal lesson times was heard during inspection week.

Teaching and learning

93. The good teaching and learning results in good achievement and some very good lessons were observed. Lessons are very well planned, with a variety of listening, composing and performing tasks that widen pupils' understanding of the chosen topic. Tasks are timed and the lessons move at a good pace. Teaching is lively. The variety and pace of lessons capture pupils' interest. Their enthusiasm is sustained and learning is consolidated by good questioning that ensures widespread participation. Teachers' musical skills are outstanding and their demonstrations and explanations are very clear. Relationships are very good and pupils work enthusiastically, concentrating well in circumstances where it is difficult to hear their own work. They work very well co-operatively, in small groups and they are now enjoying their music lessons again. In Year 10, the numbers electing to follow the GCSE music course are above the national average. The numbers of pupils of all ages learning instruments are rising and extra-curricular clubs are well supported. Assessment is satisfactory and teachers make good suggestions for improvement.

Leadership and management

94. The new subject leader has good plans for the development of the department. For example, she is revising assessment procedures in Year 7 to be developed across all years. The curriculum is well planned. Recruitment onto GCSE courses has improved very significantly. The timetable does not provide for Year 11 GCSE lessons during the college day but Year 10 lessons now take place in curriculum time. A lack of singing was criticised in the last report but this is now included appropriately as part of the learning. Instrumental teaching is offered for nine instruments. The peripatetic teachers are monitored and well managed. More use of National Curriculum level descriptors and examination marking criteria is needed to enable pupils to plot their own progress and plan for improvement. Improvement since the last inspection has been good but further improvement is hampered by inadequate resources. Lack of resources for music technology restricts the development of composing skills in all years. More instruments are needed for world music and keyboards are not suitable for multi-tracking and storing work. The multi-track recorder and the CD player are broken. The main music room is a good size but there are insufficient rooms for small group work and progress is slowed when pupils cannot hear their work clearly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Aspects of management, such as assessment, programmes of work and monitoring are unsatisfactory.
- There are inconsistencies in teaching regarding the reinforcement of learning objectives, the use of consolidation sessions and end-of-lesson summaries.
- Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the subject and pupils benefit particularly from an extensive fixtures programme.
- Pupils benefit from the teachers' secure knowledge of the subject.
- The pupils generally have positive attitudes towards the subject, although more could be done to ascertain the views of girls, with the aim of increasing female examination entries.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

Assessment and examination results

95. The results of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2004 were above the national average. Standards seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. The discrepancy can be explained by the different assessment methods used. The teachers' assessments put greater weight on skills rather than assessing all four strands of the National Curriculum. The 2004 GCSE results were slightly above the national average. A number of individual pupils have obtained records of achievement in sports at local and county levels.

Standards and achievement

96. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily given their standards on entry in Year 7. Pupils' skill levels progress well in gymnastics, dance and football. Their ability to evaluate performance is weak. For example, pupils offer ill-judged opinions about the techniques or tactics used by their peers. Knowledge of health and fitness is not developed well across the years, with pupils in Year 11 unsure of the reasons for following strenuous exertion with more gentle exercise. In GCSE theory lessons, pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge, although many pupils find theory the most difficult part of the course. Few pupils take sufficient effort to research their theory work adequately and this is reflected in the quality of their written work.

Teaching and learning

97. In the best lessons, pupils benefit from coaching and questioning that reflects their teachers' secure knowledge of the subject. Teachers skilfully select pupils to provide demonstrations of their skills and knowledge that help to reinforce learning for the rest of the class. Pupils are kept on task and their concentration is maintained through the use of a variety of drills and learning styles. Learning is less effective when teachers do not make the lesson objectives clear, do not use time to consolidate learning or fail to conduct effective summary sessions at the end of the lesson. Sometimes teachers spend too long on exposition and so miss opportunities to involve pupils in presenting work and evaluating their own and others' work. Teachers mark written work regularly but fail to set enough short-term targets for pupils. Their plans pay insufficient attention to problem-solving or to the importance of research in extending pupils' knowledge of theory.

