

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOUTHAM COLLEGE**

Southam

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125738

Headteacher: Mr M Thompson

Lead inspector: Mr R C Drew

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

Inspection number: 268916

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,088
School address:	Welsh Road West Southam Warwickshire
Postcode:	CV47 0JW
Telephone number:	(01926) 812 560
Fax number:	(01926) 815 807
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Stevens
Date of previous inspection:	January 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is an 11-18 comprehensive school with technology college status. It has 1,088 pupils on roll, including 144 in the sixth form. The college serves the market town of Southam and the surrounding rural area. The great majority of pupils are white, mainly British, with a very small number from each of seven ethnic minorities. Two pupils have English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. Nearly 19 per cent of pupils, slightly above average, are on the register of special educational needs and 2.6 per cent have a formal statement. The majority of pupils on the register have moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. The proportion of pupils thought to be eligible for free school meals, at 3.4 per cent, is very much lower than average. Other indicators suggest that pupils' socio-economic background is advantaged, but not greatly so. Pupils' attainment on entry is slightly above average. The college achieved its specialist technology status in 2000, but has also just been given humanities college status. It has received numerous awards in recent years, including Sportsmark and two School Achievement Awards, and participates in the Engineering Education and Young Enterprise schemes.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7281	Robert Drew	Lead inspector	
19720	Deborah Granville-Hastings	Lay inspector	
30899	Ken Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology
17331	Nick Pett	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
19586	Wendy Easterby	Team inspector	English English (sixth form) English as an additional language
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History Business AVCE (sixth form)
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music
31100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Science Physics (sixth form)
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) ICT AVCE (sixth form)
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Work-related learning
12972	Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education Physical education (sixth form)
14596	Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs
31680	Phil Redican	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)

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

This is a very good school. Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Overall standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good and the headteacher's leadership is very effective. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Achievement by pupils in the main school is very good.
- The headteacher provides very effective, clear leadership.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average and rising rapidly.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall and good in the sixth form.
- Assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress are very effective in the main school.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Leadership and management of physical education and mathematics are excellent.
- Sixth-form achievement and the arrangements for progress-tracking which contribute to it, whilst satisfactory, are less effective than in the main school.
- Academic advice and guidance for sixth form students are unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation in several subjects is unsatisfactory.

Since the 1999 inspection, the college has made very good progress, improving results in the GCSE examinations by far more than the national trend. Teaching and learning are much better and assessment is used very well. Facilities have been enhanced, especially for mathematics and technology. The reinforcement of literacy skills and the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 have been transformed into strengths. Behaviour and attitudes have improved significantly. Specialist status for both technology and the humanities has been achieved. There are still areas of inadequate accommodation and results in the sixth form have risen at a slower rate than in the main school.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Overall achievement is very good. Pupils are very well taught and learn very effectively, so that by the time they leave they attain standards that are well above average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the pupils' performance was above the national average in mathematics and science and average in English, but their performance was much better than that for pupils in similar schools. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. The good achievement continues through Years 10 and 11, cumulatively amounting to very good added-value and GCSE examination results which were well above the national average in 2004. Standards in Year 11 are well above average in mathematics, science and history and are above average in most other subjects. The overall added-value between Year 7 and Year 11 is outstanding. In the sixth form, standards are above average and the students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Progress in lessons is good, but assessment and target-setting are less effective and not enough students sustain good progress across their courses.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are all good, with much that is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the college is very good because teaching and learning are very good and the curriculum is good overall. Teaching and learning are very effective, although teaching in the main school is of a higher quality than in the sixth form. Teachers have many strengths, showing strong subject expertise, establishing very good relationships and, across Years 7 to 11, using assessment very well. Assessment and target-setting contribute less impressively to longer-term achievement in the sixth form, but are satisfactory by national standards. Teaching and learning are very good in most subjects. The curriculum is good overall and very good for Years 10 and 11, offering a wide range of alternative courses for the full range of pupils. The breadth of opportunities is not so extensive in the sixth form, but the college is extending the enrichment programme to remedy the shortcomings. Accommodation hinders aspects of the curriculum in music, drama and sixth-form art and design. Care guidance and support are good in Years 7 to 11, but do not serve sixth-formers so well because post-16 academic guidance is unsatisfactory. Partnerships with parents and links with other schools and the community are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very strong, clear leadership. He sets very high expectations of pupils and staff and, while planning very effectively, also leads by example through his high-profile presence around the college. The management team is very effective at senior level and the great majority of subjects are also led and managed very well. Heads of year are consistently very effective. In design and technology, leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite action to strengthen the arrangements, leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory: opportunities to establish an ethos of higher expectations are missed and achievement fails to match the impressive quality found in the main school. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well led and managed. The governing body is effective. Governors give good support and guidance and have sound knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. They meet all their statutory duties well, except those for a daily act of collective worship.

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

Pupils and parents have positive views of the college, even when there are areas they might like to change. Ninety per cent of parents say that their children like the college and an even higher proportion of pupils confirm that this is a good school to be at. Both groups strongly believe that the college is well run and that the small amount of bullying that takes place is dealt with very efficiently. A significant minority of parents wish to meet with more subject teachers. Pupils are unhappy with the misbehaviour of a minority.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- establish good quality leadership and management of the sixth form;
- raise long-term achievement in the sixth form to match the very good quality sustained in the main school;
- improve the level of boys' attainment across the college, narrowing the gap with girls' attainment;
- provide better accommodation for music and drama;
- ensure that sixth-form students receive consistently good advice and guidance about course choices;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- provide a daily act of collective worship.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT SOUTHAM COLLEGE

The 144 students in the sixth form join almost entirely from the college's Year 11. Twenty-two courses are offered at AS and A2, with four vocational options and some one-year courses.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and it is cost effective. It benefits from good teaching and positive student attitudes in lessons. Standards are above average. Improvement since the last inspection has been sound.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- The achievement or added-value of students is very good in physical education.
- Students' attitudes in lessons are good.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory.
- Advice and guidance provided for students are unsatisfactory.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English language is good. Teaching and learning are good and the subject well led and managed. Progress in lessons is good. Standards are above average.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good. Students are making good progress in lessons, reflecting the good quality of teaching and learning. Leadership and management are good. The A-level results in 2004 were broadly average and current standards in Year 13 are above average.
Science	Provision in physics is good. Standards are above average, teaching and learning good and students achieve well in lessons.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is good. Standards are average. Students are making good progress in lessons and the quality of teaching and learning is good.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress in lessons. The subject is well led and managed. Standards are broadly average.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is satisfactory. Recent A-level results were well below average, but standards seen during the inspection were just below rather than well below national levels. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in physical education is very good. Teaching and learning are good, but this subject is especially well led and managed, with very effective use of assessment and target-setting so students make very good progress. Standards are well above average.
Business	Provision in business education is good. Teaching and learning are good, students progress well in lessons and the subject is well managed. The A-level results in 2004 were broadly average but work seen during the inspection is above average.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Provision is satisfactory overall. While there are strengths, guidance about choosing and remaining on sixth-form courses is variable, leaving too many students misplaced. Careers guidance is generally good. Help with preparing UCAS applications is generally good, but the timing of advice and information is inconsistent.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Sixth-form students make satisfactory progress, but leadership within the sixth form does not promote high expectations strongly enough or manage provision with the necessary rigour and consistency to realise students' full potential. There are good features, including the head of sixth form's accessibility to students, the positive, encouraging atmosphere that prevails, and good projects, such as the paired-reading programme. However, the ethos is too undemanding, the pattern of attainment across the sixth form is not analysed and acted upon adequately, advice to students about course choices is weak and leaders in the sixth form do not encourage active participation by students in the wider life of the college.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students express broad satisfaction with the sixth form. Eighty-six per cent of those responding to the inspection questionnaire were pleased to be in this sixth form and those interviewed confirm this view. Many believe careers advice is good, but that course combinations do not fully match their aspirations. A significant majority do not feel their views are adequately sought. On balance, inspectors agree with these views, judging that advice and guidance are unsatisfactory, while acknowledging that most students overall make sound progress in this sixth form.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve very well in the main school and reach well above average standards. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are above average in the sixth form.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall achievement in the main school is very good.
- Standards in the GCSE examinations are better than might be expected, given pupils' starting points, and in 2004 were well above the average for all schools.
- The upward trend in standards is much stronger than nationally and reflects good policy and appointments.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Whilst most subjects promote very good achievement, in a minority, this is only satisfactory.
- Boys reach lower standards than girls by Year 11 and by more than the national margin.
- Achievement in the sixth form is less marked than in the main school because assessment and the tracking of students' progress are less effective.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils enter the college with slightly above-average standards, but because they progress very well in lessons, they are able to reach considerably higher levels of attainment by the end of compulsory schooling. Results in the national tests in Year 9 in 2004 in English, mathematics and science were well above average for similar schools and amongst the top five per cent of schools nationally in mathematics and science. The GCSE examination results were also well above the national averages for all schools and those with a similar intake. Nationally-used measures of gains made by pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 place this school in the top 12 per cent in the country. Essentially, this very good achievement by pupils reflects the very good teaching they receive, combined with the use of assessment and target-setting to support and challenge long-term progress. Whilst individual subjects often show good achievement, the absence of major weaknesses allows the combined impact of all subjects to be very effective. Pupils in the main school are very well acquainted with their targets across the curriculum, and both subject teachers and tutors contribute to the very valuable monitoring of their progress. In many individual subjects, achievement is good for pupils' first three years in college, and the impact of another phase of good progress in the next two years means that the cumulative gains are very good. In the case of mathematics, the improvement made by pupils during their time in the main school is exceptional, reflecting the outstanding quality of leadership and management of the department.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (33.9)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (36.8)	n/a (35.4)
science	n/a (35.1)	n/a (33.6)

*There were 191 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The GCSE examination results have risen far more rapidly than nationally since the last inspection. This success is partly the outcome of substantial improvements in the quality of teaching following the renewed focus given to this area by the headteacher and senior colleagues. The monitoring of pupils' progress, already good at the time, has also become even more effective since the last inspection. Senior leaders have also shown persistence and

good judgement in making good appointments to lead a range of subjects, which now contribute far more positively to overall performance, notably mathematics, English, science, modern foreign languages, the humanities and ICT, along with physical education, which has been long established as a strength of the college.

**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	70 (60)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (92)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	417.7	340.3
Capped average point score per pupil	312.7	282.8

*There were 166 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Whilst achievement in Years 7 to 11 is very good overall, the added-value in a few subjects is broadly satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, a period of staffing difficulties and less effective leadership in German has now given way to a strong department with good, new leadership. Music, too, has recently begun to improve under new leadership and management, but has not had time to produce levels of achievement similar to those in most other subjects; in addition, good teaching and learning in music are countered by inadequate facilities that limit the quality of provision. In design and technology, satisfactory achievement reflects broadly satisfactory leadership and management.
4. Pupils who have special educational needs generally make very good progress. Analyses of their performances in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 as well as GCSE results in Year 11 show very good progress over time. All pupils on the special needs register gain some GCSE passes, at least with a grade G. Many attain well above that. The effectiveness of support assistants is increased because of their deployment to subjects in which they show specialist knowledge. Gifted and talented students achieve very well. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve very well. They make very good progress in their language because of the very good support they receive and their very positive attitudes to learning.
5. Boys attain considerably lower standards than girls at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. It is important for the college to narrow the gap so that the expectation of high attainment becomes a more common aspiration amongst boys. However, initial assessments in the majority of subjects show that boys enter the school with lower attainment in Year 7 and their added-value or achievement over time is similar to that of girls. The college is thus involved in the process of correcting an imbalance it did not create, but requires strategies to reduce the deficit.

**Sixth form**

6. Standards at the end of Year 13 are above average and, given their prior attainment in Year 11, this represents satisfactory overall achievement by students. Collective A2 results for 2004 were above average and this matches the general picture seen by inspectors. This is because teaching and learning are good overall and there is satisfactory use of assessment and target-setting, with stronger practice in some subjects. In addition, those subjects focused upon during the inspection are generally led well, with satisfactory quality in art and design, but very effective leadership and management in physical education. Effective teaching and subject leadership ensure that students make good progress in lessons, but the overall management of systems for monitoring and assessing students' progress is not as effective as in the main school. Short-term gains are not converted into good longer-term achievement. Students are broadly satisfactory, rather than good, in their awareness of target grades and

how they might progressively raise their standards over time. Scope for re-sitting modules and thus improving standards and motivation part-way through a course is more limited than usual. Results suffer from inconsistent approaches to revision and a small minority of students failing to complete coursework or examinations.

