

INSPECTION REPORT

Tavistock College

Tavistock, Devon

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113539

Headteacher: Mr Chris Powell, Acting Principal

Lead inspector: John Carnaghan

Dates of inspection: 21st - 25th February 2005

Inspection number: 268944

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 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1850
School address:	Crowndale Road Tavistock Devon
Postcode:	PL19 8DD
Telephone number:	01822 614231
Fax number:	01822 612030
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alex Woods
Date of previous inspection:	February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Tavistock College is a large 11 to 18 comprehensive college serving the town of Tavistock and a large rural area. It is a specialist language college. The area it serves has average social and economic factors. The standards of students as they enter the college in Year 7 are average. The proportion of students who take free college meals is below average. Very few students are from ethnic minority backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of speaking English. There are very small numbers of looked-after children, and no refugees or travellers. The proportion of students with special educational needs is average and the numbers of those with statements of special educational need are average. The number of students who join the college or leave at other than the usual times is a little above average. The college experienced the resignation of its Principal and the appointment of a new Acting Principal approximately one month before the inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	21
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Work-related learning	23
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	55

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Tavistock College provides a satisfactory standard of education. Students' standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good. The leadership of the college changed a few weeks before the inspection and is good. It has ensured that the college has continued to provide a satisfactory standard of education during a turbulent time. The curriculum is unsatisfactory because it is incomplete. Accommodation is outdated and unsatisfactory. Management is satisfactory. Governance is good, but governors have not ensured that all elements of the National Curriculum are covered or that there are daily acts of collective worship. The college spends average amounts per student, giving satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the Acting Principal and other key staff has maintained above average standards during a difficult transition period. Governors make a strong and growing contribution to college improvement, but have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met;
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good;
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good;
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Coverage of all aspects of National Curriculum subjects is incomplete and provision for work-related learning is very limited and is unsatisfactory. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship;
- Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory because planning has been insufficient and computers are inadequately deployed;
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and limit attainment in some subjects;
- In history and geography, provision and achievement are very good overall. Provision and achievement in English, mathematics, art and design, physical education, religious education, and business studies is good and provision for students with special educational needs is very good;
- International links have been mutually beneficial.

The college was previously inspected in 1999. It has successfully addressed two of the five key issues. Of the other three, the college's planning for the future is disjointed and unconvincing. Accommodation is seeing some improvements, but remains unsatisfactory. Some weaknesses in the curriculum have been dealt with, but it also remains unsatisfactory. Students' standards in tests and examinations have largely kept pace with national improvements. However, improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

For Year 11, similar colleges are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Current standards are above average. On entering the college, standards are average, so students' **achievement across the college is good**. It is very good in history, geography and business studies in Years 10 and 11. It is good overall in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, physical education and religious education, and in Years 7 to 9 in history and geography. Achievement of boys relative to girls varies between subjects, but is generally similar to the national pattern. The few students who speak English as an additional language and students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. The very small numbers of students from ethnic minorities makes a judgement of their achievement invalid.

Students' personal qualities and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Attitudes, relationships and behaviour are all good. Development of moral, social and cultural awareness is good and promotion of spiritual awareness is satisfactory. The action the college has taken to promote attendance is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Seven out of ten lessons seen were good or better and a third of lessons were very good. Teachers have good subject expertise and use both this and a wide range of classroom strategies to engage students in their learning. Relationships are warm and constructive. Teachers have to work hard to overcome the limitations imposed by unsatisfactory accommodation and resources.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. The science curriculum is unbalanced and elements of the design and technology, music and ICT curriculum for Years 10 and 11 are not covered. Work-related learning is provided for few students and does not meet requirements. There are too few acts of collective worship. There are good opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and limit attainment. Guidance to help students improve is good. Assessment is satisfactory, providing the college with valuable information. This is starting to be used to set improvement targets for students. The involvement of students in the running of the college is satisfactory and developing and students meet staff regularly. There are satisfactory links with parents and the local community and good links with other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The Acting Principal is a good leader who has raised expectations and morale throughout the college in the few weeks since taking up his post. However, in his brief tenure, he has been unable to overcome the existing deficiencies in areas such as planning, the curriculum and accommodation. The senior management have striven to maintain college provision in the face of difficulties. Line management of departments has ensured teaching is strong. Methods of self-evaluation are satisfactory, but the college has not planned effectively for improvement. Overall, management is satisfactory. Governance is good. The governing body is robust, understands the college's strengths and weaknesses and supports it well, seeking to challenge and influence its priorities. However, it has not ensured that the college meets all statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are generally satisfied with the college and most report that their children like attending. A minority are concerned about the information they receive from the college and the way their views are sought. Reports and other information sent home are unsatisfactory. A minority of parents are worried about behaviour, but behaviour is good. Parents and students do not like the split lunch-breaks and the inspection supports their concerns. Most students like college and say teaching is good. However, many showed concerns about behaviour and bullying in their questionnaires, but inspectors find that these are not significant issues. When interviewed, students say that bullying is not common and the college deals with it well. Some students thought they were unfairly treated and did not think there was an adult they could talk to. A small group feel that they do not receive sufficient careers and other guidance about choices after Year 11. The inspection does not support either of these concerns. Careers guidance is satisfactory.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the curriculum to meet requirements and raise standards. Ensure all students have opportunities to experience work-related learning;
- Improve inadequate areas of accommodation and unsatisfactory resources, particularly in ICT;
- Improve the quality of communication with parents;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the college provides the required acts of collective worship;
- Meet National Curriculum requirements for music, design and technology and ICT.

SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH FORM REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students' standards are above average and their achievement is good. Teaching, learning and the assessment of students' work are good. The curriculum is good because it provides a wide range of subjects. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Governance is good. The sixth form is cost-effective. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students' work is thoroughly assessed so that they have clear targets for improvement;
- Provision is very good in religious education, history and psychology. It is good in English, ICT, health and social care, French, biology, chemistry, physics, business studies and film studies;
- Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good;
- Opportunities to use ICT in a number of subjects are limited by a shortage of computers.

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	English. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students receive high-quality feedback throughout their courses. Their achievement is good. Leadership is very good and management is good. French. Good. Teaching, learning and achievement are good and standards are above average. Attitudes are very good and the subject is well led and managed.
Mathematics	Mathematics. Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is students' achievement. The area is well led and management is satisfactory.
Science	Physics. Good. Current standards are above average. Teaching, learning and achievement are good and the area is well led. Chemistry. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Their standards are above average. Leadership and management are good. Biology. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. The subject is well led and managed and the curriculum is good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Film studies. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Leadership and management are good, but there are too few opportunities for enrichment of learning through trips and visits.
ICT	ICT. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students' standards are above average. Leadership and management are good.

Health and social care.	Health and social care. Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well, supported by a good curriculum. Standards are average. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Humanities	History. Very good. Teaching, learning and assessment of students' work is very good. Standards are above average. The subject is very well led and managed. Psychology. Very good. Excellent students' attitudes and behaviour and very good teaching and learning promote very good achievement. Leadership and management are very good. Religious education. Very good. Teaching and learning are very good, but achievement is limited by accommodation and resources and so it is good. Leadership is very good and management is good.
Business	Business studies. Good. Teaching and learning are very good, but limitations in the curriculum mean that achievement is good. Leadership and management are good.