Leadership and management

98. Leadership has overseen a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Examination courses are now established and standards have been maintained. Pupils continue to benefit from an extensive choice of extra-curricular activities and a very good fixture programme. The new all-weather playing surfaces are beginning to be well used. However management is unsatisfactory. Although an annual review takes place, there is little monitoring of progress made towards the goals it sets. The subject leader does not observe all the staff teaching and there are only informal arrangements for monitoring planning or marking, for example. There are further inconsistencies in departmental practice in the treatment of non-participants in lessons and in the target-setting procedures for girls and boys. Programmes of work, particularly for examination courses, do not adequately identify expected levels of work or where best to introduce aspects like citizenship. Some satisfactory assessment procedures have been developed. However, pupils have insufficient knowledge of what levels they should set as goals to identify ways of improving their work and have little idea of their progress across the different aspects of the subject. The numbers taking examination courses are limited. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive although some girls express discontent with certain aspects of the subject but the management has done little to investigate the reasons for this. There is a lack of information about female and multicultural achievement in sport.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The GCSE leisure and tourism course was inspected in full. Other vocational courses and work-related learning were sampled. Work was analysed and lessons were seen in GCSE catering and child development courses and in advanced vocational education health and social care. Work of pupils following other work-related programmes was analysed, lessons were seen and discussions held with pupils. The standards evident in the GCSE catering course, introduced in Year 10 in 2004, are well below national expectations. Many pupils find sustained written work difficult and their achievement is thus very limited. The

standards of Year 11 child development pupils are generally in line with national expectations but very few pupils are likely to gain the highest grades. On the whole, they have not made satisfactory progress in terms of their standards at the beginning of the course. The pupils in Year 10, however, have made better progress to date. For example, they demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding of different types of play in children. As yet, however, only a minority of pupils have good skills in planning or evaluation and the least able struggle with their grammar.

GCSE LEISURE AND TOURISM

Provision in GCSE leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly in Year 11.
- Teaching is both well planned and stimulating, making very good use of visits to local businesses and involving business people in course planning and teaching.
- Many students use ICT competently and to particularly good effect in the presentation of their work.
- Whilst the teachers mark work conscientiously and accurately, they do not give sufficient written guidance as to how the pupils might improve their work.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

Assessments and examinations

99. The first group of GCSE leisure and tourism pupils will complete the course in 2005.

Standards and achievement

100. Most Year 11 pupils know and understand the range of local leisure facilities and they have produced a good survey of the leisure needs of different groups in the local population. They can identify and contrast the relative merits and limitations of attractions in a large city like Plymouth or in a local rural area. Many pupils use ICT well. For example, they produced interesting publicity material to advertise the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton. Higher-attaining pupils' work shows high standards of presentation and detail. They analyse and interpret the information obtained from the Internet and other sources to good effect. Most pupils produce thorough work but it sometimes lacks sufficient analysis or interpretation. Some are less confident when dealing with the theoretical elements of topics like marketing or the costing of tourism and leisure activities. The work of the lower-attaining pupils is often lacking in detail or analysis. Most pupils, however, have made good progress over the course relative to

their individual ability. The quality of work, in terms of understanding, thoroughness, accuracy and presentation, has steadily improved, even though that of the least able continues to show poor standards of grammar. Within Year 11, the girls generally produce work that is marginally better than that of most of the boys.

Teaching and learning

101. Lessons are interesting and well prepared, with activities that capture pupils' attention and regularly require them to take the initiative in what they do. The pupils are able to remain on task and work at a good pace as a result of good individual support and advice from their teachers. Their learning also benefits from the range of ICT skills that they are expected to use. Regular visits to tourist attractions and leisure facilities in the area provide important resources for developing their investigative skills. Skills in customer care have been developed through the 'Welcome Host' training programme supported by local employers and a period of specifically designed work experience has helped all pupils, including those with significant special educational needs, to benefit further. The teachers mark work regularly and in line with the criteria set out in the course documentation but the pupils lack clear written guidance on how they might improve their standards and there is insufficient correction of grammatical errors.