7. Whilst there is some collective analysis of results each year and discussion of added-value, those leading the sixth form do not currently pursue far enough the causes of marked differences in subject performance. This failing limits scope for the sixth form to spread its own best practice in teaching or in leadership and management in order to raise standards. In several subjects, however, teaching and learning and the management of students' long-term achievement are very effective. Results and sampled teaching indicate that this is the case in A-level psychology and extensive work seen during the inspection confirmed that students in physical education benefit greatly from the clarity and strength of leadership, which motivates colleagues and students to work to the limit of their potential. Staff place very high expectations on students, but make it clear how high-quality work can be achieved and how teachers will help in the process. Schemes of work are very effective in raising standards over time because they build progressively greater challenge into successive tasks. In art and design, where achievement is satisfactory, there has been discontinuity in staffing.

**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	90.2 (93.1)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.8 (33.1)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	275.6 (306.9)	265.2 (258.2)

*There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and results in pupils having good attitudes to college and to their learning. Behaviour around college and in lessons is also good. Attendance and punctuality are both good.

Attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are good. Their attendance rate and punctuality are satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils have good attitudes towards college, working hard and with enthusiasm.
- Students mostly enjoy sixth form life and apply themselves well to their studies.
- Relationships are very good, creating a happy and productive atmosphere.
- Pupils' moral development is very good because the college clearly communicates its values, beliefs and high expectations of attitudes and behaviour.
- Attendance of pupils in the main college is good and contributes to their good achievement.

**Commentary**

8. Pupils' personal development is very important to the college, which has successfully created a supportive yet purposeful atmosphere in which pupils grow and mature. Pupils are valued as individuals and for their contribution to college life, and there is a feeling of friendship and harmony throughout. There is a well-established ethos of honesty, trust and respect that produces a strong sense of community in which all pupils play an equal and important role. These values are consistently promoted through the day and in lessons, with teachers providing very good role models for pupils. Pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils understand and accept the moral code on which their college life is based. High expectations from staff, assemblies, tutor time and teaching approaches in lessons reinforce the values of

right and wrong and respect for others. Because of this, the behaviour of most pupils is good and often very good. Pupils are friendly, polite, interested in people and quick to talk to visitors. Last year, there were four permanent exclusions but none so far this year. Fixed-term exclusions are average for a school of this size and used appropriately to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Many subjects contribute to pupils' well-developed sense of fairness and dislike of prejudice and injustice.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	783	46	2
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	1	1
No ethnic group recorded	186	6	1

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

9. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils quickly fit into the college community because expectations are clear, consistent and supportive. As a result, pupils' attitudes to college and to their learning are good. Often, their positive attitudes, questions and suggestions contribute to the progress and direction of the lesson. Pupils enjoy being at college, enthusiastically joining in with the activities provided for them. Relationships are very good and help to improve pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils report there is very little bullying and that it is dealt with quickly and sensitively if it does occur. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages are fully integrated and comfortable with their friends and say that there is no racial conflict.
10. Pupils' awareness of their own and European culture and heritage is good. Through a variety of trips and visits, they have many opportunities for new experiences, for example, trips to the Clothes Show, Space Centre, museums, battlefields in Belgium and e-mail links with colleges in France and Germany. Pupils consider issues around asylum seekers and refugees in life skills lessons, but they have limited awareness of the multi-ethnic diversity of Britain today. Neither do they have friendships or contact with colleges beyond Europe to help understanding of cultures very different from their own.
11. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The college deliberately and successfully promotes a strong sense of identity and self-worth that enables pupils to value themselves and others, contributing positively to their ability to learn and their very good achievement. Assemblies play an important part in the day and those observed during the inspection were motivating and offered pupils a chance to reflect on what had been said. A few subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. In religious education, pupils learn about the diversity of religions and show respect for the beliefs of others. They are encouraged to think about feelings and emotions through such questions as 'What is your idea of heaven?' and 'What would you do if you had 24 hours to live?' In history, similarly, pupils are encouraged to imagine their own feelings in situations such as being in the First World War trenches or had they been expected to join the Hitler Youth.

12. Attendance is good and consistently above the national average. The college actively promotes the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and the direct link to good achievement, and sets itself high standards. Its commitment is evident in its recent appointment of an attendance co-ordinator to monitor and improve attendance even further.

## Attendance

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.8	School data	0.5
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.*

## Sixth form

13. Sixth-form students generally approach their studies in a positive way and with enthusiasm. They are mostly well motivated, try hard and are often absorbed in their work. When given the opportunity, as in physics and ICT, for example, they develop good skills of working independently, but too often, students are not expected to take on responsibility for managing their own learning.
14. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and students appreciate the interest and support of their tutors. Although students enjoy the sixth form, they would like a greater range of enrichment activities and more chance to be responsible for their own area. The sixth-form committee has limited capacity and does not involve enough students to promote a definite identity within and alongside the main college.
15. Attendance is satisfactory overall. Students can negotiate with their tutors to study at home for some of their free periods, which often means that attendance in morning registration is low. Most students arrive on time for their lessons.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the college is very good. This comprises very effective teaching and learning, and a good curriculum, with very good enrichment opportunities. Care for pupils and students is good, as are links with parents and the wider community.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning for the college as a whole are very good and there are a few instances of excellent practice. Assessment is very good in Years 7 to 11 and sound in the sixth form. Teaching and learning overall in the sixth form are good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has very good teaching in Years 7 to 11 because staff show a comprehensive range of strong features in their work.
- Learning is very good in the main school because very effective assessment and target-setting systems complement classroom practice.
- Teaching and learning both benefit from the very good relationships that prevail in lessons.
- Sixth-form teaching and learning are good, but lack some of the key strategies used in the rest of the college.
- Homework is not used as well as other teaching and learning strategies.

## Commentary

16. Teaching and learning are very effective overall, especially in Years 7 to 11. Nearly all features of teaching are strong in the main school, so that very good subject expertise is matched by the use of an impressive range of teaching strategies. Lesson planning is much better than usual: teachers succeed in identifying and catering for the full range of pupils in their classes; objectives and structure are clear, with well-timed changes of activity to ensure good pace and the opportunity for active participation by pupils. Plenary sessions at the end, which sum up and clarify the content of each lesson, are used very regularly and well in most lessons, so that pupils consolidate learning and teachers know that issues have been covered securely.
17. Learning benefits from all these features, and by the fact that most pupils have a very clear idea of their current standards, how they can improve and what targets they should be aiming for. Across Years 7 to 11, this very effective use of assessment data on a day-to-day basis is made even more beneficial by the longer-term work of tutors, mentors and subject teachers. Because staff review pupils' progress very regularly, identifying strengths in the performance of individuals, classes or year groups, as well as areas of underperformance, teachers are able to provide precisely the right level of challenge or support to pupils. Expectations are very high, but very accurate.
18. The quality of behaviour and the relationships in lessons are very good, which further promotes successful teaching and learning. Staff show much more consistency than is common in offering praise or applying sanctions to pupils; they establish clear guidelines and gain respect as a result. Within this context, many lessons reveal very positive relationships: pupils know that they can take initiative, seek advice and be trusted; and teachers create a highly productive environment for learning where humour, challenge and encouragement help pupils cover more than they thought possible.
19. Whilst there are exceptions, too few teachers use homework as effectively as they do nearly all other strategies. The use of homework is satisfactory, but parents are right to note contrasts between the highly reliable and effective approach sustained by some subjects, for example, mathematics and history, and the less consistent use that is more common in others. The absence of a tightly defined and agreed whole-school timetable limits overall effectiveness; individuals and departments have to create their own systems and expectations.
20. Teaching and learning are excellent at times, with examples of this high quality seen in English and physical education lessons. Here, the subject expertise and ability to motivate are quite exceptional, reflected in pupils' learning. There is a joint commitment to the very highest standards by pupils and teacher: the prior work of pupils is known intimately by staff and planning builds on it. Questioning and tasks in these lessons always go beyond simple initial responses, with follow-up questions and extension work to explore understanding further.
21. In citizenship, the level of expertise and confidence of staff is sound rather than good. Schemes of work are adequate and there is good practice from some staff. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, in contrast to the college's general quality. However, the subject is well led and provision is improving.
22. The quality of teaching and learning provided for pupils who have special educational needs is very good. Teachers and assistants understand the needs of the pupils very well. The structured programme for additional English is very good and does much to enhance pupils' literacy skills. In lessons where pupils are supported by learning support assistants, they receive very good levels of help. This is well planned between teachers and assistants and good records are kept. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils who have English as an additional language is very good. They receive regular help in class, when needed, and their support assistants are very encouraging and know them well.

***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 155 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2.6%)	43 (27.7%)	89 (57.4%)	18 (11.6%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

## Sixth form

23. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Teachers show good subject expertise and communicate with clarity. They succeed in sharing their enthusiasm for their subject with most students. Teaching is never unsatisfactory, but in some lessons, the quality is limited by the narrow range of strategies used, including a heavy reliance on the teacher's exposition. It is also quite common for sixth-form lessons with many good features to lack the tight structure and very effective plenary sessions that regularly produce very good teaching and learning lower down the college. The capacity for sustained, independent study outside lessons is variable, but satisfactory overall. Students have a satisfactory awareness of their targets and how to meet them. This feature is a real strength in the main school, contributing to very good achievement, but in the sixth form, it does not supplement or consolidate the progress made in lessons with the same success. Clear exceptions are provided by individual teachers and by consistent practice within physical education. In the latter, students make good progress in lessons and achieve very well over the long term, due to the combination of effective day-to-day teaching and very good assessment. Students have a clear understanding of what constitutes high-quality work in this subject, lessons frequently include valuable analysis of examination board requirements and how they can be met and there is much active involvement of students, including regular discussion of their own performance and how this can be improved.

## The curriculum

The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is good. In the sixth form, it is satisfactory. Provision for enrichment and extra-curricular activities is very good. Resources are satisfactory, but accommodation is unsatisfactory overall.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils who are gifted and talented and for those who have special educational needs is well adapted to individual needs.
- Opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond the normal college day are very good in mathematics, science and physical education.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Courses in the sixth form are not well matched to students' needs and abilities.
- The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- Unsatisfactory timetabling arrangements for design and technology and for drama results in loss of continuity of pupils' learning.

## Commentary

24. The college's status as a technology and humanities college is reflected in high-quality provision in many areas of the curriculum. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is broad and well balanced, and meets statutory requirements in most respects, except in failing to provide a daily act of corporate worship. All pupils take a lifeskills course, and most take a second modern foreign language. Pupils whose literacy skills are below the expected level take one foreign language and a course in additional English. In physical education, pupils benefit from being able to learn five different activities instead of the more usual four. There is a broad range of activities in design and technology, but the timetabling arrangements are unsatisfactory and lead to a fragmented experience for pupils. Although all pupils study drama, lessons take place on a fortnightly basis and continuity is adversely affected. In music,

geography and religious education, the lack of ICT equipment prevents these subjects being taught in sufficient breadth. In art and design, facilities for three-dimensional work are restricted.

25. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Pupils are able to choose from a wide range of GCSE subjects. Vocational GCSE courses in child development and manufacturing are available and in ICT, there is a GNVQ qualification. As a result of strong links with Warwickshire College, very good provision is made for pupils to pursue courses which cannot be offered on site, and those for whom an entirely academic programme is inappropriate. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend a range of vocational courses at Warwickshire College one day each week and some have one day per week of work experience. A flexible approach permits pupils to develop particular talents and abilities. The 'extended day' provides opportunities for additional classes in mathematics and science and there are master classes in mathematics, an annual summer school and good links with the Children's University. Higher-attaining pupils in performing arts and textiles attend sessions at Warwickshire College. Financial support is given to pupils who have been selected for national athletics teams.
26. The opportunities provided by the college for pupils to enrich their education are very good. There is a very good range of activities, most notably in physical education, drama, dance and music. The contribution made by visitors and visits is very good, as are the number of residential visits enjoyed by students.
27. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. They are very well supported in their lessons, and specialist help is provided when needed. Good arrangements for gifted and talented pupils include entry for national challenge competitions in mathematics. In design and technology, pupils are enrolled for workshops and weekend courses in problem-solving and team-building activities organised by The Smallpiece Trust for engineering. Within the curriculum, provision is also good. There is a fast-track programme in music which enables some pupils to complete the GCSE syllabus early in Year 10 to allow for entry to AS level in Year 11. Twilight classes in mathematics for high attainers provide enhanced opportunities, including the chance of early entry to AS mathematics for current Year 10 pupils. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness, is good. Careers and work-related learning also have good provision.
28. Staffing is good overall. There is a good match to the numbers and expertise of staff to teach the curriculum. The number and range of skills amongst learning support staff are very good. Teaching assistants, many of whom are attached to departments, support the learning of pupils with special educational needs well in lessons across subjects. Provision for these pupils is very good. The great majority of support is provided in mainstream classes. Additional English classes provide a very good, structured programme, which enhances pupils' literacy skills well.
29. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Recent building and refurbishment have led to very good accommodation for mathematics and design and technology. Specialist technology college status has led to considerable extension of ICT facilities. However, the accommodation limits activities in music, where practice rooms are inadequate. In English, modern foreign languages, art and design, and in drama, the accommodation is very cramped. In physical education, there are inadequate changing facilities, especially when several groups are timetabled simultaneously. Inspectors note that the school has successfully secured additional funding for building works to be completed by autumn 2005. These agreed plans are designed to meet many of the needs identified above. Access for people with disability is unsatisfactory, especially in the ICT block. Resources are satisfactory overall. There is very good provision in mathematics and design and technology, with good provision in English, religious education and music. Whilst the ratio of computers to pupils is favourable, access for all subjects is only satisfactory. Computer suites located in specialist subject areas, such as the humanities, are often timetabled for the whole year for other subjects, thus preventing access for some

classes who are taught at the same time. However, planning of subjects is not always effective enough to make maximum use of the resources.