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 college. 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

The use of assessment to promote students' learning is good. The college makes good use of the data to ensure that all students are suitably aware of their strengths and areas for improvement and to set appropriate targets. Preparation for students' future after Year 13 is good. Most students feel they are given a good degree of responsibility and are treated as young adults, but a minority of those who completed questionnaires are unhappy about their advice on options after they leave school. However, when interviewed, students said they received good guidance on higher education and career choices and the inspection supports these views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of sixth form is well informed, provides a good role-model and has warm relationships with students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have generally positive views of the sixth form. Students feel that the sixth form is well led and managed. They say they enjoy sixth-form life and applaud the quality of teaching. They value the wide range of subjects to choose from. A large minority feel that the college does not seek their views sufficiently or that there are no adults who know them well. They showed concerns about bullying in questionnaires. However, when interviewed, students said that bullying in college had diminished in recent years and is not an issue and the inspection team agrees. Relationships with adults are, in fact, good and students can express their ideas at the school 'senate' and in the sixth-form committee.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' standards are **above average**. Students' achievement during their time at school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the quality of support, the achievement of students with special educational needs is good. For the very few who speak English as an additional language it is also good.
- Achievement is very good in business studies, history and geography in Years 10 and 11. In English, mathematics, ICT, art and design, physical education and religious education, it is good in Years 7 to 11. It is also good in Years 7 to 9 in history and geography and in Years 10 and 11 in science and music.
- There are well above average standards in geography in Years 10 and 11.
- Music standards in Years 7 to 9 are below expectations.

Commentary

1. Students start life at the school with academic standards that are generally average. In Year 9, current standards are above average and were well above average in Year 9 tests in English and above average in mathematics and science. This indicates that students' achievement during their time in Years 7 to 9 is good. In Years 10 and 11, current standards and examination results are above average. This maintenance of above average standards represents good achievement both for this age range and overall.
2. There are a number of reasons for good achievement at the school. Teaching has drive, ambition and focus and there is good pace to most students' learning. This is enhanced by most students' strong learning ethos. Lessons are rarely disturbed by bad behaviour and students enjoy the activities in lessons. However, in many subject areas, limitations in accommodation and resources inhibit attainment, but the standards reached in these circumstances indicate good achievement.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average points scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.6(33.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.8 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.2 (35.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 282 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The school's results in tests at the end of Year 9 have remained above average overall for the four years up to and including 2004. There are no national comparitors for each subject so 2004 results cannot be compared with these students' prior attainment in tests at the end of Year 6, but in 2003 English results were average, mathematics results were well above average and those in science were above average. These figures indicate good achievement for students over Years 7 to 9.
- Year 9 students' current standards are largely above what is expected nationally, although they are at the expected level in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages (overall), citizenship and religious education. They are below expectations in music. In terms of statutory targets for students at the end of Year 9, in 2004, the school was very close to its challenging targets in English and mathematics, comfortably exceeded its low ICT target, but fell well short of its difficult science target. This variation would indicate some unreliability in the college's assessment of these students' abilities in preceding years.
- The gains students make in Year 9 provide a sound foundation for their continuing studies. The focus given to achieving success in GCSE and other examinations encourages students and promotes their continuing good achievement.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54 (53)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (94)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student	41.9 (40.5)	41.4 (40.6)

There were 294 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The trend of improvement in GCSE results over the period 2001-04 was below the improving national trend. Results in 2004, based on average points, were average in comparison with all schools nationally and average when compared with these students' Year 9 results. The school was more successful in the proportion of students who gained more than five or one or more A* to G grades at GCSE where the results were above average. For those who gained five or more A* to C grades, standards were average compared with all schools and in comparison to their previous standards.
- Subject GCSE results in 2004 were well above average in art and design and geography. They were above average in English, mathematics, ICT, history and full-course religious education. Results were below average in science, modern foreign languages and business studies. They were well below average in physical education.
- Given the language college status, it may seem surprising that results in modern foreign languages were not better in 2004. However, the college enters all students in Year 11 for at

least one and often two languages. This contrasts to the national pattern where relatively few students are entered for one, let alone two, modern foreign languages. Thus, the national average largely reflects the relatively small group of students who opt to take a language in GCSE examinations, in contrast to the whole year group who take languages at Tavistock College. These factors lower the college's modern foreign languages results in comparison with the national average.

9. The percentage of students who gained five GCSE A*-C grades, the percentage of those who gained five or more grade A*-G and their average point scores all fell slightly short of the school's 2004 target. However, this shows greater accuracy in the assessment of these older students. There are no significant differences between the genders.
10. Year 11 students' current standards are generally above expectations. This is similar to the 2004 GCSE results and is a result of the good and very good teaching that this group receive. Standards are much better than expected in geography and above expectations in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, history, physical education, business studies and full-course religious education. There are no subjects where current standards are below what is expected.
11. Achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good because they receive strong support. Those students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers due to effective support.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.0 (89.8)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	36.1 (32.5)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	266.4 (229.9)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 125 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

12. Students' standards in the sixth form are currently above average. In the 2004 examinations, the average point score of students was in line with the national average. Female students performed similarly to their male counterparts, in line with the national trend. These results were similar to those in 2003, but lower than those in 2002. However, these results represent good achievement for these students and overall in the sixth form.
13. The inspection focused on 13 subjects in depth and standards seen may not reflect the wider pattern across the whole sixth form. With students' standards generally above what is expected nationally, the examination results and standards seen during the inspection represent good achievement. The good teaching and positive attitudes seen in the sixth form are leading to improvements in students' achievement. In the subjects inspected, current standards were in line with expectations in mathematics, health and social care, religious education and business studies. Standards are much better than expected in psychology and better than expected in English, ICT, history, French, biology, chemistry, physics and film studies. Students' achievement is very good in history and psychology and good in English, ICT, French, health and social care, religious education, biology, chemistry, physics, business studies and film studies.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students, including those in the sixth form, have **good** attitudes to college and behaviour is **good**. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality in the main college and the sixth form are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes in lessons contribute well to their learning.
- Behaviour is good in almost all lessons and around the school.
- There are good strategies to support students who feel they are being bullied.