Leadership and management

102. The course is well led and managed. The two teachers work well as a team and have devoted considerable time to developing a course that is relevant to the needs of the local leisure and tourism industry. They monitor the impact of their teaching and adjust their approaches accordingly. Guided by local employers, they have provided a well-structured programme of lessons. This innovative approach has led to the subject featuring strongly in the college's successful bid for 'Specialist School' status. There are realistic plans to provide sixth-form courses and offer some work-based training to local business.

Work-related learning

103. Arrangements for work-related learning are good. All pupils engage in work experience, develop skills for enterprise and benefit from a good careers education programme. Different aspects of provision are well managed and there is considerable breadth to what is offered. However, there is not a clear picture of what elements all pupils are entitled to, with the exception of the well-structured core programme, nor is there a clear set of criteria against which to monitor its effectiveness. GCSE leisure and tourism makes very effective use of its links with business but there is not much use of potential business links in other subjects.
104. Some pupils are guided into the 'alternative curriculum programme' instead of doing a full range of GCSE options. Most of these pupils have special educational needs and the majority gain accreditation of their personal, social and work-based skills through the 'Youth Award Scheme' which they combine with subjects such as English, mathematics or science. The pupils also attend NVQ accredited training courses one day each week at either Bicton or East Devon College. Several of the older pupils have made well-informed careers decisions as a result of these courses and the work experience placements arranged to complement them. The pupils generally work hard and there has been a marked improvement in the computing skills of the older pupils. There has also been growth in maturity with regard to their attitudes to work and to making career decisions.
105. The work-related lessons seen in the core curriculum were marked by very careful planning and by high levels of commitment and activity from the pupils. There are too few lessons with

a work-related theme in the core curriculum to cover all the necessary aspects in sufficient depth.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full. Personal, social and health education was sampled and one lesson on sex and relationships education was seen. In this lesson, teaching was satisfactory, pupils' attitudes were good and they paid close attention to the video recording about sexually transmitted infections. By the end of the lesson, it was clear that many pupils had learned how the condom helps prevent infection as well as being a contraceptive.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a clear policy for citizenship.
- The leadership of the subject is good.
- Arrangements for the effective monitoring of the teaching of citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- Many lessons have strong elements of citizenship but these are often not brought sufficiently to the pupils' attention.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	In line with national expectations	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

Standards and achievement

106. Pupils involve themselves actively in many community projects. They know how to make adequate preparation for this and they can write the appropriate 'thank-you' letters. Pupils are capable of completing the many self-assessment sheets that are required by departments in the college. In this sense, their skills of participation and responsible action are well developed. Pupils are similarly capable in the skills of enquiry and communication. These have been developed through work in religious education and particularly in drama. Pupils have adequate knowledge and understanding of the more factual aspects of citizenship. This has come through significant units of work, such as the unit in geography where pupils have studied many aspects of the European Union. The personal, social, and health education programme also has many valuable units of work on such topics as government, voting and rights and responsibilities. This programme also includes work on sex and relationships, drugs, alcohol, bullying and smoking.

Teaching and learning

107. Citizenship is taught in a variety of ways. An audit across departments has identified where they can make a significant contribution to this provision during the normal course of their teaching. This happens, for example, in religious education, English, geography, drama and history. The personal, social and health education programme that is taught to pupils during the tutorial period also has a particularly valuable contribution to make to citizenship. The teaching seen in tutorial periods during the inspection covered a range of themes within the scope of both citizenship and personal, social and health education. At times, it was not always clear which of these subjects the topics belonged to. Nevertheless, very strong elements of citizenship were seen in other lessons in the college during the inspection, particularly in geography and religious education. More often than not, however, these valuable learning experiences were not always fully appreciated by the pupils, as the teaching failed to identify them as being contributions to their learning in citizenship. In this sense, the best advantage is not being made of the good learning potential across departments. Arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting on citizenship are already in place but they are not being fully implemented.