### **Sixth form**

30. The sixth-form curriculum is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, AS and A-level courses in media, music technology, psychology, physical education, drama, statistics and textiles have been introduced and there is now a broad choice of 20 AS and A-level subjects, and AVCE courses in business, manufacturing, leisure and recreation and ICT. All students take a course in general studies and key skills. One-year courses leading to Student Apprenticeships are available for students in Years 12 and 13. Most students take four AS courses, from which they select three for study in Year 13. However, in several subjects, the match between course content and students' abilities has been unsatisfactory, and a significant number in Year 12 have failed to obtain a grade in the AS examination. Arrangements for re-sit courses in GCSE in English are unsatisfactory. Reflecting its status as a technology college, good links have been established with the Royal Academy of Engineering and with various local firms. Some students worked with Aston Martin on a three-day project run by Birmingham University, presenting their findings at the National Exhibition Centre. The Manufacturing Federation supports other on going ventures. The Maths Challenge, the Young Scientist club and Young Enterprise provide further enrichment opportunities. Although there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, participation by students in Years 12 and 13 is relatively low. Since the last inspection, provision for religious education has improved by its inclusion in the general studies programme and the introduction of an annual, one-day conference on moral issues.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The college provides very good support for pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils' involvement in college life is good. Management of day-to-day care, welfare and health and safety is good.

In the sixth form, the college provides satisfactory support for students' personal and academic development. Students' involvement in college life is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Very good relationships result in most pupils and sixth-form students having confidence and trust in their teachers.
- Teachers know the needs of their pupils very well and are flexible in their approach to helping them.
- The use of tutorial time in the main college is usually good, but occasionally unproductive.
- Many sixth-form students do not get accurate and appropriate advice to help them make the right choice of sixth-form courses.

### **Commentary**

31. There is very good support for pupils' personal development on a day-to-day basis. Pupils' well-being is central to the work of the college and pupils feel comfortable in a secure and happy environment. There is a very effective mix of experienced and new heads of year and they work together cohesively to give a very good level of support. They have a very good understanding of pupils' individual circumstances and needs and because of this, pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the college, the very good relationships result in teachers and pupils interacting well and there is a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. Achievements in all walks of life are recognised and rewarded and pupils genuinely acknowledge each other's successes.
32. Support for pupils' academic performance is very good. From Year 7 onwards, the very good tracking of progress highlights underachievers quickly and these pupils are supported in a

variety of ways. A well-structured mentoring programme is helping specific pupils to improve and achieve as well as they are able. Pupils are becoming more involved in evaluating their own performance in many subjects, which gives them a clear understanding of how well they are doing. The homework club is used by many pupils and gives extra help and support for those who need it. As GCSE examinations approach, after-college and holiday classes are available to help pupils with revision and preparation. The college is flexible and adaptable in its approach to helping pupils. Good relationships with a local college mean that some pupils attend college courses and some pupils are on extended work placements to help them cope when they find an academic curriculum difficult. Good careers advice begins in Year 8 and helps pupils make decisions about their future.

33. Pupils in Year 7 settle in quickly and easily because of the good arrangements to help them. They are well prepared during Years 5 and 6 and have many opportunities to visit and be involved in activities in the college. Next year, Year 7 pupils are embarking on an exciting 'Learning to Learn' project in which their independent learning skills will be developed and extended.
34. Pupils are positive about the college and feel that their views and opinions are genuinely considered. The year councils look at issues important to their own year group and pupils generally feel these meetings are more useful than the college council. Older pupils are less sure about the effectiveness of their councils, but they all feel that they can talk to any teacher and that they will be genuinely listened to. There are few opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, but the college council is currently looking at re-establishing the prefect system.
35. The college pays satisfactory attention to the physical care and wellbeing of its pupils. There is an effective child-protection policy that follows the appropriate procedures and all issues are handled sensitively and with great care. Although there are good systems in place to manage and monitor health and safety across the college, and good use is made of outside specialist help, there remain some issues over day-to-day, low-risk aspects. For example, too many classrooms had trailing cables from electrical equipment and some paths are uneven and extremely slippery in muddy conditions. The college is aware of the need to tighten up on risk assessments in such areas and is addressing the problem of vehicle and pedestrian access.

### **Sixth form**

36. Very good relationships between tutors and students provide good support on a day-to-day basis. Many of the tutorial sessions are focused and give individual students the opportunity to talk about their specific needs and progress. However, many students feel that they did not have not good and accurate advice prior to the sixth form to help them make the correct choice of courses to suit their future career needs and this is supported by the inspection. Specific advice on how to complete university and college courses applications is good, but there is no structured approach to ensuring a comprehensive network of practical and supportive advice.
37. There are limited opportunities for students to take an active role in the main college and local community. Some students are part of the paired-reading programme with pupils in Year 7, which is effective and valuable. However, there is scope for many more students to be involved in this or similar schemes, and with more monitoring of their participation. Again, the sixth-form committee comprises a small number of students and they are given little opportunity to take on responsibility for their own area and development. The enrichment programme does not extend out into the community to give students a part to play in wider society.

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

The college has a good partnership with parents and parents are very supportive. The good links with schools and colleges and the good links with the community support and develop pupils' learning and broaden their experiences well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children are making.
- Communication between home and college is good.
- The college is well supported by the local community and provides a good range of community education courses.
- Good links with primary schools support learning and the curriculum well.

### **Commentary**

38. The college enjoys the support of its parents and is constantly looking at ways in which to involve them more. Newsletters and brochures of high quality keep parents up to date with activities, events and developments. Their views are regularly sought on issues such as the move to target-setting and review days, rather than traditional subject-based meetings, and the proposed new timings of day. The college responds to parents' views and is willing to be flexible in the light of what they say.
39. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through two interim reports, a full written report, a target-setting day and review day. Parents report being comfortable in approaching teachers with questions, and teachers are quick to contact them personally to explain problems and how they intend to deal with them. However, a significant minority of parents express dissatisfaction with the fact that there is no occasion on which they are able to discuss their child's progress with subject teachers. Overall, however, parents are supportive of the college and happy with the experience they and their children have.
40. The college has good links with the local community. The local and wider community are exploited well through a variety of trips, activities and visitors for all year groups. These add an important extra dimension to pupils' learning, helping them see the relevance of their studies and giving them first-hand experience. For example, in design and technology, pupils in Year 8 took part in workshops where they worked in teams with engineers to design and make jet-propelled vehicles. Many local businesses take part in industry and enterprise days, where pupils benefit from the experience of interviews, team-building and decision-making activities. The college enjoys good support from the local Lions and Rotary clubs, local businesses and the PTA for awards evenings and activity days.
41. There is a well-established and thriving community education programme and over 1,000 people attend a good range of courses over the year, a number of which are held in the smaller local villages. The college is flexible and wants to meet people's needs. For example, a parent joined an A-level art course and studied alongside sixth-form students. The college plays an important role in the local community and has a good and improving reputation.
42. There are good and well-established links with the feeder primary schools. The good flow of information and the induction programme ensure that pupils settle in quickly. Primary schools have benefited directly from the technology college status in design and technology, mathematics and ICT, and primary schools report higher standards as a result. For example, mathematics teachers visit eight primary schools every week to teach pupils in Year 6. Specialist teaching, shared resources and facilities, guidance and advice on assessment and observation of teaching skills give primary teachers confidence and pupils the opportunity to gain in technical knowledge and skills. Pupils in Year 5 from all primaries take part in an annual science day. In addition, pupils of all ages enjoy the dress rehearsals for concerts, and the college helps to organise the primary schools' sports festival.
43. The college is now looking to further its work with other secondary schools in the area and is part of a consortium looking at joint provision for sixth-form students. It is also working with

another secondary school on developing a website that enables parents to have more information about learning and their children's progress. The college has a well-developed sense of responsibility and is quick to share its knowledge and expertise with the county and further afield.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are good, with much that is very good. The headteacher gives very strong and effective leadership, management systems work well and other key staff provide good leadership and management. There is good governance, although the act of worship requirements are not met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher leads very clearly and with strong commitment.
- Senior staff operate very well as a team and contribute very effectively to the overall leadership and management of the college.
- Planning for improvement since the last inspection has brought major benefits to pupils.
- Delegation is a strength and has allowed improvement in many areas of provision.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory.
- Many subjects and years are very well run and there are instances of excellent leadership and management at this level.

### **Commentary**

44. The college has made very good improvement since the last inspection, largely the outcome of staff responding well to the headteacher's very good vision and his determination to pursue beneficial change. His openness in seeking high standards of behaviour, personal development and academic improvement is striking: he leads very well by example, providing a high profile presence around college, keeping close contact with pupils and staff, and dealing with day-to-day issues in corridors, classrooms and the staff room. His vision for the college is expressed unequivocally and it rightly places heavy demands on himself and colleagues. His ideas and those of others are mediated well by senior staff and communicated very effectively to staff as a whole.
45. Planning for improvements to standards has been focused primarily on raising the quality of teaching and learning across Years 7 to 11. The headteacher has made very good choices of staff to lead this development and has overseen equally effective strategies to ensure that the great majority of lessons now have good structure, pace and skilful use of assessment data and targets. Other aspects of planning have carried this central aim further: successful bidding for specialist technology college status has seen ICT provision changed from a key issue at the last inspection to a strength in many areas of the college's work. Choosing to focus on humanities for a second area of specialist status has proved to be another wise decision, building on an emerging strength to give additional confidence and challenge to this area and helping attract and retain high-calibre staff. Decisions about provision for pupils with special educational needs have also proved highly beneficial, with literacy problems now being tackled very well by a focus on additional support within the English department. Standards have risen markedly as a result of these and other developments.
46. Good leadership by example and skilful planning from the headteacher have also promoted extensive delegation. Responsibility for managing assessment systems, staff professional development, self-evaluation procedures and performance management now lies with very capable senior managers. Their high-quality work has established these areas as strengths. Teamwork at senior level is very good overall, with individuals complementing each other's skills well. They present a very clear and consistent message to staff and pupils about the college's commitment to improvement.

47. There is much good leadership and management of subjects and year groups. Overall, this feature is very effective, especially in religious education, science, history, English, history and ICT. The quality is excellent in mathematics and physical education, where only the very highest standards are accepted in planning, administration and, above all, the rapid progress pupils can achieve. Leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are also very good and the leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented pupils are effective. The college's policy for identification is followed by departments so that the pupils are well provided for in most areas. The provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is very well managed. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils are successful, progress is regularly monitored and subject teachers are provided with good advice on teaching approaches.
48. Governance is satisfactory, with some strengths. Governors are good at promoting the college in the community and supporting senior staff as they make strategic decisions. Their knowledge of the college's strengths and weaknesses is sound and they fulfil their statutory duties well. Only the requirements for the daily act of collective worship are not met.
49. Financial management is good and an audit by the local education authority reveals that strong control systems are operating well. The college's total income, and thus its ability to fund improvement, is lower than nationally, with spending per pupil being well below average. The current negative carry-forward figure is already covered by assured income arriving later than several expenditure items.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,996,633
Total expenditure	3,057,165
Expenditure per pupil	2,900

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2,745
Balance carried forward to the next year	-57,787

**Sixth form**

50. Leadership and management of the sixth form are unsatisfactory: whilst measures have been taken to strengthen them, new ones are required. There are existing strengths, including the head of sixth form's ready availability to students and prevailing atmosphere of encouragement. There are numerous good elements within the formal curriculum, such as new AS and A-level subjects requested by students, and engineering challenge and paired-reading projects within the enrichment programme.
51. However, the modest take-up for these admirable projects is partly indicative of an ethos which is too undemanding of students. They benefit from good teaching and subject management, but overall leadership of this sector of the college fails to champion the high expectations found in the main school. There is less analysis and discussion of standards than usual, and plans for maximising students' progress lack rigour. Assessment and target-setting are broadly satisfactory, but do not play the decisive and beneficial role in raising standards seen in Years 7 to 11. Too many students are unsure of their targets or how to improve their work in order to meet them. While subject leaders can and do contribute to these tracking processes, their limited coordination and prominence across the sixth form as a whole reflects shortcomings in leadership and management.
52. Students show good, and often very good, attitudes in lessons but they are less confident or committed to independent study and less heavily involved in the wider life of the college than is common, and these aspects are not promoted or monitored with sufficient urgency. Students receive variable advice and support, both before and during their time in Years 12 and 13. On balance, this feature is unsatisfactory because a significant minority embarks on inappropriate courses or students are retained on them despite evidence that long-term

benefit is unlikely. For example, several AS courses, GCSE English and the key skills programme in 2004 all had too many students unable to complete their courses satisfactorily.