Commentary

14. Students like their college and say that they learn well because of good teaching. The inspection agrees. In lessons, they listen attentively, work hard and concentrate well on extended activities, both when working independently and with others. This has a good effect on their learning and achievement. Students are positive about most areas of college life. They appreciate the range of after-college clubs provided, but are frustrated that they are not able to participate in many lunchtime activities and meet friends due to the split lunch-hour arrangements.
15. Students' behaviour is good. They act sensibly and get on well with others. In a few lessons, there is some low-level disruption that hinders teaching and distracts others from learning, but in most, students behave well. Some students' and parents' questionnaires express concerns about bullying. In discussion, however, students say that bullying is dealt with effectively and that they would know who to go to for help. Inspectors did not observe any significant anti-social behaviour. Help available to students who feel they are being bullied, including peer mediators and a confidential e-mail help-line, is good and well publicised around the college.
16. The development of students' personal qualities is good. In English, geography, history and religious education, students respond very well to opportunities to consider and reflect on the morality of war and the impact of world poverty and show empathy for others' views and ideas. Social development is good and enhanced by many opportunities to take responsibility around the college. Students respond well to their roles as year councillors and senate members and when helping those new to Year 7 to settle into college life. They are willing contributors to charity fundraising events in support of others. Students gain good experience of other cultures through subjects, but also through the college's links as part of its specialist language status. Links with Japan are very strong and much appreciated by students, some of whom have had the opportunity to experience Japanese culture at first hand.
17. Students' spiritual development is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection through more systematic departmental planning. Many lessons provide students with good opportunities to reflect on their own lives and to show empathy and understanding towards others. Assemblies focus on social and moral issues from a broadly Christian viewpoint. However, although tutorials are mostly used satisfactorily to build good working relationships with students, insufficient attention is given to using the 'Thought for the Day' as a focus for discussion and reflection. Thus, the college does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
18. Overall, students with learning difficulties have good attitudes towards learning because a high priority is placed on developing good working relationships by all the staff providing support.

Exclusions

19. The number of permanent exclusions is low and has reduced as a result of the college's good support for students who have significant behaviour difficulties. Students who have fixed-term exclusions receive good guidance and clear targets for improvement when they return. This is helping to achieve a gradual decline in the overall number of exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1764	166	2
White – any other White background	16	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	45	2	0

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

Attendance

20. The college monitors attendance effectively and most students attend well. However, a small number of individual students have unsatisfactory attendance which results in the level of unauthorised absence being slightly higher than average. Unless transport is delayed, students usually arrive at college on time. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.3	School data:	1.3
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

Sixth form

21. Students have positive views of sixth-form life and appreciate the range of subjects on offer to them and the quality of teaching which helps them to achieve well. Students say that behaviour is good in the sixth form and that incidences of bullying are no longer an issue. Students have strong working relationships with staff and appreciate the way in which they are treated with maturity and consideration. Sixth-form students' personal qualities are good. They work and socialise together well and are keen to help younger students, for example, helping to check homework planners during tutorial periods. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although slightly below expected levels due to the erratic attendance of some students,

particularly in Year 12. The college is aware of this and is monitoring attendance more closely through the use of electronic registration at all lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education that the school provides is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **good** and the assessment of students' work is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The school provides **good** care for students and there are **satisfactory** links with parents and the local community and **good** links with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are **good** and assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers promote warm, constructive relationships, which encourage good learning.
- Teachers are subject experts and use their knowledge well to enthuse students.
- Lessons are well planned and organised to provide an interesting range of activities.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 188 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11 (6%)	54 (29%)	71 (37%)	48 (26%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

- Overall, teaching and learning are good. Over a third of lessons seen were very good or excellent and seven out of ten were good or better. In most subjects, teaching is good or better and there are very few unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. However, there is generally strong consistency of teaching. Students are strongly encouraged and engaged and relationships in the classroom are constructive. Classrooms and students are managed with assurance to provide the best circumstances for learning.
- Teachers show a strong sense of care and promote equality of opportunity well. Teachers work closely with the many support staff to ensure that all students receive the correct degree of help. Behaviour and attitudes are positive and this encourages a brisk pace to most lessons. Teachers work effectively to promote students' independence in their learning. They take opportunities to build students' confidence in their endeavours, so that undertaking extended work or research required by many Year 10 and 11 examinations is not such a barrier to success. Teachers have high expectations for students taking GCSE and other examination courses and students respond well, working with an emphasis on meeting the requirements of the examinations.
- Lessons are enhanced by the behaviour and co-operative attitudes of students. They show respect for teachers and other staff in the classroom, listen well to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. They listen well to instructions and this means the pace of learning is usually at least good. Many lessons include a wide range of activities for students and this is effective in engaging their interest, ensuring that concentration levels remain high.
- On the rare occasions where teaching is less effective, the management of students' behaviour is less assured and, because expectations are lower, learning can be unsatisfactory. Teaching can be handicapped by accommodation and teachers and students

often suffer through working in cold, unpleasant and impractical rooms with a lack of useful resources nearby. The unsatisfactory provision of books, materials and particularly computers also inhibits learning. It is to their immense credit that teaching and learning do not suffer more due to these deprivations.

26. In the classroom, teachers make good use of well-structured individual education plans to meet the learning needs of all students, particularly those with special educational needs. Teachers have access to good guidance to support students with learning difficulties and plan effective lessons. The large team of teaching assistants are deployed very well to support students and teachers in the classroom. Some are linked to subject departments to provide the maximum support and continuity for students as they move through the college. Other teaching assistants are deployed across the curriculum to meet the specific needs of individual students. This approach works well to maximise learning. However, the effective use of teaching assistants in the classroom varies depending on the quality of planning and liaison with the subject teacher.
27. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teachers plan their lessons well and provide the individual support required to ensure successful outcomes. In some subjects, there is good use of tailored workbooks and worksheets to meet specific learning needs, for example in science and English. Learning is also enhanced through the effective use of ICT with programmes that target specific learning difficulties and also measure progress.
28. There is good ongoing monitoring and regular diagnostic testing of students with learning difficulties. There is very good liaison with primary schools for the collection and transfer of assessment information when students enter Year 7. Very good use is made of ICT for record keeping and informing staff across the college on the capability of students with learning difficulties. Reviews are effectively undertaken as required, involving parents, college staff and the relevant agencies to ensure learning needs are fully catered for and future strategies agreed.
29. The small number of students in Years 7 to 11 with English as an additional language are assessed promptly by the college. The very good provision involves support in lessons and substantial one-to-one support, when this is necessary, and enables these students to achieve well.
30. The marking of students' work is constructive and linked well to improving their performance. Targets are produced centrally, based on students' prior attainment. Students' work is regularly assessed and compared with extensive academic records kept on the school's administration system. Once a term, students are identified as making exceptional progress, being on target or underachieving, and this information is shared with students and parents. Whilst assessment data is well provided for at whole-school level, further use of this data to inform planning is variable across subjects. Assessment for learning strategies is being piloted and this has helped students to learn better in history and religious education. The use of student self-assessment is underdeveloped. However, assessment is used very well to monitor the progress of students with special educational needs.

Sixth form

31. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. There is a higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching in this age range. Reasons for this include a good focus on the examination requirements and very positive student attitudes, which contribute strongly to good learning. Teachers work hard to ensure that students receive the correct degree of challenge appropriate to examination expectations.
32. Lessons are thoroughly planned to provide continuity of learning through schemes of work. Students' previous learning is checked and reinforced as part of the introduction to lessons and teachers reinforce and extend learning well in the sessions that close most lessons.