Leadership and management

108. Leadership is good. A lot of work has been done to establish schemes of work. The department has a good range of documentation. Management is satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning in citizenship is not adequate to the task of revealing areas for improvement. The staffing is satisfactory and accommodation and resources are adequate for present purposes.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six 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 2004.

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	1	100	78.3	0	21.6	30	28.5
Biology	1	100	63.5	0	10.4	30	19.8
Chemistry	1	100	70.3	100	13.2	50	23.0
Economics	1	100	71.6	0	18.6	20	25.8
English literature	4	100	86.2	25	17.4	30	29.7
Geography	1	100	75.5	0	27.0	30	27.0
History	4	100	82.2	50	29.2	45	29.2
Information and communication technology	1	100	66.6	0	8.8	20	20.6

Law	1	0		0		0	
Mathematics	4	0	59.9	0	14.1	0	20.5
Psychology	2	0	67.8	0	15.1	10	22.4
Physics	3	33	66.4	0	14.8	0	22.4
Physical education	1	100	72.2	0	11.8	20	22.8
Sociology	1	100	72.1	100	19.6	50	25.9

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	7	100	98.3	14.3	50.2	74.3	87.1
Biology	4	100	96.6	0.0	40.0	70.0	79.3
Drama	6	100	99.6	50.0	42.8	96.7	85.1
English literature	14	100	99.4	7.1	44.9	60.0	85.5
Design and technology	12	100	97.8	8.3	35.0	65.0	77.9
Geography	19	100	98.8	42.1	46.4	81.1	85.2
History	11	100	99.0	18.2	45.6	78.2	85.1
Information and communication technology	11	100	96.3	0.0	25.7	54.5	71.1
Mathematics	5	60	96.8	0.0	56.6	28.0	89.5
Other science	1	100	97.4	0.0	44.2	40.0	82.5
Other social studies (psychology)	2	100	97.4	0.0	42.5	70.0	81.6
Physics	10	60	96.7	0.0	45.3	34.0	82.6
Sociology	7	100	98.5	14.3	45.3	74.3	84.6
Business	9	100	91.6	35.3	24.1	81.2	67.9
Health and social care	14	100	93.5	35.7	24.9	85.7	70.0
Leisure and recreation	1	100	90.7	0.0	18.3	60.0	64.6

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	Number in final year	% gaining qualification	% gaining merit	% gaining distinction
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		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate business	4	100	49.7	25	22.3	0	6.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was inspected in full. German was sampled. In the one lesson observed in this subject, students in Year 12 achieved well and contributed enthusiastically to a discussion on press freedom, in response to good teaching.

English

Provision in English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, constructive marking and good support and guidance all help students learn and achieve well.
- They become good independent learners.
- The course is led and managed well so that students fulfil their potential.
- At times, teachers over-explain or try to tackle too much at once, so that the pace of learning slows.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Above national expectations
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good

Commentary

Examination results

109. In 2004, A-level examination results were well below the national average and below the standards expected on the basis of students' prior attainment. The performance of some students was affected by absence. In addition, these students and others obtained poor results in the 'closed book' section of the examination. The department promptly identified these causes and immediately adjusted its approach. As a result, standards for current Year 13 students are above national expectations and much more in line with the above average results of previous years.

Standards and achievement

110. Year 13 students began the course with GCSE grades in the range of A* to C. They are achieving well because of good guidance and support from helpful background material, a clear focus on assessment objectives, constructive and supportive marking and good teaching. As a result, they make good gains in knowledge and understanding and their analytical skills develop well. Their written and spoken contributions often show their interest and sense of participation in their learning. Year 12 students are working above national expectations and achieving well. Good teaching is promoting students' interest in current work on Chaucer, Ian McEwan and Thomas Hardy and they are looking forward to exploring these authors further in their own writing.