53. Senior leaders have been aware of these shortcomings and taken action. An additional post of assistant head of sixth form was created two years ago to share the workload, develop a good general studies programme and provide additional resources for advice and monitoring. The formal curriculum and enrichment programme have been improved and take effect from September 2005. The highly effective approach to assessment and target-setting used in the rest of the college will be used in the sixth form at the same time. Nevertheless, the actions taken leave shortcomings which require further changes to establish suitably clear, strong and well-organised leadership of the sixth form.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision in work-related learning is **good** and meets statutory requirements.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good arrangements for some pupils, including for those who are gifted and talented, to take part in off-site learning.
- Good management ensures that pupils are well prepared for the world of work through a variety of activities and experiences.

### **Commentary**

54. The college prepares pupils well for their working lives and supports them in developing the skills they need. All Year 10 pupils engage with the world of work through work experience placements over a period of two weeks. With support from the college, most pupils organise these placements themselves. They receive good preparation by making applications and undergoing interviews. Good debriefing, soon after their placements, enables them to discuss and reflect on their experiences.
55. A good programme of careers education is provided as a part of the life skills curriculum for all pupils in Years 8 to 11. In Year 11, all pupils have mock interviews with representatives of businesses and companies. They later receive oral and written debriefing. There are good relationships with the Connexions service: all Year 11 pupils have individual interviews with a Connexions officer, who is available for consultation throughout the week.
56. The curriculum is well planned to enable pupils in Years 10 and 11 to attend a good range of courses at Warwickshire College one day each week. These include student apprenticeship courses in motor vehicles as well as NVQ courses in engineering, hair and beauty, animal care, public services and sport and recreation. Two gifted and talented pupils in Year 10 attend a weekly college course in performing arts and have done some work with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Two others in Year 11 attend an evening course in creative studies. All the pupils speak enthusiastically of their courses and appreciate the opportunity that they have been given to develop their skills and learn more about the world of work.
57. Work-related learning is well led and managed. An audit was carried out two years ago and revised recently to assess the contribution made by subjects across the curriculum. A guidance forum has been set up to monitor variations in the curriculum and extend work-related learning. There are good plans to further develop the existing good relationships with Warwickshire College.

# 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

- Standards are above average because teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are very good, ensuring that pupils achieve well.
- Assessment is used very well to underpin each pupil's learning.
- Teaching is appropriately matched to different attainment levels.
- Pupils do not have sufficient curriculum time in drama in Years 7 to 9 to ensure continuity in learning.
- Boys' standards are lower than girls'.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

#### Commentary

58. Results in the 2004 national tests were above average. They went down in 2002, but have been rising since then. Pupils do less well in English than in science and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Girls attain higher standards than the boys. Higher-attaining pupils read Shakespeare with understanding and explore the effects of his language on the reader. They have a wide vocabulary and write accurately. Lower-attaining pupils deliver limited responses, but try hard, even when studying difficult areas, such as Shakespeare. Their writing is weaker than their speaking and listening and their presentation is untidy. Presentation is much improved when they word-process their work.
59. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were above average in English and well above average in literature. Almost all pupils are entered for both examinations. Standards at the end of Year 11, judging from coursework folders, are above average. Many pupils attain the highest levels, with work that is detailed and technically accurate. They make perceptive analysis of text, showing very good personal involvement. Lower-attaining pupils have a reasonable vocabulary, but tend to narrate rather than analyse and have weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment remains wider than that found nationally, despite the many effective strategies used to motivate boys.
60. Pupils, including the gifted and talented, achieve well in all years. Those with special educational needs and lower attainers achieve very well because work is carefully tailored to their needs and they receive very good support in class. Regular, well-managed, additional English lessons provide further very good support for these pupils.
61. Teaching and learning are good, covering a range from satisfactory to excellent. Despite much discontinuity in teaching over recent months, standards have remained high because of very good support from departmental management in lesson planning and very good monitoring of learning. Leadership provides an excellent role model in teaching and attention to pupils' development.
62. When teaching and learning are strong, pupils are actively engaged in fast-paced lessons using a variety of stimulating methods. Pupils in Year 9 learnt about directing a scene from *Macbeth* through a series of carefully structured activities, culminating in role-playing. Content, pace and methodology in lessons are always appropriately matched to pupils' attainment, ensuring that pupils achieve well. Assessment is very good. It is used well to motivate pupils,

who know how to improve. Where teaching is less effective, pupils learn at a slower pace and class management is less assured.

63. Since the last inspection, achievement and teaching have improved and new initiatives have been put into place successfully. Improvement has been very good.

### **Drama**

Three lessons were sampled in Years 8, 9 and 10.

64. Standards are average by Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils achieve well in lessons, but satisfactorily over time. This is because Years 7 to 9 have only one lesson every two weeks, thus disrupting the continuity of their learning. Teaching and learning are good.
65. Lessons are well structured and pupils enjoy them, working hard both individually and in their groups. Pupils take on roles appropriately, some convincingly. They are beginning to develop the ability to criticise each other's performances. They create and develop drama together. Pupils in Year 10 were able to deliver monologues to the rest of the class with reasonable confidence.
66. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' learning beyond the curriculum, with regular performances and visits. However, the unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation for drama limits the contribution the subject could make to the life of the college.

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

67. The college pays much more attention to the improvement of pupils' literacy than it did at the time of the last inspection. There has been successful staff development in this area and teaching incorporates thoughtful provision for how pupils' literacy can be improved. Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils speak clearly and are able to explore ideas in discussion. Important vocabulary is carefully introduced and pupils are encouraged to use it in speech and in writing. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, pupils had to describe a woman falling through ice, using the appropriate technical vocabulary, which helped to clarify the precise meaning of the scientific terms in a scenario the pupils were familiar with. Pupils are given opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and to read material in different genres. Whilst studying the First World War in history, for instance, pupils read poetry to deepen understanding of the conditions endured in the trenches.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The GCSE examination results in French are consistently well above average and reflect good teaching and learning.
- As a result of staffing difficulties, the pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and examination results in German have been well below average in the last two years.
- Good management is helping to resolve problems and create a cohesive team that is promoting effective learning.

### **Commentary**

68. The GCSE examination results in French have been well above the national average for the last three years. The difference between the performances of girls and boys has reflected the national picture, except in 2003, when the gap was much smaller than that found nationally. In German, the results were well above average in 2002, but staffing difficulties have since

adversely affected learning and the results were well below the national averages in the following two years.

69. Standards are above average overall. They match the average in German, but in French they are well above average. In Years 7 to 9, reading and listening skills are more highly developed than writing and speaking skills. As a result of staffing problems in German, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge that current teachers are striving to fill. Although pupils in both languages speak confidently when rehearsing language structures and expressions, they struggle to sustain a spontaneous conversation. In Years 10 and 11, pupils write extended texts that are more independent in content. Written work in French is of a higher quality than in German because pupils have a more secure understanding of grammar and they have knowledge of a wider range of vocabulary and structures. Throughout Years 7 to 11, girls perform better than boys, but no more so than is found nationally. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by the end of Year 9 and of Year 11 in French, but in German achievement has been hindered by staffing disruption and is unsatisfactory.
70. The two permanent modern foreign languages teachers are well supported by two recent, temporary appointments, and the overall quality of teaching and learning is now good. Most lessons are conducted at a lively pace and enable pupils to practise all four language skills through a variety of appropriate activities. Pupils respond positively, apply themselves well and co-operate well with one another. Teachers do not insist often enough that pupils use the foreign language in everyday exchanges during lessons. Inconsistencies in the application of assessment procedures mean that pupils are not always aware of how they can improve their level of performance. Teaching strategies based on the National Key Stage 3 framework are well developed in French and help to promote effective learning. There are good ICT facilities in the department and they are used well to support pupils' language learning.
71. Leadership and management are good. The unsatisfactory management of German in the past has recently been resolved and is now satisfactory. The capacity for improvement in German is now good. Daily organisation is good and procedures are clear. There is a strong commitment to improvement and good support is provided for the modern foreign language assistant and teachers new to the college. Examination data are analysed and used well to draw up plans and policies for the future. Good arrangements, well supported by the college's senior management, enable teachers to observe one another in order to share ideas and further develop teaching strategies.
72. As at the time of the last inspection, accommodation is scattered and two rooms are cramped when there are classes of 30 pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. None of the teaching is unsatisfactory, resources are now good, results are still above the national average and there are better arrangements for higher-attaining pupils to be taught in appropriate groups in Year 9.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average because of very good teaching.
- Achievement is very high because the excellent quality of assessment enables pupils to understand how to improve.
- Excellent departmental management and leadership ensure that teachers are confident and secure in applying college and departmental policies to ensure a very good ethos for learning.
- The department is very effective at training and supporting teachers new to the profession and has strong links with the university training department.

### **Commentary**

73. Results in national tests and examinations at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 have been well above average in recent years. Pupils' achievement when compared with their earlier performance has been excellent both in the Year 9 tests and in the 2004 GCSE examinations. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys in most years, but levels of improvement are similar for both.
74. The standard of work is well above average by Year 9 and Year 11. Most pupils find data-handling easier than other aspects of mathematics, but all, including lower attainers, handle algebra better than is the norm. In Year 9, higher-attaining pupils multiply algebraic brackets with confidence in the course of solving equations. In Year 11, they solve quadratic equations securely, both with formula and by factorising. Lower-attaining Year 11 pupils manipulate and simplify algebraic expressions correctly.
75. Achievement is excellent in all years. Mental arithmetic and basic number work improves dramatically. Even those who find greater difficulty with mathematics have good knowledge of multiplication tables and can find percentages and fractions of quantities with confidence.
76. Pupils learn very well because of very good teaching throughout the college. In over half of the lessons, teaching and learning were very good, and in almost all of the rest, they were good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The application of principles established in the National Numeracy Strategy, with total consistency across the department, means that lessons are planned and taught very well. Pupils are given challenging work. Activities in each class are varied so that there is always plenty of interesting work to do. Pupils are kept on their toes and concentrate well. Lessons almost invariably include a range of tasks and activities well suited to the different strengths of the pupils. Hence, those with special educational needs, for example, make very good progress alongside their peers, whether or not they are supported by the very good learning support assistants available. Gifted and talented pupils, too, are very well provided for. Master classes, arranged in twilight time, provide them with an added challenge and an additional source of enjoyment.
77. The consistent application of college and departmental behaviour policies ensures a very good ethos for learning across the department. For the most part, the relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and pupils behave well. Teachers praise and reward the pupils' efforts frequently and justifiably so that there is a culture of willingness to succeed. On the rare occasions when it is necessary to discipline a pupil, this is done effectively because the teachers know the procedures well and are confident in the support they receive from the head of department and from each other.
78. The use of assessment is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and learning by the excellent assessment arrangements. They mark most of their work, set their own targets for improvement and assess how much effort and progress they are making, with support and advice from teachers where necessary. They are encouraged to pay close attention to how best to improve. Homework and end-of-topic tests are marked carefully and fully by teachers at least once a fortnight, so that the staff are fully aware of each pupil's progress and adjust their programmes of study to ensure excellent progress overall. The marking of both tests and homework is uniformly of the highest quality; pupils benefit from excellent advice and encouragement to do better.
79. Consistency, therefore, is evident in all of the department's work and stems from excellent leadership and departmental management, which have secured very good improvement since the last inspection. The experienced and long-standing head of department ensures a total focus on raising the standards within the college and the standing of the department. Displaying vision, she sets high standards and maintains them. Morale is very high and both teachers and support staff take pride in their work.
80. Almost all of the teaching of mathematics is done by specialists. The small amount of non-specialist teaching is very effective. The department has been able to maintain this strong

position because the teachers enjoy working in an excellent environment, with first-class leadership and new, purpose-built accommodation. Close co-operation exists between the department and the University of Warwick Education Department. The department provides very good and much-valued initial teacher training for postgraduate certificate students. One of the current teachers completed teaching practice there last year, prior to being appointed to a full time post. Three other teachers trained at the university in recent years. The department's reputation, therefore, attracts both students and applicants for teaching positions.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