33. Accommodation has a detrimental impact in the sixth form. Too many rooms are shoddy, and lack equipment, particularly computers, and space. Again, through the efforts of teachers, these difficulties are often overcome and only occasionally have a negative influence on learning. Occasionally, where teaching is less effective, chances to extend the learning of the most able students are not taken. Teaching can, on rare occasions, be routine, slow paced and boring.
34. In Years 12 and 13, the college regularly receives students from Germany on a half- or full-year placement scheme. Their standard of English is sound on arrival, but is well supported by the weekly lesson of English as a foreign language provided by the college. These students achieve well.
35. The head of sixth form co-ordinates a good system of assessment through which students' academic progress is regularly assessed and reported. This central co-ordination means that assessment is better in the sixth form than in the rest of the school. The process involves students well. Individual interviews are conducted by tutors and subject teachers and students' attainment and progress towards target grades are carefully monitored.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. Enrichment of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, is **good**. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is insufficient time for science in Years 7 to 11.
- The curricula for ICT, design and technology and music do not meet statutory requirements.
- There is no daily act of collective worship for all students.
- There is unsatisfactory access and opportunity for some students.

Commentary

36. The curriculum provides students with a good range of courses to match their needs and aspirations. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because generous time allocation in modern foreign languages and other subjects means that there is too little time available for science. Science is adversely affected because there is not enough time on the timetable to allow students to study all of the required topics in depth. Students are given insufficient access to parts of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 because of timetable constraints. The college does not meet statutory requirements because ICT is not taught to all students in Years 10 and 11. In design and technology and music, the lack of computers prevents adequate coverage of, respectively, computer-aided design and manufacturing and music technology. Students do not participate in a daily act of collective worship.
37. There is a wide range of option choices in design and technology and in science. As a specialist language college, the overall curriculum provision for languages is good and students are expected to study Japanese as well as at least one European language. Elsewhere, the curriculum is largely traditional, and there is unsatisfactory provision for work-related learning. However, work experience for Year 10 students is good. Good links are made with primary schools to determine what the students know and can do before they join the school. The curriculum is kept under regular review, but insufficient action is taken to ensure full statutory compliance. Good links are made with careers advice services, local businesses and through international exchanges, which help to prepare students satisfactorily for the later stages of education and flexible employment opportunities. The provision of personal, social and health education is satisfactory. There is satisfactory coverage of drugs, alcohol and sex relationships education.

38. Through the inclusion team, the college operates a separate unit for students who experience barriers for learning and this ensures the continued attendance of these students at college through a combination of college-based lessons and an alternative vocational curriculum. This facility, because of the accommodation available, can only cater for a small number of students at any one time and does not have the flexibility to deal with additional students that may require immediate support. The special needs department also provides effective support for dyslexia, numeracy and literacy. There is good accommodation for the withdrawal of students. The provision for using ICT is good and there is a good range of learning resources to meet the learning needs of all students.
39. The school offers good enrichment activities, with some very good elements, both within and beyond the school day. The wide range of educational exchanges and curricular initiatives significantly broadens students' international understanding. There are links with many European countries as well as Japan, Uganda and India. The 'extended school' initiative offers some excellent opportunities for personal development. These programmes are well managed and are highly popular. One of the highlights is the annual tall ships race in which last year each participant received a youth achievement award. There are high participation rates in a wide range of sports. Lunchtime arrangements restrict provision. However, an innovative system of evening transport enables students to take advantage of post-college opportunities two evenings per week. These include the good 'headstart' programme where students can consult staff on all issues relating to their studies, most commonly coursework. The provision for on-line learning is developing with some good material available for some subjects.
40. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. The school occupies a cramped site with limited external space. There is very restricted space for drama and music. Many subjects are taught in dilapidated hutted accommodation. Although considerable effort has been made to provide access for all students, wheelchair-bound students do not have easy access to all classrooms. The school is currently in the process of expanding its accommodation. However, even with the resulting additional teaching space, difficulties will remain, particularly for accommodation in science, mathematics, design and technology and physical education.
41. Resources are unsatisfactory, with the consequence that teachers have inadequate books and materials to meet the needs of their courses. This is particularly true of mathematics. Weaknesses in leadership and management over a period of time account for this deficit. There is inadequate provision of computers and difficulties in getting access to them in English, science and design and technology. The school library is adequately stocked with books, but has too few computers. Teachers have to produce additional materials to supplement the shortage of resources.
42. The match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. Nearly all teaching posts are filled with appropriately qualified permanent staff. Support staff are used well and are closely integrated into classroom work. The performance management of staff is firmly established. This has been effective in bringing about significant improvement in key areas of the school. It is clearly linked to staff training and the development of individual teachers. There is a well-planned induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory in relation to accommodation and resources, but staffing has improved well.

Sixth form

43. The range and appropriateness of subjects provided in the sixth form are good. Staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach. There is an extensive range of examination courses. The provision of vocational courses, international exchanges and courses offered at the local further education college provides students with a good range of opportunities to obtain vocational qualifications. The college meets the statutory requirement to provide religious education for sixth-form students.

44. Accommodation and resources for sixth-form students are unsatisfactory. Teaching is dispersed across the school beyond the specialist sixth-form accommodation, with the consequence that teachers in some subjects do not have a permanent base to store resources. ICT equipment and access to it are inadequate for sixth-form studies. This limits students' access to Internet resources and restricts teachers in the range of teaching activities they use. Staff respond well to the more demanding requirements of sixth-form teaching. There has been inadequate improvement in accommodation and resources since the last inspection. However, good improvements in staffing show in the improvements in teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. They receive **good** support, advice and guidance. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory** in the main college and **good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced and well-established pastoral staff support all students well.
- Good working relationships with staff help students to feel well cared for.
- Strategies to support and include students with behaviour problems are good.
- Students feel that the split lunchtime period has a negative effect on their well-being.

Commentary

45. The pastoral management group leads this area of the college's work well. There is a clear vision to develop the academic role of the tutor further and to use data available to intervene quickly where there is risk of underachievement or exclusion. Experienced heads of year and tutors work as effective teams, know students well and provide good continuity of care as they move through the college. They work effectively with individual students who give cause for concern and liaise well with parents. The student services manager gives very good support to staff and to students. Procedures for safeguarding children are good. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory, although some minor concerns were raised with individual subject departments during the inspection.
46. Students have good relationships with staff and say there are adults available to talk to with any concerns they may have and inspectors agree. Induction arrangements for those in Year 7 are good and most students report that they settle quickly as a result. Parents, too, appreciate this aspect of the college's work.
47. The college's support and inclusion of students with behaviour problems are good. Learning mentors, teaching assistants and members of the inclusion team work effectively with students to help them overcome personal stress which affects their learning and behaviour and which may result in exclusion. The off-site provision, known as 'The Link', cares well for students with severe behavioural or social problems which preclude them from attending a normal college day and supports their learning effectively so that they achieve as well as they can given the nature of their difficulties.
48. Students value their year councils and Senate as a way of making their views known, although they say they are not always sure what it has achieved. They are particularly concerned about the impact that the split lunch-hour has on their social life and feeling of well-being in college because it means that they are unable to socialise with friends from other groups or attend lunchtime clubs and activities together. Senior managers recognise this concern and have begun to consult with students, through the main consultative body (the senate), on how improvements can be made.
49. There is very good provision for the welfare and guidance of students with identified learning difficulties through the special educational needs team and a separate inclusion team to

support and mentor students with unacceptable behaviour. The staff in the inclusion team focus effectively on behaviour management and are very pro-active in mentoring students.