Teaching and learning

111. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subject enable them to explain important concepts clearly to students and help them learn well. Students develop thorough understanding, a good critical vocabulary and effective analytical skills as a result. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their learning by participating in paired and group work, making presentations to others and leading and representing groups. Their independent learning is developed well as a result. Teachers give willingly of their time so that students have positive attitudes to the course and value the individual support they receive. These, too, contribute to their good achievement. Occasionally, teachers over-explain or try to tackle too much at once so that students are not actively involved in their learning or are not sure what they have to do. As a result, the pace of learning slows.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership provides clear direction and pays close attention to the needs of individual students. Staff are continually evaluating their approach to see how things can be done better. Teachers are well deployed so that their enthusiasm and interests benefit the students' learning. Since the last inspection, standards, achievement and teaching quality have been successfully maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

113. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above national expectations so that students are able to cope successfully with the demands of their courses. Students are generally well supported in the development of their language and literacy skills, particularly in English literature, art and design, modern foreign languages and religious education.

MATHEMATICS

Lessons in mathematics were sampled. Two lessons were seen, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching was satisfactory in one lesson and good in the other. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and provided individual students with good, well-judged support so that they learn effectively. A-level results vary widely from year to year depending on students' prior attainment. In 2004, they were very low, in 2003 they were above the national average.

SCIENCE

During the inspection, biology was inspected in depth. Work in chemistry and physics was sampled. In the one lesson of chemistry seen, satisfactory teaching allowed students to gain a sound understanding of how colour is produced in transitional metal compounds. Attainment was above national expectations. In the one lesson of physics seen, teaching was satisfactory. Students consolidated their understanding of the gas laws reasonably well. Achievement was satisfactory, with students gradually becoming more confident in their handling of physical concepts. Standards were in line with national expectations.

BIOLOGY

The provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject and their awareness of course requirements provide students with very well planned learning opportunities.
- Both male and female students achieve well.
- Students' enjoy the subject and work hard.
- Students do not have access to all of the equipment required for advanced-level work.
- Students' work is not thoroughly monitored.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good

Commentary

Examination results

114. In 2004, all students gained at least grade E in the A-level examinations but no students gained grades A or B. Results were slightly lower than in the previous year. Since the numbers entered were small, comparisons with national data are not reliable.

Standards and achievement

115. From work seen during the inspection, students in Year 12 have a sound understanding of biological systems and can relate different aspects of the subject to one another. Most of them are building well on the work they did previously at GCSE level. However, some are not sufficiently precise when answering questions and lack confidence in carrying out investigations. Teachers are aware of this and place considerable emphasis on helping students become more independent. Students in Year 13 demonstrate reasonable knowledge and understanding of more complex biological concepts. They have acquired essential skills such as interpreting microscope slides and cope successfully with complex problems. Male and female students make similar progress. More competent students often have a good knowledge of the course requirements. The range of texts available is too narrow for students to obtain a good grasp of recent developments in the subject. Students' attitudes are very good. They enjoy the subject and work hard. They are keen to improve. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students appreciate the support and encouragement they receive and, as a result, most of those who start the AS-level course complete the year and almost all continue to A-level.

Teaching and learning

116. Teachers have a good knowledge of the A-level course requirements. Well organised schemes of work provide students with a good variety of appropriately challenging activities. Lesson planning is very thorough and provides students with very good learning opportunities. Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject is used well to explain biological concepts. Occasionally, however, teachers do not always use questions well to probe and test students' understanding. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and teachers provide very appropriate advice on how they can improve their work. A number of factors prevent students from developing the skills required for success at this level. Some lessons are timetabled outside the normal college day so there is too little time for extended investigations to be completed effectively. Furthermore, the lack of adequate specialist

resources and equipment and insufficient access to ICT facilities in laboratories mean that students cannot obtain the full range of practical experience.