81. Pupils demonstrate well above average numerical competence in most subjects. In doing so, they are well supported by good teaching. Most departments have policies for the teaching of numeracy, which is well co-ordinated across the college as a whole. Careful, accurate measuring is a strong feature in practical subjects such as design and technology and art. Pupils calculate resistor and capacitor values accurately in resistant materials, as well as entering accurate data into computer-driven lathes and milling machines. In geography, history and physical education, there are many examples of good, and sometimes very good, handling and analysis of data. Examples are as diverse as researching into the links between unemployment and the rise of the communist and Nazi parties in Germany in the early 1930s to studying the impact of exercise on blood flow and lung capacity.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

- Teaching is consistently very good and pupils' learning is very good as a result.
- Standards are well above average and indicate very good achievement.
- Strategies for improving standards are very effective.
- Teachers and other staff work very well together as a team.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support and extend pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

82. The national test results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average. They were also well above average, given pupils' prior attainment on entry, in Year 7. Results in previous years confirm the very good achievement of pupils in this age range. Pupils in Year 11 take either separate GCSE science examinations or double award science. Overall results for both grades A\* to C and A\* to G were well above average both nationally and in relation to their performance in the tests at the end of Year 9. These results maintain an upward trend in recent years.
83. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and represent very good achievement. Pupils enter the college with attainment that is above average for their age, but as the result of very good teaching, they continue to make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 have a very good understanding of the particulate theory of matter. They understand how temperature affects how particles are arranged and move in solids, liquids and gases. Average- and lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 calculate the speed of objects and relate unbalanced forces to phenomena such as friction and air resistance. Their very good mathematical skills contribute significantly to the high standards. Standards in Year 11 are also well above average. These pupils continue to maintain the very good progress seen in earlier years and their cumulative achievement from Year 7 to Year 11 is very good. For example, higher-attaining Year 11 pupils have very good knowledge and understanding of current electricity. They use Ohm's Law to calculate the resistance of a wire as its length is changed systematically. Average- and

lower-attaining pupils have a very good grasp of concepts in biology, such as photosynthesis and respiration. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress due to the very good support they receive from teachers and learning assistants.

84. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned and productive. Teachers have a very secure command of the subjects they teach and their clear explanations of scientific theories and concepts contribute significantly to pupils' learning. Teachers challenge higher-attaining pupils with the use of more difficult extension work, such as 'bonus questions'. Prompted by teachers' insistence on high standards, behaviour is always good and often better. Strategies such as the use of the three-part lesson give teaching a sharper focus and are contributing well to raising standards. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good. There is a very good focus on setting both short- and long-term targets with the result that pupils' performance is closely monitored, improving overall standards. Pupils gain some experience of ICT, but there is insufficient incorporation of this aspect into lessons.
85. Leadership and management are very good. A very effective team of teachers and support staff focus well on raising pupils' achievement. For example, teachers have worked together to produce new and effective schemes of work. Monitoring of teaching and learning is highly effective and has helped to raise standards. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. The GCSE examination results are improving rapidly and the department is in a very good position to move forward.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and attain standards that are well above average.
- Good achievement in the GNVQ course leads to above average standards in GNVQ Intermediate examinations.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- The improvement made since the last inspection has been very good.
- Cross-curricular ICT is good in a number of subjects.
- There is no whole-school programme for teaching and learning in ICT so that a number of subjects are unable to access ICT to use it as a tool for learning.
- Pupils' achievement in the GCSE short course is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

86. Pupils enter the college with above-average standards in ICT. In Years 7 to 9, new schemes of work have been introduced over the last two years. These have been adapted from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy for ICT and provide very good challenge. They enable pupils to attain standards that are well above national averages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that a much higher proportion of students than found nationally gained the level expected of pupils of this age, and the evidence obtained during the inspection confirms these results, which represents good achievement. Pupils attain these standards in Year 9 working on an integrated project that involves the creation of a wide range of challenging business documentation. They attain high standards in, for example, producing software models of a profit-and-loss account or publicity materials on a website.
87. In the 2004 GNVQ ICT intermediate examinations, just under half of the pupils in Year 11 attained grades that were above average, a good achievement, as each pupil who passed was awarded the equivalent of four GCSE passes. In the GNVQ course, pupils attain above-average standards. Pupils conduct research, develop plans and design work to create a call centre. Their research into such aspects as office furniture design is thorough and well presented. Pupils gain a good understanding of the users' needs and preferences and

express these well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the relevant hardware and software issues and of the legislation.

88. Just over half of the pupils in Year 11 followed a GCSE short course in ICT in 2004. Many of these pupils did not complete the work required by the syllabus and their results were below average. Standards attained by this year's cohort are below average. Achievement is unsatisfactory. Insufficient time is allocated to teaching and learning in the subject and, as a consequence, many pupils are not able to complete sufficient coursework to fulfil the basic requirements. Some gains are made in producing a range of publicity documents using ICT. Recognising the problem, the college has abandoned this course and replaced it with a key skills course which is operating in Year 10 for around half of the pupils. Achievement in this course is satisfactory.
89. Outside these courses, the provision of ICT in a number of subjects is good and helps pupils to attain a satisfactory overall level of competence in ICT so that, overall, pupils in Year 11 demonstrate satisfactory achievement in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding associated with ICT.
90. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned, beginning with clear introductions that prepare pupils well and following up with activities of suitable challenge to match all ability levels. When teaching assistants are present, they work very well with pupils who have special educational needs to complement the work of teachers. Closing sessions are very well handled, celebrating the progress pupils have made as well as reinforcing what has been learnt. Teachers provide very good support through worksheets that give step-by-step guidance, successfully introducing pupils to more independent learning. This strategy is enhanced in Years 10 and 11, when pupils use high-quality commercial support materials available on the Internet. Teachers cope well with classes that are often too large for the room, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils often have to share computers, but tasks are adapted to ensure that progress is not adversely affected.
91. Leadership and management are very good. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the subject. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have risen from below average to well above average. Teaching and learning comply fully with statutory requirements. New courses have been successfully introduced. There is good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and very good analysis of examination results. The head of department has a very good overview and has developed a very effective team. The network is stable and is very well managed by a network manager, who is supported very well by ICT technicians. Where there have been weaknesses, as in the GCSE short course, action has been taken. However, departmental planning covers too long a period and does not provide the detail necessary to assure sustained development of teaching and learning in the subject.

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

92. Provision is satisfactory. Many subjects make a good contribution to the development and reinforcement of ICT skills across the curriculum, including physical education, design and technology, English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In these subjects, pupils demonstrate satisfactory competence using ICT to aid learning. However, there is no whole-school programme for the development of cross-curricular ICT, which has led to some difficulties of access for a number of subjects that would benefit from increased use of ICT. Work is in hand to equip over half of the rooms in the college with hardware that will significantly enhance the use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

93. Pupils' achievement is good across all year groups, with examples of very good achievement. This achievement is seen in the effective way that pupils learn and develop their potential. Standards in basic geographical skills are below average on entry into Year 7, but pupils' overall competence in literacy and numeracy is above average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the national average overall, and a significant proportion of pupils attain well above average standards, reflecting the teacher assessments in 2004. By the end of Year 11, standards are in line with the national average overall for those pupils who choose to take the GCSE course. Most pupils are continuing to develop their potential, showing the capacity to reach above and well above average standards. Their course work displays competence in the full range of geographical skills. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above the national averages at grades A\* to C and grades A\* to G. Many pupils did better at GCSE than would be expected, given their previous performance in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. Across the year groups, girls perform better than boys, although the gap is closing as teachers successfully use activities designed to hold boys' interests, but not at the cost of the involvement of girls.
94. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with examples of very good strategies. A strength is the consistent practice across all year groups. Lessons are well planned, drawing effectively on the very good schemes of work, so that pupils in all year groups experience the full range of geographical skills. Good use is made of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, not only in Years 7 to 9, but also in Years 10 and 11. Lessons begin with an immediate review of pupils' previous learning and then lead into the main activity. At the end, there are good summary sessions when teachers check the overall understanding that pupils have reached. Teachers have very good expertise, which they use well to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Learning is good, and in Year 11, where pupils came into the course with attainment which was below the national average, their good achievement has significantly improved their standards. Questioning is challenging. Work set effectively meets the pupils' differing needs, although the department recognises that further development is required in producing learning resources for average-attaining pupils. Higher attainers often have extension activities, and a significant strength is the support for pupils with special educational needs, who also achieve well. Learning support staff have a very effective partnership with the class teachers. The overall strategies to support the development of pupils' competence in literacy and numeracy are also very effective. The small minority of pupils with English as an additional language are equally well supported. The procedures for assessment are used very well, and pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. There are insufficient opportunities for the use of ICT, although Year 11 coursework shows that pupils are competent in using a range of strategies to illustrate their work. In Years 7 to 9, there is inadequate use of fieldwork.
95. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed acting head of department is well supported by an advanced skills teacher who was previously the subject leader. This is a strong department which has shown very good improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve even further. There is a very good team approach which shares a very clear vision. The raising of pupils' achievement and standards, and the quality of teaching and learning, have all been very well addressed. Whilst monitoring and evaluation of pupils'

attainment, and of teaching and learning, are effective, there is not enough opportunity for staff to observe one another teaching, and thus share best practice. The very recent award of specialist status for the humanities is well deserved and has the potential to improve provision further. It reflects well the previous determination to improve the opportunities for all pupils. The continually improving achievement of pupils reflects the consistency in leadership and management, and in teaching and learning, leading to very good provision overall.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- There is limited access to ICT facilities which means that there is not enough systematic use of ICT to further promote research and presentation skills.
- Very good leadership provides the subject with a clear vision and direction.
- The assessment, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are strengths of the department.

### Commentary

96. Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicated standards which were above average. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above average, which represents very good achievement as pupils enter the school with skills in history that are average. Pupils have a very good understanding of how and why volunteers to join up at the outbreak of the First World War became quickly disillusioned, and higher-attaining pupils comment well on the poignancy of the poetry of Wilfred Owen.
97. Results at GCSE in 2004 are above national norms. Standards in class in Year 10 and pupils' work in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils comprehend with empathy the plight of the Jewish community in Nazi Germany, and the higher-attaining pupils understand how Hitler used a range of methods, including anti-Semitism, to maintain power.
98. Teachers' emphasis on thinking and enquiry skills ensures that pupils of all capabilities make very good progress, particularly in the development of the skills of analysis and interpretation, and higher-attaining pupils show a mature understanding of historical concepts. Pupils with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve very well because they are effectively challenged by a range of appropriate materials.
99. However, the achievement of all pupils is restricted by the lack of access to in-class ICT facilities and the computer suite to promote their research and presentation skills. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' very good work within the literacy strategy is marred by careless spelling, particularly in class note-making. In Years 10 and 11, with very few exceptions, there is little evidence of wider reading to enhance both style and knowledge. Too often, the high standards of pupils' oral answers are not replicated in their written work.
100. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is very good. Teachers use their very good knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities that strongly engage the attention of all pupils. The vast majority show strong interest in the subject; co-operate well with the teacher and with their classmates; and learn very effectively. Their attitudes and behaviour are, with the exception of a very small minority, very good. Teachers develop pupils' research skills and empathy very well. They are enthusiastic and have high expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils are stimulated and excited by high-quality teaching so that history has become a very popular subject. There is a lack of visits in Years 7, 8, and 9 to further enhance pupils' interest. Homework is not always used effectively as a means of preparation for the following lesson.

101. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has produced documents that signal her clarity of vision about the future of the department and which underpin much of the good work of the department. She is supported particularly effectively by the senior management of the college and by her colleagues. There is a very effective assessment system which, together with monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, is a strength of the department. She and her colleagues are very good role models of commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards.
102. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards in class are much higher, teaching has very much improved and schemes of work have been effectively revised to meet pupils' needs. This is a strong department with very good potential for even greater success.

### **Religious education**

Provision for religious education overall is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make good progress and their attainment is above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Achievement is very good overall.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

103. By Year 9, pupils' attainment is above average. All pupils achieve well and make good progress. Assessment portfolios show that pupils do very well, some achieving Levels 6, 7, or 8 which is very high. This is due to very good teaching. Pupils are often asked to relate topics to everyday life, and think things through fully. An example was seen in a Year 8 lesson about creation when a pupil asked 'What was God doing before he made the universe?' Pupils study topics such as light, reincarnation and commitment. They find out the views of several world religions relating to each topic and so produce a wider knowledge and understanding.
104. In Year 11, pupils do very well in the short course GCSE examinations. Just under half of those entered gained grades between A\* and C in 2004. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average. Pupils are able to delve deeper into the topics in classwork because they no longer have to present extended work for examination assessments. All pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. For example, they study medical ethics, which is an entirely new topic for all of them, and learning is very good.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use very good methods to provide activities for pupils in lessons. For example, in a good Year 7 lesson, the teacher invited each pupil to write on the class whiteboard any one fact they knew about Jesus. In this way, nearly everyone was involved, and pooling pupils' knowledge produced a good overall picture. They learnt well. In another very good Year 7 lesson, pupils analysed newspaper articles and wrote whether they thought each one would have made Jesus angry. This was an entirely new concept for most of them and they learnt very well. In two very good Year 10 lessons, the teachers gave pupils lists of medical facts about the development of a foetus. They asked them to put them in chronological order and then give an opinion about what stage of development abortion should or could be carried out. By using these facts, and coming to their own opinions, pupils developed a very clear understanding of some aspects of this complex topic.