50. The special needs co-ordinator has very good links with the feeder primary schools. Regular visits are made to see students in Year 6 with learning difficulties and to assess their learning needs and attend review meetings. This ensures their needs can be catered for effectively upon transfer to the college. There is particularly good practice in supporting students when they transfer to Year 7, demonstrating the high level of care staff have for students. During lunchtimes, students have access to the rooms in the department and they are supervised very well. This provides security for those students who feel at risk and may require additional support or care.

Sixth form

51. Good-quality care, guidance and support are provided for all sixth-form students. Although some are unsure about choices available to them when they leave college, inspectors find that they are well prepared for their futures after Year 13. They receive clear guidance about the range of courses available and are encouraged to attend college and university open days. There is a good peer support network between students and they say they do not always feel the need to turn to adults. However, they know who to go to if they are worried. They feel well supported by the head of sixth form. Students' views are listened to individually and through their own sixth-form committee. They feel they are treated with respect and maturity by staff and that their views are valued. They speak positively about the opportunity to have their say in the way in which the college is run through the senate. They, too, are concerned about the split lunch-hour and the restriction this places on their involvement in lunchtime activities.

Partnership with parents, other colleges and the community

The college has a **satisfactory** partnership with parents. Links with the community are **satisfactory**. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided to parents, particularly students' reports, is unsatisfactory.
- Links with the international community are good, but those with the local community are underdeveloped.
- The college's links with primary schools are promoted very well through its Language College status.

Commentary

52. The college has satisfactory links with parents. Most feel that students make good progress as a result of good teaching and that they are helped to settle in and mature well. Inspectors agree with these positive views. Some parents are concerned about behaviour and bullying, but inspectors find that behaviour is good and any bullying is dealt with well. Inspectors also find that some parents' concerns about homework are unfounded.
53. During an uncertain period in the leadership of the college, some parents have felt that communication with them has not been as good as it could be and they have not always been kept as well informed about change as they would like. The college generally keeps parents well informed about its activities in newsletters and on the website. Some parents feel, however, that they are not well informed enough about their children's progress. Inspectors find that while arrangements for parents' meetings and tutor consultations are good, the quality of information provided in reports is unsatisfactory. They lack sufficient detail on students' achievements and what they need to do next to improve and there is too much similarity in the text between each subject which parents find hard to understand. The college

has already identified this weakness and is currently reviewing its procedures for reporting to parents.

54. Through its language college status, the college has developed extensive links with a number of countries, which have a good impact on students' cultural development and awareness. However, while there are some good links with local businesses and sports clubs to provide students with practical opportunities to support their learning, there are insufficient planned opportunities across all subjects to extend students' experiences outside the college. The college's facilities are well used by the local community outside college hours, particularly for sporting activities.
55. Links with local primary schools are good. Transition arrangements are well established and staff work together well to improve liaison and transfer of information across the two phases of education. The language status of the college and expertise of staff are of benefit to primary schools who are able to provide students with opportunities to learn French and to sample Japanese at an early age.
56. Reviews for students with statements are undertaken and involve parents, college staff and the appropriate agencies to ensure needs are fully assessed and catered for. There are good links with the agencies and the local education authority. There are good procedures to contact parents when staff are concerned about the attitude or progress of students.

Sixth form

57. Parents are supportive of the work of the sixth form and are fully involved in any discussions concerning the progress and future plans of their children. Sixth-form links with the community are similar to the main college. Links with other colleges in the area are good and provide students with the opportunity to undertake courses not normally available to them in their own sixth form, such as dance. The international dimension of the college is enhanced through the provision of sixth-form placements for students from Germany.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the Acting Principal is **good**. The leadership of other senior staff is **good** overall. Management of the college is **satisfactory**. The work of the governors is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Acting Principal has a clear sense of purpose and in a short time has raised the morale of all staff and students.
- The team of senior managers has worked consistently and effectively to maintain college provision under difficult circumstances.
- The college has not evaluated or planned effectively for improvement. There is no short-term strategic action plan that identifies the most productive lines for development.
- Leadership of the sixth form is well established and gives a strong sense of direction.
- The line management of departments is consistent and effective and ensures that teaching and learning are good.

Commentary

58. In the short time he has been in post, the Acting Principal has successfully raised expectations and encouraged managers and leaders to bring about change. Pastoral leaders and teachers are now working together to support the quality assurance initiatives and the senior management team has worked hard to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection. This has been particularly effective in raising the quality of teaching and learning through the monitoring, evaluating and review strategy.

59. The college has not used its knowledge to plan for and implement improvement, particularly in the areas of accommodation and the curriculum. At the time of the last inspection, accommodation was unsatisfactory and this is still the case. Even with the resulting additional space from the building in progress, there will still be difficulties, especially in physical education, science and design and technology. This is the outcome of the absence of an effective short-term strategic plan for building and site development.
60. The Acting Principal recognises the need to review and recast the school's language college status from the constraints of the requirement for two languages for all students. Similarly, the need for change is acknowledged in order to improve the range of vocational courses in Year 10 and 11, which are currently not meeting the needs of all students.
61. Senior managers provide good support to heads of department and encourage staff to share their good practice through short training sessions in-house and at staff meetings.
62. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is providing very good leadership of a good team of well-qualified learning support assistants and teachers. The co-ordinator has introduced a variety of strategies to improve the support and provision for students with learning difficulties. For example, improving the management structure of the department and the introduction of the 'Watch Out List' circular to inform staff about the needs of students. There is very good management of the department, particularly with the help of a senior teaching assistant who deals with the deployment of teaching assistants and part of the administration. Very good use is made of ICT for managing the deployment of the teaching assistants and for the recording and collation of information. Teachers in the classroom have ready access to all this information on the school Intranet and this is also supplemented with folders of information for each department.
63. Teaching assistants also attend subject departmental meetings and this helps to ensure good liaison with teachers and the identification of issues as they arise. A school governor attached to the learning support department is fully aware of developments in learning support and monitors progress well.
64. Governance is good. The governors are an active and supportive body, who are positive about the school and collectively recognise its strengths and weaknesses. They have been resolute in their support through a difficult transitional period and as a result the very recent appointment of an Acting Principal has gone smoothly without any negative impact. The governing body has had considerable changes in membership over the last term and a half, but there is now stability and a policy group is currently working on a plan to optimise the efficiency of the governing body. They have developed a good relationship with senior managers and are willing to challenge when they disagree. The role of the governing body has been crucial in addressing many of the weaknesses the college has experienced in recent years and bringing about fundamental changes in the leadership. The governors are clear about the particular problems associated with the accommodation of this very large college. Plans are being considered to improve the accommodation even more when the current building programme is completed. Budgetary decisions are made after careful consideration and the impact of such decisions are evaluated carefully. The governing body has not ensured that the college complies with its statutory duty to provide a daily act of worship for all students, which was identified as an issue during the previous inspection. Furthermore, not all students are provided with their curriculum entitlement. These areas of non-compliance in the college are, in large part, due to the difficulties the governors have experienced with the previous leadership of the college. The quality of information given to governors in the past has been inadequate so they were unable to correct weaknesses. Through the determination of governors, significant changes have recently taken place in the leadership of the college and they now have all the information to which they were entitled in the past and show strong commitment to correcting previous long-standing statutory breaches.