Leadership and management

117. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of how the subject needs to develop. She provides an effective role model for students and gives a clear direction to work in the subject. The two teachers involved are very aware of the difficulties students encounter and co-ordinate their teaching and lesson organisation well. However, too few planned opportunities are arranged to review progress and consider longer-term developments. Since the last inspection, the numbers of students taking biology have increased and achievement is better but resources are still inadequate and the monitoring of work in the subject is not well structured.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

One Year 12 lesson was sampled. The lesson was well taught and students refined their understanding of the coursework requirements. They were completing projects, making extensive use of spreadsheets. The projects all related to real-life applications, such as controlling stock and managing balance sheets. The standard of work was above that normally expected at that stage in the course as students made extensive use of formulae and macros to make predictions.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in full. Courses in religious education, sociology and geography were sampled. The A-level course in religious education is a new introduction to the college and so there are no examination results from previous years. The standards of attainment were above national expectations and the teaching was very good. The strong demands made on pupils in the lessons meant that their achievement was very good. Two lessons of sociology were seen, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Standards were in line with national expectations and students made sound progress. One geography lesson was seen in each of Years 12 and 13. The teaching in both was good. Teachers' expertise was used most effectively and stimulated interest. Oral and written work indicates that students have acquired a good grasp of the subject. The detailed guidance provided for students is very good and indicative of the quality of teaching on the course.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, in response to good teaching.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- There is good leadership and management of this popular subject.
- Some students lack confidence as independent learners.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Good

Quality of teaching and learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good

Commentary

Examination results

118. In the 2004 A-level examinations, the pass rate was above the national average, although the percentage of students gaining A or B grades was well below the national average. A small group of students were accredited with above average AS-level results.

Standards and achievement

119. Students in Year 13 show levels of knowledge and understanding, skills in analysing and evaluating evidence and the ability to write critically, which are in line with expectations for this age group. This represents good achievement for both boys and girls, who have positive attitudes towards the subject. Most develop well as independent learners. However, a minority are reluctant to contribute orally in class, except in direct response to the teacher.

Teaching and learning

120. Teachers' use their very good knowledge of the subject well to further students' understanding. This is done most effectively in teachers' attempts to involve students actively through strategies such as debate and preparing presentations. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 lessons learn about the qualities of critical analysis through well-informed debate about the meaning of the assessment criteria. Where the teaching is less successful, teachers do not engage students sufficiently in sustained discussion.

Leadership and management

121. The teachers work well as a team and are well managed. The department has adapted well to changes in the syllabus and teachers conduct regular reviews of progress in the subject and evaluate how to take a developing subject further. History is one of the most popular A-level subjects in the college. Standards, which were in line with national expectations and good progress have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology (product design) was inspected in full. Food technology and textiles were sampled. One combined Year 12 and 13 food technology lesson was seen. Teaching was very good because the teacher had created an environment in which the students working on product developments were confident and very clear about what they should achieve and they responded well to the good balance of challenge and support that she provided. Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their previous GCSE results. A Year 12 textiles lesson was seen where students were developing creative ways of using textiles for head adornment. Teaching was very good, as stimulus materials and guidance from the teacher were very well used to inspire students to develop imaginative ideas. These are currently on track to achieve their target grades.

Design and technology (product design)

Provision in design and technology (product design) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of students in Year 13 is good and standards are above national expectations.
- Students have good attitudes to their work.
- There is insufficient emphasis on self-assessment.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory, particularly for computer-aided design and manufacture.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	Above national expectations
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

122. In 2004, the A-level results were below the national average, as they were in 2003. However, the students in 2004 generally did as well as expected in the light of their GSCE results, which was a significant improvement on 2003, when they underachieved.

Standards and achievement

123. The students currently in Year 13 are continuing the good progress they made in Year 12. They show good levels of independence and confidently manufacture the products they have designed for their major coursework project. In their design work, they research and generate ideas well but their presentation skills and ability to develop and detail ideas are not so well developed.

Teaching and learning

124. The quality of teaching in Year 13 is good. Lessons are well managed and productive. The students have good attitudes and enjoy their work. They have a very clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve and are resourceful in tackling practical issues they confront, such as holding unusually shaped components while working on them and developing new practical skills. Teachers manage their time well and regularly review students' work, although insufficient use is made of self-assessment to clarify standards and help students manage their own improvement. The subject technician also provides invaluable practical support to students.