106. The systems and use of assessment and marking by all the teachers are very good and inform their planning very well.
107. Leadership and management are very good, and the head of department leads a very strong team. They meet regularly to share good practice and exchange ideas. Schemes of work are very good, but the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. The head of department is well aware of this and is already taking steps to remedy the shortcoming.
108. The subject has shown good improvement since the last report, principally in the much-improved teaching and in maintaining the very good GCSE results.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Timetable arrangements for Years 7 to 9 hinder attempts to raise standards. High staff turnover has disrupted examination groups and GCSE results are below average.
- Disruption caused by an extensive building programme has had a detrimental effect on standards.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches the technological experience provided for pupils.
- Accommodation and resources are very good.

#### **Commentary**

109. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were below average and were below the figure for 2003. Boys' results were well below average. Comparative figures show that both boys and girls perform less well in technology than in most other subjects. There are several reasons for this comparatively low performance. The subject has suffered severe disruption over a period of two years, as specialist facilities were not available owing to an extensive re-building and refurbishment programme. The quality of practical coursework was affected, along with the motivation of many students. Over the same period, a number of staff changes, sometimes at short notice, resulted in discontinuity of teaching for examination groups. Accommodation is now very good and staffing levels more secure, but efforts to overcome the cumulative effects of these factors on pupils' achievement are only just beginning to lead to improvements.
110. Teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2004 were above average, which matches the level of attainment seen in some Year 10 groups. Pupils' attainment by Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Current Year 9 pupils are working at average levels of attainment. Based on pupils' average attainment at the beginning of Year 7, this represents satisfactory achievement. Recently revised assessment procedures provide accurate information on attainment and progress and support pupils' learning in a positive way. Project booklets provide a strong framework for technology and are of particular help in enabling lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve in line with their peers. However, they do not always allow higher-attaining pupils to make a more individual contribution when generating design ideas. Where additional notebooks are used well, they enable higher-attainers to evaluate their work through extended writing. A mini-option system allows pupils in Year 9 to develop more individual design work because they focus for an extended period on specific areas. For example, pupils in textiles, who were designing and making shorts for young children, were developing colourful and creative ideas in an experimental way. The subject provides good support for pupils' personal development

through opportunities to develop research, thinking skills and co-operation with others, but many find independent working difficult.

111. Standards in Year 11 are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. A small number of pupils are able to attain higher standards. Examples were seen in some high-quality GCSE coursework folders, where detailed research and analysis is supported by good use of ICT and imaginative presentation skills. Textiles and graphics folders reflect higher standards than other technology areas. Graphics work in Year 10 shows particular promise. Many pupils, however, lack the organisational skills to work independently and consequently, their folders contain shallow research, presented in a disorganised way.
112. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good aspects. Planning is thorough and lessons are structured to use time and resources well. In the best lessons, pupils are engaged from the outset by carefully chosen starter activities. Clear explanations ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and, consequently, they work with a sense of purpose. Good individual help and advice ensures that most pupils make good progress. Where teaching is only satisfactory, it sometimes lacks this pace and is occasionally too dominated by overlong explanations from the teacher. Well-qualified technicians support pupils' learning very well. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs. Provision for gifted and talented pupils outside the classroom is good and includes participation in problem-solving activities organised by The Smallpiece Trust. Good teaching and classroom organisation are developing good relationships and positive pupils' attitudes. The impact of good teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is minimised by timetabling arrangements that cause many teaching groups to be shared by different teachers. This affects continuity, provides a fragmented experience for pupils and places additional burdens on staff as they attempt to co-ordinate the work.
113. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite the recent difficulties, good links have been maintained with junior schools, and activities outside the normal curriculum have continued to enrich pupils' understanding of how technology affects everyday life. Contacts with business and industry, for example, are good. However, insufficient emphasis has been placed on strategies to ensure that design and technology plays a leading role within the technology college framework. Since the last inspection, facilities for, and teaching of, computer-aided design and manufacture have improved. Improvement overall has been satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Leadership and management are good, and have secured good improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are good; pupils achieve well as a result and reach standards that are above average in Year 9 and Year 11.
- In a small number of lessons, pupils do not work hard enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to visit art galleries, or take part in workshops with professional artists.

### **Commentary**

114. Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils work with colour confidently, using earthy browns and reds to create attractive aerial views, informed by a study of aboriginal art. They use ICT well to produce unusual, distorted portraits, which are further developed in paint and oil pastel. Their low-relief work, based on lettering, is highly decorative, and they also produce humorous cardboard shoes, which are lively and bright. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that standards were above average.
115. Standards of work at the end of Year 11 are above average. Pupils produce sculptures using willow twigs, which are impressive in scale, and have richly textured surfaces. They draw confidently in charcoal, and their studies of seed pods are bold, and emphasise the play of light and shade. Their still-life work in oil pastel is informed by Cubist painting, and uses clean colours well to create interesting compositions. Sketchbooks are exciting, particularly those of higher-attaining pupils, and are often used for research and for experimenting with materials. However, the research of lower-attaining pupils is largely led by the teacher and does not show enough development of personal ideas. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were average. In recent years, results have varied according to the standards of those pupils who choose to take the course at the beginning of Year 10, and have usually been average or above average.
116. Leadership and management are good, and have secured good improvement since the last inspection. Reviews of performance data, such as examination results, are thorough, and developmental planning is clear. Assessment has improved, and is now good. In addition, the behaviour of boys, and their achievement, have improved, and both are now good.
117. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, methods and materials are exciting, and large scale. For example, in a lesson on construction, pupils made large sculptures from long willow twigs. They bent the long twigs into circles and ovals, joining them with tape to make large, open shapes. They went on to use cotton wool, glue and plaster to create a variety of rough and interesting textures. Their interest levels were very high, and very good learning was the result. Because the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, pupils' achievement, in Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11, is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the active tasks set in lessons, and the good individual advice given by teachers.
118. In a small number of lessons, methods and materials are not inspiring enough, and pupils do not try as hard as they could. They do not pay enough attention to the teacher's reminders to concentrate, and the pace of the lesson slows. This produces a pace and learning that is satisfactory in those lessons.
119. There are not enough opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to visit art galleries, or to take part in workshops with professional artists. As a result, their research is rather limited, and their sketchbooks lack a sense of real originality.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils at all stages learn well because teaching is good.
- There are good challenges for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented.
- The accommodation is poor, adversely affecting achievement in practical activities.
- The National Curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 cannot be taught in full because there are insufficient facilities for ICT.
- Extra-curricular activities are good.

### **Commentary**

120. The GCSE examination results in 2004 were well above average, although no students gained the highest grade of A\*. However, numbers are too low for valid comparison with the national picture. Standards seen during the inspection were average. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2004 were similar to the above-average standards observed during the inspection.
121. Pupils' attainment in music on entry to the college is average, and across Years 7 to 9, pupils achieve well as a result of teachers' clear lesson planning and systematic teaching of skills and knowledge. Boys achieve as well as girls, and, because lesson strategies are properly planned, pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve as well as other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are fast-tracked towards early examination entry. At all stages, pupils are eager to succeed, co-operating and concentrating well when expected to work independently. In Year 9, most pupils play fluently because they have developed the correct technique for playing keyboards and pitched percussion instruments. They read simple scores, follow guidelines to create musically convincing compositions and recognise the important features of the different styles of music they have studied. However, their progress in ensemble playing, composing and listening is restricted because congested classroom accommodation prevents them from experimenting and evaluating their efforts. No singing was heard during the inspection.
122. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, several of whom have chosen the course in spite of having no systematic instrumental experience outside school, achieve well. Average and lower attainers achieve above their predicted levels, although some higher-attaining pupils lack motivation, which affects their attainment. All perform competently, and several higher-attaining pupils play at a level above that required for the examination. Some, whose experience in music outside the classroom is narrow, struggle with composing, and with some aspects of general musical knowledge. Higher attainers in Year 10 will take the GCSE examination this year, which is a year earlier than usual.
123. At all stages, pupils learn well because teaching is good. Teachers are accomplished, versatile musicians who provide highly effective role models. Their expectations are high and they plan appropriately for the full range of pupils. Topics are relevant, strategies are imaginatively and systematically presented and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace in a calm, but purposeful, atmosphere. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and achieve well, in spite of the restrictions of the accommodation. There are occasional misjudgements in the use of time, and in some lessons, there is too much emphasis on note-taking or talk at the expense of practical activities.
124. Leadership is good. The head of department is energetic, readily becomes involved in a wide range of activities and has an intense personal commitment to pupils' success. Support for the newly-qualified teacher in the department is good. Management is satisfactory. Departmental arrangements for monitoring teaching are informal, without any opportunities for the head of department to be appraised by another experienced music practitioner. The assessment system is not properly linked to National Curriculum criteria and there is insufficient short-term target-setting. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is not yet complete, and does not balance time between ethnic styles and traditional western music appropriately. Developmental planning properly highlights the need for increased ICT, which is still insufficient for this part of the National Curriculum. The accommodation is poor. In the main teaching room, access to electrical sockets is difficult, as mentioned in the last inspection. There is no second teaching room, causing significant loss of teaching and learning time as bulky equipment is transported to different rooms around the college. Pupils taught under these circumstances make slower progress than those taught in the music room. There are no suitable separate spaces in which groups of pupils can work on their compositions, developing their discrimination and sensitivity, and only one room for instrumental teaching.
125. Good standards have been maintained, and numbers taking instrumental lessons have increased to around 150. Music continues to make an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The college's reputation is enhanced by regular

productions, and by pupils who perform in groups at local fund-raising events. However, because accommodation difficulties have become acute, electrical installations are still inappropriate, and there is insufficient ICT, improvement is only satisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is very good.
- Results in the GCSE examinations are well above average and have steadily improved.
- The extra-curricular programme is a strength of the college.
- Exemplary use of ICT is evident across the department.

### Commentary

126. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are generally good in some games, gymnastics, trampolining and dance. In rugby, the majority of boys are able to apply the individual techniques they have learned in a game. In gymnastics, pupils show a range of ideas, and many girls perform individual and paired balances with poise and control. Girls are less ambitious than boys in performing in Year 7, but by Year 9, are keen to develop challenging sequences with apparatus. By Year 9, a significant number of boys reach high standards of performance on the trampoline, the number of boys achieving front somersaults being an impressive feature. All pupils move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently. Standards in games, such as volleyball and badminton, are less secure and only just about average for the pupils' age. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 for pupils as a whole is very good.
127. In Year 11, standards in core physical education are good, with many pupils achieving well in football and dance. Many individual boys show very good levels of performance in football and the majority of girls often attain well and beyond personal expectations in dance. Across Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good. The programme allows nearly all pupils to follow either short- or full-course GCSE programmes, which involve pupils in constantly evaluating and appraising their performances.
128. In the GCSE examinations, all pupils achieve well, with an impressive number gaining grades A\* to C last year. Results are well above national averages. The knowledge of rules and tactical considerations, as well as personal performance in a number of areas, is good. Standards of work in theory lessons are good, and often very good, with the majority of pupils showing good knowledge and understanding of putting theory into practice when discussing the potential impact of the principles of training or the components of health-related fitness. The number of pupils taking GCSE courses has more than doubled and the number of girls taking the subject has also increased since its inception in 2001. The grades achieved every year have steadily risen.
129. Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good. The incidence of non-participation is minimal. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress as the result of informed and enthusiastic help from learning support assistants, who are out in all weathers supporting pupils, in close liaison with the teacher. A significant number of pupils develop and refine their skills in the strong extra-curricular sports programme. It is a strong feature of college life and provides rich opportunities for internal or external competition. Many clubs also exist for those pupils who wish purely to participate, and these are well attended. Events such as the annual gymnastic and dance performance involve a large number of pupils from across the whole college, including the sixth form.
130. Teaching is generally good with some of it very good or excellent. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good where there are challenging objectives and teachers provide stimulating demonstrations and a brisk pace, with a variety of tasks. In Year 9, teaching is excellent in lessons where realistic tasks are set for the different abilities, as in a trampoline lesson where

boys rose to the challenge of somersaulting. Aided by very good use of technology, they can compare their performance with a specific model. Across Years 7 to 11, learning is often very good because it is informed by detailed assessment of progress and it takes place within a context that fosters encouragement. This distinctive feature often results in spontaneous applause as pupils celebrate the achievements of their peers.

131. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The teaching team pursues excellence but has adopted an ethos of 'sport for all'. Thus, overall provision for sport is very good. The condition of entrances to facilities is poor, due to the mud that is carried in. This undermines the high standards set by the department and is often hazardous.
132. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. There have been considerable developments, including the overall levels of staffing, the more coherent structure of assessment, an increase in certificated courses available for all pupils and effective use of ICT in teaching. The numbers taking GCSE have continued to grow and results are well above the national average.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- There is a strong sense of community in the college.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.
- Citizenship is not co-ordinated across the curriculum.
- Links with the wider community are not fully exploited.

#### **Commentary**

133. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, pupils' attainment is in line with expectations for their age. This represents satisfactory achievement in the areas of developing participation and responsible action, as well as sound progress in acquiring the skills of enquiry and communication. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are satisfactory and there is a strong sense of community in the college.
134. Understanding the consequences of actions is a developing theme and is apparent in sessions based around the themes of smoking and alcohol consumption. For example, pupils in Year 10 are aware of the possible outcomes, not just on the individual but also on others in the community. Looking at medical ethics and religion in religious education, and the above-average levels of literacy and oracy enable pupils to express and justify a viewpoint, but their awareness of links with citizenship is less secure.
135. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and there is a good balance between individual tasks, group work and whole-class teaching. In a Year 8 assignment, 'Should cannabis be legalised?' pupils researched and presented arguments and then expressed their own opinions. However, there are missed opportunities to extend thinking beyond the familiar and to challenge assumptions.
136. The programme of study is mapped within the overall life skills programme, underpinned by coherent schemes of work. There is a dedicated team, which has done a careful audit within the life skills programme. However, the audit has not extended to the overall curriculum. There is recognition of the college's role as a community, but pupils' experience in the wider community, through bringing visitors in or involvement with external organisations, is limited. There is also little appreciation of the multicultural nature of current society.

137. Citizenship is explored through events such as mock elections, and the year and college councils, where representatives are democratically elected. The councils have been effective in improving the variety of food in the canteen, the provision of drinking water, the introduction of a lower-school magazine, and a project to establish recycling. There is also a peer-mentoring scheme in which older pupils are trained to offer advice and support. However, year group work and assemblies do not yet underpin the citizenship programme by focusing on responsibility and accountability.
138. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with the life skills programme fully embracing citizenship requirements. The change in status of citizenship from a cross-curricular theme to a discrete National Curriculum subject has not been fully implemented, however, and some pupils fail to attach appropriate importance to it. There has been no subject audit or staff training. Opportunities to encourage pupils to challenge stereotypes and consider injustice and prejudice in the wider community are not exploited.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The lifeskills programme encompasses all aspects of support for personal development.
- The programme is planned and resourced well.
- Teaching is by a team of specialists.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and feel that they are beneficial.
- Links with outside agencies are underdeveloped.
- The quality of links with tutorial work and assembly themes is too variable.

### **Commentary**

139. The college has chosen to teach personal, social and health education in conjunction with citizenship, work-related learning and careers education under the umbrella title of 'lifeskills'. This holistic approach is providing good support for the personal development of pupils and is an indication of the value placed on it by the college. Plans for development, for example, are linked to whole-school issues of behaviour, attitudes and learning. The programme has been carefully planned and is supported by appropriate resources, but the weighting given to each component does not always provide an appropriate emphasis for each. A team of specialist teachers, who also have pastoral responsibilities, teaches lifeskills, which enables links to be established with work done during tutorial time and with assembly themes. The effectiveness of these links is determined by the enthusiasm of form tutors. In the most effective tutorials, pupils are given the opportunity to discuss these themes. In some tutorials, treatment of the 'thought for the week' is perfunctory and does little to enhance pupils' understanding. By Year 9, pupils are able to identify and discuss the key issues surrounding drug misuse and their understanding of the complexities of its effects on personal relationships is above average. Discussions with Year 11 pupils revealed an above average awareness and understanding of the personal and social issues that are likely to impinge of their lives.
140. Teaching and learning are good overall and help pupils make good achievement. Relevant and up-to-date resources are used to support carefully planned lessons. Pupils are interested in lesson topics and their enthusiasm is maintained by use of varied teaching methods and activities. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson, for example, developed a better understanding of how tobacco advertising can manipulate feelings and attitudes in pursuit of increased sales. The lesson was well-taught and used group work, class discussion, video and individual activity. Pupils were able to identify and discuss the subtleties of the issues in a reasoned and sensitive way. Because they have good opportunities for group work, pupils develop valuable

skills of sharing ideas and considering the views of others. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers' explanations are not clear enough to allow pupils to carry out tasks without additional clarification. Occasionally, techniques for managing group discussions with younger pupils are not strong enough and learning is not as productive. Pupils are encouraged to record their work in an organised way and to take care with presentation of completed pieces of work. Because of this, pupils treat the subject with respect, conduct themselves sensibly in lessons and hold the view that lessons are worthwhile and enjoyable. Higher-attaining pupils are able to construct reasoned and well-written essays on topics that explore emotional issues and require consideration of the feelings of others. Whilst lower-attaining pupils are less sophisticated in their responses, evidence from notebooks shows that they have participated fully in lessons. For example, leaflets produced during a topic on relationships contain thoughtful messages.

141. The lifeskills programme includes all statutory requirements for sex and relationships education and raising awareness of drug and alcohol misuse. Whilst the college makes attempts to include outside agencies in the teaching programme, these links are not strong enough to demonstrate to pupils the specialised skills and experience available. There are good links with the Connexions service and, together with the work experience programme and careers advice, pupils are well prepared for the world of work and further education pathways. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and has included strengthening the links between all aspects of school life that contribute to pupils' personal development.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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-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
English language	7	100.0	99.4	14.3	44.9	71.4	85.5
Mathematics	7	100.0	96.7	42/9	56.5	82.9	89.5
Physics	3	100.0	96.7	66.7	45.3	86.7	82.6
ICT	10	100.0	96.3	10.0	25.7	68.0	71.1
Geography	5	100.0	98.8	20.0	46.4	50.0	86.3
Art and design	8	87.5	98.3	12.5	50.2	55.0	87.1
Physical education	6	100.0	97.8	33.3	30.9	76.7	75.4
Business studies	10	100.0	91.6	31.6	24.1	85.3	67.9

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

The focus was on English language. No lessons in English literature were observed during the inspection. Discontinuity in staffing has had an adverse effect on the teaching of this course. Candidates retaking the GCSE English examination do not usually manage to attain grades C and above.

Provision in English language is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement.
- Leadership and management are good; new innovations have been introduced effectively.
- Assessment procedures, whilst satisfactory, are not used well enough to challenge and motivate students.
- Students work hard, acquiring and reinforcing knowledge well.

### **Commentary**

142. The results in A-level examinations are variable. In 2004, they were well above average. Students did better in English language than in their other subjects. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are average, which represents good achievement for these students since they began Year 12 with slightly lower attainment than sixth-form students generally. Male and female students are making good progress towards fulfilling the targets set for them; many are exceeding these targets. Students in Year 13 analyse textual language confidently. Higher-attaining students express themselves fluently, using specialist vocabulary appropriately. The essays of lower-attaining students follow a structured pattern systematically, using relevant detail. Students in Year 12 show lively interest in discussion. They are mastering complex ideas and their specialist vocabulary is developing well. Students read around the subject reasonably, thus extending their awareness of the way language is used.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some teaching is excellent. Where teaching is most successful, students are actively involved and learn at a fast pace. For example, students in Year 12 progressed rapidly in acquiring knowledge about the characteristics of the language of text messages because they moved swiftly from one interesting activity to another, bringing their own experiences to bear on their learning and working together with the teacher, exploring new ground. Assessment is satisfactory. Marking is thorough and diagnostic, so that students know their strengths and weaknesses, but assessment is not used powerfully to motivate and drive students towards challenging targets. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and they keep up-to-date with this developing subject. Questioning is used well to assess understanding and deepen students' awareness. Students use computers for research, word-processing for presentation of work and sometimes PowerPoint presentations to teach each other topics.
144. The subject is led and managed well. Detailed programmes of study are in the process of development and assessment procedures are being improved. The head of department sets an excellent example in her teaching. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. More students are electing to study the subject, although there are still more girls than boys, and achievement has improved.

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

145. The college offers a course in key skills communication at Level 3 for all sixth formers. Very few students complete their portfolios to gain accreditation.
146. Standards of literacy are above average. Students are articulate and write with technical accuracy in the subjects they study. Teaching introduces new terms carefully; thus, students use specialist vocabulary appropriately and fluently. Students' research skills are good and they use books as well as computers. They do not, however, read around their subjects sufficiently to extend their knowledge.

## MATHEMATICS

The college offers courses leading to mathematics at GCE AS and A-level. Students study a combination of pure mathematics with either mechanics or statistics. There are five students studying further mathematics in Year 12 who are well taught and are making good progress. Sixth-form students wishing to improve upon their GCSE grades are also well provided for in a small class preparing to retake the GCSE examination in the summer. The focus of the inspection was on AS and A-level mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
- Good assessment of the students' work helps them to progress well.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- ICT does not contribute well enough to teaching and learning.

### Commentary

147. The A-level examination results in 2004 were in line with the national averages, showing good improvement in relation to the students' individual average GCSE scores in 2002. Results for previous years have usually been above average, with students performing at least as well as predicted and often better. The AS results were also above average in the last two years, similarly reflecting good achievement.
148. Current standards are above average throughout the sixth form. In each year, there is a range of attainment from those likely to gain the highest grades of A and B to those who will pass narrowly with grade E. All are on course for a pass, given their current rate of progress and level of commitment. Students in Year 13 display a good understanding of the calculus and its use, including the ability to calculate surfaces of revolution in mechanics. In Year 12, all students have made a secure start, with almost all showing above-average algebraic skills and good problem-solving ability. This current good achievement builds on excellent achievement in earlier years in the college.
149. Teaching is good. Pupils learn well in lessons because they are carefully prepared and presented with appropriate pace at a good level of challenge. Teachers are very well qualified and knowledgeable. Much of the sixth-form teaching is very good. In these lessons, very skilful discussion and a variety of question-and-answer techniques ensure that students understand new ideas, such as parametric equations in Year 13 and conservation of momentum in Year 12. In some lessons, effective use is made of the interactive whiteboard and students remarked upon the extent to which this enlivened their lessons. In general, however, there is less use of ICT than is seen in the most effective practice. The head of department is aware of this and, along with her colleagues, eagerly awaits delivery of more whiteboards, which will enhance the opportunities for staff to use more ICT in their teaching. All of the staff is computer literate and further training to enable effective use of the new equipment is in hand.
150. Assessment is good. Work causing students difficulty is checked in lessons, and students receive good guidance and support from the teachers. There are examples of very good practice, with teachers using model answers to demonstrate how more difficult questions can be best answered. The use of testing to reinforce current learning and review topics covered earlier in course is regular and effective. Students are encouraged by their teachers to be very aware of their responsibility for managing their own learning. They all spoke most warmly of the extreme willingness with which teachers make themselves available to give extra individual advice and support outside of class.

151. Departmental leadership and management are good and have ensured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The teacher who is most involved with organisation of sixth-form work works closely with the head of department to see that the teachers and schemes of work are up to date. She plays a substantial part in the organisation of the sixth form as a whole, which keeps her in close touch with the students. The recently introduced system of providing one-to-one interviews with students experiencing difficulties is proving increasingly effective.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

152. In general, students' skills in mathematics are above average and they use them well to support their learning in other subjects. In geography, for example, students interpret primary data effectively as part of their study of river flows and of transport networks. In physical education, very good teaching results in effective interpretation of graphs for various aspects of physiology. In physics, students calculate the half-life of radioactive isotopes, such as radon, using logarithmic graphing techniques.

153. The college offers a compulsory course in Level 2 key skills (application of number) for every student in the sixth form. Some take this seriously and produce good portfolios, so that everyone who completes the course acquires the qualification. The vast majority of students, however, perceive this as peripheral to their main studies; they fail to complete the necessary coursework and so are not entered for the qualification.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Physics**

Provision in physics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' good achievement is underpinned by their positive attitudes.
- Teaching is consistently good, resulting in good learning.
- Teachers have a very good command of the subject.
- Relatively few females do the subject.

### **Commentary**

154. The A-level results in 2004, from a very small cohort, were above average, with the majority of students gaining the highest grades of A or B. The AS results in 2004 were below average and some students' results were unclassified. Retention rates are good, with most students completing their physics course.