Sixth form

65. The leadership of the sixth form is good and the head of the sixth form has done much to establish the clear direction for the continuing development of the school's international outlook. This is evident through the scheme that supports a number of students from abroad who study at the school for short periods – sometimes continuing to A-level examinations – and promotes students' cultural development and integration. This also supports the links through which some students travel each year to Sweden for work experience.
66. The management of student information is good. There is a detailed, centralised database of students' academic and personal information and tutors keep a record of students' college service outside lessons. Relationships between staff and students are warm and respectful and the monitoring, advice and guidance provided are good.

Financial information

67. Financial systems and procedures are good. Recent audit reports have given the highest rating to most aspects. Monthly reporting systems to the principal and governors secure effective monitoring of expenditure against budget plans. There are robust systems to secure best value for money. The school evaluates its expenditure by comparison with similar schools. Budget planning is not well linked to the college's strategic planning, so, for example, there are no long-term plans to allocate funds to improve the quality of resources and accommodation. The sixth form is cost effective and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6,795,684	Balance from previous year	26,922
Total expenditure	6,614,323	Balance carried forward to the next	208,283
Expenditure per student	3,539		

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

The provision for work-related learning is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no whole-college policy for work-related learning, but a co-ordinator has been recently appointed.
- An audit has not been undertaken to assess the teaching of work-related learning across the curriculum.
- A number of subjects teach work-related topics, but these are not recognized as contributing to a work-related learning programme.

Commentary

68. The college has started to consider work-related learning across the curriculum with the very recent appointment of a co-ordinator. However, there is not a whole-college policy for work-related learning and the college has not undertaken an audit through subjects to identify possible activities already being undertaken in the curriculum.

69. The college has a work-related education programme for approximately 40 students in Years 10 and 11. However, this is mainly for the disaffected and the less able students. The programme is a planned alternative curriculum with a mixture of school-based lessons to cover the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and to link courses with local colleges and work experience. The college has not developed links or partnerships with the local education business partnership and enterprise organizations to support the development of work-related learning.
70. All students undertake work experience in Years 10 and 11 and a number of subjects do teach work-related topics, for example, in geography covering aspects of industry, in design and technology through manufacturing, and in citizenship through exploring rights and responsibilities in the working world. However, these activities are not currently recognized by teachers as contributing to a work-related learning programme of study in Years 10 and 11. The co-ordinator has started to plan for a full work-related learning programme, but this is in the very early stages of development.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work of the department is clearly focused on raising standards of attainment.
- Students achieve well as a result of much good and very good teaching.
- Very good leadership has established a strong team of teachers with a clear sense of common purpose.
- Students with learning difficulties are given the support they need to achieve well.
- There are some missed opportunities to extend individual student's understanding through questioning and discussion.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and there is inadequate access to ICT.

Commentary

71. Students reached above average standards in the 2004 Year 9 National Curriculum tests. The overall standards compare favourably with standards reached by students from schools and colleges in similar circumstances. Over recent years, standards have been on a persistent rising trend, faster than the national trend.

72. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above average in both English language and English literature. This represents good achievement for all students concerned. An increasing number of students attain the higher grades. Students' understanding of poetry and other texts, revealed in their discussions and other work in lessons, is even better than that suggested by results in examinations. What is particularly striking is the quality of the students' analysis and discussion of poetry, where achievement is very good.
73. Standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are above average in the current Years 9 and 11. All students achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment as teachers provide a challenge that extends students to the full extent of their capabilities. Students build well on their attainment in Year 7, particularly the weaknesses in writing that many students show in their earliest work. Girls generally attain higher standards than boys to the same extent as nationally. Steps taken to narrow the gap are beginning to bear fruit in some years.
74. Teaching is good, with some that is very good, and a few lessons are excellent. This is as a consequence of a growing shared awareness of the strategies that lead to effective learning, particularly amongst boys. At the heart of the success of many lessons lies the clarity of purpose revealed in the start of the lesson, with consistent adherence to established routines and expectations for behaviour. Less successful lessons are weakened through missed opportunities to extend students' understanding by effective questioning. In these cases, teachers settle too easily for unreflective answers or unwittingly answer the questions themselves. A real strength lies in the teaching of poetry and creative writing when activities encourage the use of a good range of appropriate language to embody feeling and mood. There is also some good work on Shakespeare, helping students to develop refined analytical skills. Students with learning difficulties are supported well through the effective deployment of teaching assistants who work closely with class teachers in planning lessons.
75. The students are good learners and have become steadily aware of their responsibility for producing their best efforts. This does not come by nature, but through the persistent efforts of the teachers to keep wandering minds on track. Students are all at ease with their work in the climate of high expectations established by the teachers. A good number of students read beyond the minimum requirements of their courses. The school's links with Japan provide students of English language with a valuable insight into the structure of a non-European language.
76. Very good leadership and good management lie at the heart of the department's success in continually improving standards of attainment and of the commitment of students to their work. The head of department has created a team of teachers who work well together, sharing one another's best practice. Teaching is monitored and supported very effectively. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in that teachers are too often constrained to work in accommodation that is not appropriate for teaching the subject. Resources are inadequate, particularly resources in ICT, with the consequence that teachers are occasionally limited in the range of teaching approaches they use. The department has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection and has improved well. It has the willingness and imagination to improve further.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

77. Students' skills in reading, writing and discussion are generally used well across the curriculum to support learning. Students' competence in the use of language specific to subjects varies from subject to subject, depending on the extent to which the college's literacy policy has been implemented. There is good practice in the development and use of literacy in some departments. In this respect, work in drama, history and geography is particularly good. In these subjects, there is a strong emphasis on the use of the correct technical language and on encouraging discussion. There are some missed opportunities in most subjects to build on students' literacy skills, particularly writing.

Modern foreign languages

The quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Japanese are very good.
- International links are very good and are used effectively to enhance students' cultural awareness.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent in European modern foreign languages.
- The use of student performance data to inform teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- Reading skills are still underdeveloped.
- ICT is not harnessed enough to support learning.