Leadership and management

125. Leadership is satisfactory and staff collaborate successfully to teach the course. The department provides few opportunities for industrial experience through visits. However, students value the engineer who attends their lessons and the expertise he provides. Access

to ICT, including computer-aided design and manufacture, is unsatisfactory and this limits students' capacity for improvement in this important aspect of the subject.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The theatre studies course was sampled. The lesson for Year 13 students was good. Particularly probing and focused questioning by the teacher helped students to develop considerable insights into the scene being studied. Students following this course have a very rich experience that includes workshops and theatre visits. They also take part in near-professional quality productions with Sidmouth Youth Theatre. A performance of 'Les Misérables' involving many students from Sidmouth College and directed by the head of drama, was seen during the inspection and deservedly received a standing ovation.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The opportunity given to students to develop their own strengths is a motivating factor and promotes higher standards.
- The commitment of students to work in their own time helps to raise standards and develop independent learning skills.
- Assessment does not take account of common areas of weakness that could be overcome with more effective whole class teaching.
- Students' sustained work is hampered by lack of access to art rooms outside formal lessons.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 13
Standards	In line with national expectations
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

126. In 2004, A-level results were below the national average, while the AS level results were above the national average. Female students did better than males. The numbers gaining higher grades fluctuate from year to year but most students who take these examinations obtain a pass grade.

Standards and achievement

127. Standards seen in Year 12 are above national expectations. These students are particularly capable, with the majority starting the course with A* to B grades at GCSE. Standards seen in Year 13 were in line with national expectations. Many more females are following these courses but there is no significant difference between the attainment of male and female students on either and all are achieving in line with their capability. Students research and develop their ideas well. The importance of

observational drawing for research is understood by students and is well promoted by teaching. However, in Year 13, the standards in this aspect of the course are uneven and for some students it is an area of significant weakness. Students respond well to the limited opportunities to work on a larger scale and to combine and explore the potential of different media. Students value the contribution made to their work by wider learning about art. They are articulate when discussing the work of artists they have researched and excited by the links they make between their own work and that of others.

Teaching and learning

128. The courses are underpinned by an appropriate methodology that encourages students to develop their own personal ideas and strengths within a context of appropriately planned projects. Lessons follow a tutorial model, with teaching being responsive to individual needs. Media skills tend to be developed in relation to these needs. A significant factor in raising standards is the good level of commitment shown by students who mostly have well-developed independent learning skills. Assessment is well matched to the examination criteria and assessments at the end of each project inform students well about strengths and areas for development. Students feel well supported and use this information to help them improve. However, common weaknesses in students' work are not used in planning whole class teaching so opportunities to address them effectively are missed.

Leadership and management

129. Leadership and management of the courses are satisfactory. They are based on a sound understanding of the examination requirements and of ways that projects can be devised to meet these requirements. Good planning includes stimulating visits and these are well used and integrated into the work of students. Since the last inspection, standards have been broadly maintained. Teaching rooms are small and have to meet the needs of the whole college as well as those of Years 12 and 13 and so access to work space in private study time is limited. This has a negative effect on standards.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Provision for physical education was sampled by inspecting written work. Standards seen at A-level are above national expectations and this reflects the results of the recent past. No students took the A-level examinations in 2004 and only three took the AS level examination. Such small numbers make national comparisons unreliable.

BUSINESS

The advanced vocational business course was inspected in full. The intermediate GNVQ and A-level economics courses were sampled.

In the intermediate GNVQ business course, standards in Year 12 are well above national expectations and students have made very good progress in applying business theory to practical examples. In the lesson seen, the students responded very well to challenging teaching by applying their knowledge about the location of businesses to the choice of a potential factory site. Effective teamwork and very competent 'PowerPoint' presentations contributed to the effectiveness of their arguments. The small number of students who took GNVQ last year achieved results slightly below the national average and did not show satisfactory achievement relative to their GCSE results.