155. Standards of work in Year 12 are in line with course expectations and somewhat better than the most recent AS level examination results would suggest. This year group has a level of attainment on entry to the course that is higher than in previous years. Students are building well on the knowledge and understanding gained in their GCSE studies and are achieving well overall. For example, they have a sound knowledge and understanding of how elastic materials perform under load. They calculate physical quantities, such as stress and strain, when a wire is put under load and relate this theory to the physical effects observed. Standards of work in Year 13 are above average and again represent good achievement. Students have a good understanding of the processes by which radioactive isotopes decay. They use their mathematical skills well to evaluate the half-life of an isotope of radon using a graphical technique.

156. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers make effective use of their strong knowledge of the subject to ensure that concepts are clearly explained, which enhances learning. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of physics through experimentation, although this is sometimes done through demonstration rather than individual work, due to a shortage of apparatus. Expectations of students are high and students respond well. They work hard and show interest in the subject. Their mature outlook is reflected in the quality of their work. Students feel that they are doing well and appreciate the help they receive outside lessons when they encounter difficulties. Assessment is good and used well to monitor students' progress.
157. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a strong commitment to build upon what has already been achieved. Co-operation between teachers is good. However, the department has had little success attracting girls into the subject, which has resulted in a gender imbalance. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with the A-level results showing consistently good achievement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The inspection focus was AVCE ICT.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good in all examination courses.
- Teaching is good, especially in the setting of agreed deadlines for the submission of work.
- Students' attitudes are good.

### **Commentary**

158. In the 2004 A-level examinations, students gained results that were in line with the national average. The present Year 13 students are attaining standards that are overall average. Their achievement is good, particularly when the below-average previous attainment of these students is taken into consideration. In the AS examinations in 2004, students gained results that were above national averages. The present Year 12 students are attaining standards that are around national averages and their achievement is good.
159. Students in Year 13 are attaining average standards in researching human computer interfaces. They identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing interfaces and apply this knowledge well in their designs for users with special educational needs, such as those who are colour blind or have a visual impairment.
160. In Year 12, students show a good knowledge of how to create high-quality commercial documentation using ICT. They do so in the documents they create for a notional business that organises murder mystery occasions. They have a sound awareness of design considerations, such as policies for equal opportunities and levels of readability. The questionnaires they create as part of their research ask a range of appropriate questions, yielding useful information.
161. Teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 are good. A notable strength is the rigour of the system that gives students very clear deadlines for the short-term tasks they are set. Students comment that they appreciate the structure this gives to their learning. This strategy is backed up by the use of good commercial online learning materials, which enhances their ability to learn independently very well. However, the use made of the college's website as a tool to aid learning is relatively weak. The college has firm plans to improve the website.

162. Lessons are well structured. Appropriate time is set aside for practical activities and teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of ICT as they move around the classroom supporting students. Teachers use question-and-answer techniques well to draw out responses from students and to give them the opportunity to present their ideas; they make good use of exemplification material. Some of this material is of only average standard and teachers use this well to point out common drawbacks. Students' attitudes are good. They listen well to teachers and follow instruction well. They are enthusiastic about the subject and are keen to contribute in question and answer sessions.
163. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Standards have improved since the last inspection, as have ICT resources. The procedures to track the progress of students have improved and are now examples of very good practice. Procedures governing admission and the conditions for continuing with the course are not sufficiently rigorous. Because of entry and retention decisions at sixth form level, some students continue too long on courses despite evidence that their effort is insufficient to gain them a pass.

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

164. The provision of cross-curricular ICT is satisfactory. Students have sound access to facilities and make satisfactory use of ICT in a range of subjects, including art and design, music and business education.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Students' achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

#### **Commentary**

165. Students achieve well. Attainment on entry to the AS course covers a wide spectrum of prior attainment in GCSE examinations and overall it is in line with expectations for the students' age. Occasionally, students who have not taken this examination as a GCSE subject embark on the course. Numbers in the Year 12 AS group are much healthier this year, showing the improving success and popularity of the subject in Year 11, but the Year 13 group is small. Standards in the AS group are broadly average, but with a minority who have reached well above these requirements. Standards in the A-level group in Year 13 are average. Because of the small numbers taking AS and A-level examinations in recent years, any comparisons with national figures would be unreliable. However, in 2004, all students attained a pass grade in both courses, with the majority of students doing better than expected in relation to their GCSE examination performance.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Planning is well structured and pays good attention to the examination requirements. Teachers use their effective subject expertise well and, in the best lessons, develop students' thinking skills very well through challenging questioning. However, a significant number of students lack confidence and teachers have to work hard to encourage the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills through the use of a range of good strategies. For example, work in Year 12 on aspects of meteorology made the students draw on their previous knowledge and understanding as they identified the causes of weather associated with different air masses. A lesson on the impact

and development of tourism led to the students collaborating well as they shared their ideas and arrived at more complex concepts of human geography. Work is well structured to support the differing needs of the students, although occasionally tasks do not make maximum use of teaching time. The use of whiteboards to show developing ideas and to summarise key points is only satisfactory overall. Not all students can hold the detail in their minds as they think through concepts. Good use is made of homework assignments and there is effective support for coursework, not least through relevant field studies. Assessment is very good, and students appreciate the support that they are given. Work is marked well, with constructive comments to show students how they can address weaknesses. The use of ICT is satisfactory and students' overall sound competence is shown in their course work.

167. Leadership and management are good, and there is continuity with work in Years 7 to 11. There is a very good team approach as all staff share sixth-form teaching. There is a good vision for development and its effect is seen through increasing numbers of students. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall, with better quality of teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are now very effective, but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning limits the sharing of best practice. Timetabling has an adverse effect on the provision. Too many lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms in the sixth-form area, thus preventing the spontaneous access to resources to develop further students' knowledge and understanding. Equally, students in Year 13 have too many lessons closely grouped, undermining continuity in students' learning. Nevertheless, this is a strong department which has the capacity to improve.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Over the last three years, students' performance in A-level examinations has not been as high as it should, but there are now signs of improvement.
- Recent improvements in assessment mean that students now have a good knowledge of how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Three-dimensional constructions are exciting.
- In the best lessons, there is a good pace, and students learn well.
- Students' independent work lacks a sense of urgency and pace.
- Reviews of performance data and development planning are not sufficiently detailed.

#### **Commentary**

168. The A-level results were well below average in 2004, and students did worse than expected considering their performance in their GCSE examinations. The results vary from year to year, and over the last three years, most students have not performed as well as expected.
169. Recent improvements in assessment mean that students have a good understanding of how well they are doing, and how to improve. As a result, their achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is also satisfactory.
170. Three-dimensional constructions are exciting. These are made by using tissue paper, string and wire to create large figures, based on a study of the human form. Students in Year 12 investigate colour thoroughly, producing bright and complex paintings on canvas and board. They use ICT well to enliven the textural qualities of photographs of local street scenes. However, their sketchbooks lack a sense of real excitement, and the notes that they make in them are too brief to explain fully and communicate their ideas. Standards are average in Year 12. In Year 13, higher-attaining students produce vigorous and exciting sketchbooks which

extensively explore themes and ideas. All students research the work of artists and designers thoroughly, but they do not always combine this research with their own experiments well enough to produce work that is ambitious or original. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their modelling skills fully, for example, by working in ceramics. Standards are below average in Year 13, representing satisfactory achievement, considering students' standards in the subject at the start of the course.

171. In the best lessons, the range of activities on offer is good, and students can paint, draw, work with ICT or make constructions. Relationships are also very good, and students listen carefully to the good advice that they receive from their teachers. These factors produce good learning. However, there is not enough variety in the teaching of projects overall. For example, too much work is classroom based, and students do not go out often enough to sketch from life, or take part in workshops with professional artists. As a result, they do not show the very highest levels of inspiration in their work, and teaching and learning, and students' achievement, are only satisfactory overall. Students' independent work lacks a sense of urgency and pace. They work on their projects outside their lesson times, but rather steadily, and without a very brisk pace.
172. Reviews of performance data, such as examination results, are not detailed enough to be useful in promoting further improvement. However, there is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas needing development, planning is sound, and recent improvements in assessment have been made. Leadership and management are, therefore, satisfactory overall.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A-level courses in physical education.

**AVCE leisure and recreation** was sampled. Attainment is good. In Year 13, students showed a positive approach to learning about the role of a sports leader on the AVCE course, and those on the community sports leader award scheme are making very good progress and make significant contributions to the wider sporting life of the college. The combination of the Community Sports Leader Award, First Aid qualification and other coaching accreditation serves to provide worthwhile components for a coherent programme at this level.

### **Physical education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at A-level have been above average and current standards are well above the national average.
- Achievement, or added-value, is very good.
- The department has expanded provision very effectively so that AS, A-level and AVCE courses are now available.
- Students make a good contribution to sporting development in the main school and in partner primary schools.

### **Commentary**

173. The work of Years 12 and 13 students is of well above average standard. A significant number of students have been successful in gaining grades A to E since the introduction of an A-level course three years ago. Attainment in the AS course shows an upward trend, both in grades achieved and in numbers taking the subject. An impressive number of students achieved beyond their target grades, representing very good achievement. Students show good knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting

performance. In a Year 12 session on training principles, students successfully linked them to training methods within their own sports and to power and endurance training. Students in Year 13 demonstrated good levels of understanding in their personal exercise programmes. They draw on personal experience to relate theory to practical examples. However, a minority of students do not read around the topic independently, prior to teaching sessions. The research skills of some students are weak, so that they are too reliant on the teacher and their approach to work is too passive.

174. Achievement is very good because of the amount of independent work put in by individual students and in this they are helped by the setting of targets and deadlines by teachers. Sixth-form students make an invaluable contribution to the extra-curricular programme, not only through representation in the high level of competitive sport, but also by assisting teaching staff in coaching administrative duties: this extends to placements in feeder primary schools, where their input is highly valued.
175. Teaching is generally good, with examples of very good teaching. Teachers provide a range of interesting tasks. They have a good knowledge of the subject and are able to provide stimulating examples to illustrate their teaching. In the very good sessions, pace is maintained throughout and questions are directed at individuals, always encouraging the link between theory, practice and previous learning. In the session on training principles, the teacher knew his students and was able to direct questions appropriately in order to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. Teachers' expectations of their students are high. Students are expected to learn independently, either in the form of preparatory or follow-up work, and to present topics. Little use is made of extension tasks for the higher-attaining students, who are not encouraged to do further research. Teachers show a genuine enthusiasm for their subject and always endeavour to link scientific concepts to practical issues within sport, fitness and health. They know their students and the rigorous monitoring and target-setting enable students to respond to deadlines, ensuring that learning is enhanced by continuous assessment.
176. Leadership and management of the programme at sixth-form level are excellent. The contributions of several specialist teachers are very well co-ordinated and staff work to individual targets and receive regular and very clear feedback from the subject leader. Students likewise are enabled to be very well aware of their progress in this subject. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when AS and A level did not feature in the sixth-form programme.

## **BUSINESS**

The inspection focused on AVCE business. The college also offers economics at AS and A-level. Achievement in economics is good.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Leadership and management are good.
- A lack of wider and in-depth reading affects students' performance in both class work and examinations.
- Accommodation and lack of specialised resources limits teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

177. Results in the AVCE examinations are in line with national figures. Work seen is average. The strength of the students' class work is their basic understanding of the subject matter and the steady accumulation of knowledge, which is well organised in their files, particularly of such underpinning business concepts as organisational functions and structures. Given the levels of prior attainment at entry to the sixth form, achievement is good. However, students' progress is hindered by the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject.
178. Students' projects and written coursework are interesting, well produced and professionally presented. Higher-attaining students effectively evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate and well-supported conclusions. They are increasingly confident with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data, although these still remain relative weaknesses. Lower-attaining students demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts. However, they do not always develop an explanation into a fully substantiated view and they often make unsupported assertions and present evidence which is not always evaluated.
179. Teaching is good. Teachers have excellent rapport with students and their expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Lessons are carefully planned and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Students are well supported academically, and they appreciate the support which they receive. Teachers ensure that students have enough practice in the kinds of analysis that will enable them to become more independent learners. However, there are some lessons in which there is a tendency for teachers to be overly didactic. Progress is best where students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work.
180. Learning reflects teaching and is good. Students respond well in lessons. Higher-attaining students maintain intellectual rigour. Where there is access, students use computers effectively to undertake research and to prepare reports for coursework. Their attitudes are mature and they sustain interest, although some tend to be passive rather than being actively involved in contributing to lessons.
181. Leadership and management are good. Management of some key aspects of the department are very good, particularly the good use of formal assessment and marking. The head of department checks and analyses results carefully to identify areas of courses in which learning can be improved and sets clear targets for action as a consequence. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in size and adequacy for the subject, which militates against the creation of an appropriate atmosphere for business-related activities. Insufficient access to ICT and professional software has an adverse effect on learning. Links with business are not yet comprehensive enough to give sufficient opportunities for developing awareness from practitioners in the field. There was little specific comment about business studies in the last report, so no comment can be given on improvement since that time.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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