Commentary

78. Results in Year 11 in 2004 were below average in modern foreign languages overall. This represented a significant dip in performance in French, which was in line with national performance in 2003. Results have been consistently below the national average over the past four years in Spanish and German. Present standards in Year 11 are in line with expectations. Current standards in Year 9 are similar to expectations.
79. Achievement in all years in European modern foreign languages is satisfactory. However, progress is inconsistent. When students are not fully engaged, they do not show the level of achievement expected. When pace and challenge are displayed, students achieve well. Enthusiastic and motivating teaching was the source of the good level of achievement made in a Year 7 class of low attainers. In Japanese, achievement has consistently been good due to high-quality teaching.
80. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in Japanese across the department is inspiring and is a major contribution to the high standards in this subject. Good teaching and learning have been observed in French, German, Spanish and Italian lessons, but there are inconsistencies in these languages. When the learning process is well structured, allowing sufficient practice and modelling of new language, learning is good. Students are used to working in pairs and small groups, work well together and achieve well. However, in lessons where pace has been slow and when the difficulty of language has been undemanding, achievement is not of the level expected. Occasionally, English is used too extensively and unnecessarily and reduces the opportunities for students to practise the new vocabulary and structures. Innovative use of puppets in both a French and Japanese class created fun and interest and motivated students to participate eagerly in oral tasks. The marking of students' work is regular and comments are encouraging, but do not always contain advice on how to improve. Teachers recognize that the use of ICT is underdeveloped as a learning tool. This is because there is insufficient access to computers. A further hindrance to improving performance is the poor quality of accommodation in the two temporary classrooms.
81. Leadership and management are satisfactory and there are good features, which are beginning to have a beneficial impact. Classroom observations and the detailed schemes of work are helping the department to develop a more cohesive approach to teaching and learning. However, at present, best practice is not being shared fully across the department. Assessment, especially within Years 7 to 9, is now well established, but all the data is not yet collected centrally and is therefore not yet used sufficiently to inform future learning. The introduction of standardised assessments and moderation of work within the department in Years 7 to 9 has enabled teachers to make a more secure judgement of student standards. As identified in the previous report, there is still a need to develop reading skills beyond the textbook.

82. The college's wide range of international links is a major strength and they are used effectively to enhance students' cultural awareness. The primary link programme is well established and working very well, enabling students to make an accelerated start to language learning in Year 7. The curriculum has been improved since the last report with language option choices being introduced in Year 8. While the four weekly periods allocated to the two modern foreign languages followed by all students in Year 7 to 9 is fewer than recommended, the new curriculum does allow better progression to language courses in Years 10 and 11. Progress measured against specialist status targets is well monitored and detailed plans are in place to meet these requirements.
83. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Results in Year 11 have declined and the issue of reading has not yet been addressed. However, detailed schemes of work are now in place and measures are being taken to monitor student progress and use data effectively.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers explain topics clearly and provide good individual support so students achieve well.
- Thorough monitoring has underpinned improvements in teaching, learning and achievement.
- Teaching methods lack variety and ICT is underused as a tool to enhance learning.
- Accommodation and resources remain unsatisfactory.

Commentary

84. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above average and better than results for similar schools. They were better than in science and English and continue a rising trend over the last three years. Boys did slightly better than girls, as they did in 2003. GCSE results in 2004 were also above average, better than similar schools and better than in 2003. Virtually all students secured a GCSE grade and almost three-fifths attained higher grades. These results represent good achievement.
85. Standards on entry are average. Work seen confirms that standards are above average in all years. Many more students are working above expected levels and almost no students are working below the expected range. Students learn new techniques quickly and apply these in familiar situations. They are less good at exploring mathematical ideas or tackling unfamiliar problems. Students have good attitudes, which contribute to their good achievement.
86. Students learn well as a result of good teaching. Lessons are well structured and teachers use a good balance of exposition and individual practice. Students value clear, whole-class explanations, followed up by individual support for those who need more help. Extension work is available to challenge more able mathematicians. These methods help all students to practise taught techniques and make good progress. Teachers manage students with calm consistency and usually secure good behaviour. In better lessons, teachers use effective questioning to both ascertain and extend students' understanding. Homework is set frequently and regularly and provides support for extended learning. Marking is thorough and teachers provide helpful comments for students on their work. Most lessons are characterised by demonstration of a technique followed by textbook or worksheet practice. Practical activities, explorations and ICT are rarely used, so students are not always actively engaged and are reluctant to experiment with unfamiliar problems. In some classes, boys dominate the dialogue with the teacher and a small number are disruptive. They are unwilling to work alone and make less good progress.
87. The department is well led and managed. The head of department is a good role-model. There is a drive for improvement and well-established priorities. The department's contribution to the college's work in other countries is highlighted in policy documents, but was not observed in practice. The strengths and weaknesses are well known from regular monitoring

and students' questionnaires. This knowledge has been used to improve practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Major weaknesses in provision in Years 7 to 9 have been addressed and standards are rising in all years. Monitoring is now a strength and a whole-school numeracy policy is in place. The department is still partly housed in mobile classrooms and there are insufficient textbooks or ICT resources. This is unsatisfactory.

88. After a period of staff turbulence, the department is now fully staffed, although some lessons are still taught by non-specialists. There are a number of classes taught by more than one teacher, and some classes have more than one mathematics lesson in a day. As a result, despite teachers' best efforts, these students learn less well.

Mathematics across the curriculum

89. Provision is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, an audit of mathematical provision has been undertaken and a whole-school policy established. In most departments, mathematical skills are included in schemes of work and opportunities to develop them are purposefully planned. In a few subjects, such as design and technology, they are not planned and provision is not systematically monitored across all subjects. Students have good levels of mathematical competence in using their skills in other subjects. For example, they show good graphical skills in their work in science and geography, while they demonstrate a good understanding of irregular time signatures in music. In all subjects, students are competent in what they are asked to do, although they are not always mathematically challenged.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective and well-structured planning is a major strength of teaching.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory and has not ensured that there is sufficient curriculum time or better accommodation and resources.
- While students are very good at practical work, standards in double award science, physics and chemistry at GCSE are too low.

Commentary

90. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average in 2004. They dropped slightly from 2003 and also since the previous inspection. The results are in line with those of students in similar colleges based on their relative achievement in Year 6. Girls did better than boys.
91. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations in double award science were below average. The results are below average because almost a quarter of the students, the most able scientists, entered for the three separate sciences instead of a double award. In biology, the results were above average. In physics, they were below average and in chemistry well below average. These results reflect good achievement in biology, but results in physics and chemistry were not as good as they should have been. Not enough students gained the higher grades in all three subjects. Overall, the girls did better than the boys. These results are below those at the time of the previous inspection. The 31 boys entered for GCSE electronics produced well above average results. No girls were entered for this examination. In the single award

science, the results were above average and more than half of these students achieved a gold award in the entry-level certificate.