Most Year 13 A-level economics students show a good grasp of economic theory and practice and they are producing work that is generally above national expectations. The lesson seen was very well planned. The teacher organised the students into groups to argue for and against differentials in men's and women's wage rates. She highlighted the types of evidence they might use and the research they needed to do. They responded well by showing a very secure grasp of the relevant theoretical models and of business practice, demonstrating the very good progress they had made in the topic and over the course as a whole.

Advanced vocational business studies

Provision in advanced vocational business studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 12 are above average national expectations and show very good progress in learning.
- In 2004, the examination results were well above the national average, with a significantly higher proportion of students obtaining the higher grades.
- The quality of teaching is very good and helps the students develop skills in teamwork, presentation and research through information and communication technology, in addition to a good knowledge and understanding of business.
- Very good monitoring and evaluation of the programme makes for effective course management and well-planned targets for improvement.
- Marking of the students' work is accurate and gives them a good picture of their progress but it lacks sufficient guidance on how they might improve their standards.

Summary of key inspection judgements:

	Year 12
Standards	Above national expectations
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good

Commentary

Examination results

130. In 2004, results for the nine Year 13 students taking the advanced vocational business examination were above the national average; particularly so for the highest two grades. In almost all cases, these results were better than expected for these students, based on the predictions from their attainment at the end of Year 11. In some cases, the grades were substantially higher. Both male and female students made good progress. More males gained the highest two grades than did females but, overall, females gained better grades. The results obtained by business students contrasted well with those in most other A-level subjects. The results gained were much higher than in 2003, when results were below average.

Standards and achievement

131. Most of the 15 students in Year 12 already make very good connections between the theoretical concepts they have learned and examples in the current business world. In the lesson seen, groups of students drew on theory about marketing, factors affecting the

efficiency of firms and the nature of competition to produce plans for expanding Reebok's share of the sportswear market. Using 'PowerPoint' presentations to outline their strategies, the students justified and prioritised their plans very effectively, thereby showing the considerable progress made since the beginning of the course. Many students have also used good investigative skills in analysing other contemporary business issues combining relevant evidence from research on the Internet and in journals with secure use of business theory. Some students, however, find it difficult to evaluate their findings and the work of a very small number does not go beyond superficial analysis. Virtually all the students work hard and produce well-presented work on computers. There is no major difference between the attainment of male and female students.

Teaching and learning

132. The course is taught very well. The students are encouraged to work in groups and to show an independent line of argument in their work which has helped them make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of topics. The teacher constantly emphasises the need to apply business theory to contemporary examples and work is meticulously planned so that the students have access to a range of information that will help them gain an informed viewpoint. Their attention is regularly drawn to the demands of the final examination. The students appreciate the commitment shown by their teacher and the manner in which she constantly challenges them by setting demanding targets for their work. Their work is marked regularly and accurately so that they understand generally what standards they are aiming for but the guidance they receive is not sufficiently specific for them to know precisely how they might improve their work.

Leadership and management

133. The very good leadership and management of the advanced vocational business course stems from the clear vision and high expectations of the subject leader, the development of innovative and stimulating teaching approaches and the way in which information about students' progress is used to modify and develop future practice. The outcome has been a steady improvement in students' standards and achievement over the course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Work in health and social care was sampled. Nearly half of Year 12 advanced vocational health and social care students are producing work of a very high standard. However, there are some students whose attainment is much lower, partly because they are held back by poor standards of literacy. In a lesson about access to care services, most students had a good grasp of the emotional issues involved as well as the practical and social problems. The students generally showed good progress by applying what they had previously learned both accurately and in context.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Provision for personal, social and health education was sampled by observing a very good presentation from a guest speaker on the subject of the role of Israel in the Middle-East. It was well received by students, who paid close attention and asked perceptive questions. Students learned much about the problems facing countries such as Iraq and Sudan. Overall, this was a very worthwhile session.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	3	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	4
How well pupils learn	3	4
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the principal		4
The leadership of other key staff	3	4
The effectiveness of management	3	5

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