92. In Year 9, current standards in science are average. This represents satisfactory achievement for the students in relation to their attainment on entering the school and includes those with special educational needs. Good strategies are employed which ensure that students of all abilities develop very good practical skills that support their understanding of theoretical science. This was demonstrated in a Year 8 class in which a wide range of abilities carried out an experiment to see which type of water contained most calcium and could use the appropriate scientific language to describe their practical work. The achievement of students with special ability in science is good. This is because of their motivation and positive attitude. However, there is insufficient structured, challenging work to raise their achievement further. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not fully covered because of insufficient time allocated to science. This leaves gaps in students' knowledge when they start the GCSE course.
93. In Year 11, current standards are above average. This represents good achievement for most students considering they entered the college with average standards. The standards seen during the inspection were higher than those achieved in the 2004 GCSE examinations. The change to a modular approach two years ago has just started to produce encouraging results in the current Year 10 and these indicate improving achievement. There are now structures in place to ensure that all students complete their coursework. This will improve their coursework mark and improve their overall grade. Students' practical skills continue to improve. They make accurate observations during investigations, but are less confident in evaluating results. This adversely affects their coursework marks. There is insufficient time allocated for students studying the three separate sciences and this reduces the time available for coursework, with some being done outside normal curriculum time.
94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The strongest features of the most effective teaching are the careful planning of lessons and the specialist knowledge the teachers have of their individual subjects. Planning is improved by the sharing of ideas and good practice. This increases the range of strategies and helps to raise standards. However, a minority of teachers do not use a wide enough range of activities, preventing students from receiving a broader experience in science. There is some variation in the quality and quantity of homework so it does not always extend or build on the quality work done in lessons.
95. Whilst management is satisfactory, leadership is unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clarity of vision, particularly with regard to raising standards. Improvements that have occurred are as a result of strong efforts on the part of staff to overcome weaknesses in curriculum, resources and accommodation. Staff development is not directly linked to an assessment of departmental needs. Standards have dropped considerably since the previous inspection and there is no immediate creditable plan to raise standards. The national science strategy is underdeveloped in the department, but external consultancy support is starting to produce positive results, particularly in the analysis of investigative work. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Because there are not enough laboratories, some lessons are taught in classrooms. This reduces opportunities to do practical work. There are insufficient textbooks to support the modular sciences and a shortage of data-logging equipment restricts the amount of ICT students can do.
96. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory since standards have dropped. However, the schemes of work show more opportunities for all prior attainers, and there is much more investigative science. Students are now much more confident with the application of number. The language college status has had minimal impact on science provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teacher knowledge and insistence on good behaviour lead to good achievement.
- Many students do not follow an ICT programme in Years 10 and 11, although the competence of these students is satisfactory.
- Students have good attitudes and work well independently.
- Some classrooms are poorly designed and limit learning opportunities.

Commentary

97. In 2004 teacher assessments, Year 9 students attained above average grades and there has been steady improvement over the last four years. GCSE results are also above average. There is a lower uptake by girls in GCSE courses, but those who entered gained similar grades to boys. Students who do not study GCSE in Years 10 and 11 have attained skills in line with expectations. Current standards of those who follow the GCSE ICT course are above those expected nationally. Consequently, standards in Year 11 are average overall and, for all students, achievement is satisfactory. However, for those students who follow the GCSE course, school results show good achievement. Students acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons. They work well independently and collaboratively due to very good lesson plans. When given sufficient challenge, students work productively and have very good attitudes. Students with special educational needs achieve equally well because of the good support given in class. The specialist language college status has not had an impact on the standards in ICT.
98. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have expert knowledge of ICT, which gives the students confidence to learn well. Very good lesson materials allow students to learn with good pace and challenge. Poor projection facilities in classrooms disrupt the flow of lessons, but teachers overcome this by using other resources well. Teachers interact well with students by using stimulating question and answer techniques. This results in motivated students who want to learn. In a minority of lessons where teaching becomes a monologue, students are less attentive. The very good attitude and behaviour of students promote a good learning environment. Students' progress is analysed well using good, informative data. It is used well to improve the standards of all students.
99. Management is good. The head of department is enthusiastic and strives for improvement in standards and provision, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Leadership is good. Lessons are co-ordinated well with primary schools, and all lesson plans contain a formalised approach to literacy, numeracy and citizenship links. The head of department is a good role-model for ICT staff. There are regular development sessions following good monitoring of teachers' performance. As a result, teachers build on their teaching skills and enhance learning for students.
100. The technicians are highly valued by teachers. They are responsive, knowledgeable and ensure that there is a reliable, well-maintained network of computers. The college website is very good and contains useful on-line resources for students to use at home. To meet full coverage of ICT, the college requires more ICT resources. Learning is limited where there is awkward viewing of projected data in some rooms. Additionally, some rooms are too small.
101. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have improved due to better teaching and management. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is still insufficient to meet the needs of all students and leadership of cross-curricular ICT remains unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

102. ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and the leadership of the co-ordination of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory. Teachers are adept in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning where they have access, but this is rare. ICT resources are good in the library and

these resources contribute to students' learning well. Good use of ICT to improve students' standards is made in the special educational needs department. ICT in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, religious education, art and citizenship is underdeveloped. ICT in music is poor.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent organisation and co-operative teamwork make this a highly effective department.
- Standards are above average and students are achieving very well at GCSE.
- Teaching engages students' interest and is successful at preparing them for examinations.
- Procedures for assessing and recording students' progress are very thorough.
- The history curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular activities and international links.

Commentary

103. GCSE results have been consistently above average since the previous inspection. They were well above in 2003, when over four-fifths of candidates passed at grades A*-C, half of them at A* and A. Performance in the 2004 examinations returned to its usual level of around three-quarters achieving grades A*-C, which is above average. Girls did better than boys, but both exceeded the national average for their gender. Students performed significantly better in history than the average of all their other subjects.
104. Year 9 students' attainment is above average and their achievement is good. The students enjoy the lessons and showed good ability at researching and organising information on life in the trenches during the First World War. Higher attainers excelled in their use of ICT to create authentic diaries of soldiers' experiences. In lessons, students gained a good grasp of appeasement through simulating diplomatic events of the 1930s. Achievement of lower attainers in Year 9 is occasionally affected by the challenging behaviour of a few students in the lower sets. Current standards in Year 11 are above average and higher in their impressive coursework investigations on Jack the Ripper. Students are well motivated, apply themselves diligently to tasks and their achievement over the course is very good. In particular, they have developed very effective examination technique as a result of thorough training in essay writing and source analysis.
105. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, where a number of classes are taught by non-specialists, and very good on the GCSE course, which is wholly taught by specialists. Lessons are well planned around key questions, with clear objectives that target the development of historical skills. Teachers employ a range of methods to engage students actively in learning, making effective use of small-group activities. ICT is used well for individual research and for writing-up projects, but access to computer rooms has restricted class use in lessons. Expert teaching and high expectations of students on the GCSE course are preparing them well for the examinations. Recent development of the on-line curriculum has provided students with a very useful facility for private study. Regular practice at answering questions and detailed marking of their work give students very good guidance on how to improve. Assessment and target setting are also strong features of teaching in Years 7 to 9, building up a profile of each pupil's assessed work over the key stage that accurately charts progress and guides improvement.
106. Leadership and management are very good. Outstanding organisation of departmental documentation and resources has provided maximum support to supply teachers covering a long absence. The subject leader is an excellent role-model in her own teaching, ably supported by a creative team of teachers. The curriculum is enriched by visits in each year, a

history club and international projects with schools in Uganda and India. Efficient monitoring and review of the department's performance inform planning and guide curriculum development. Its success is evident in the increasing numbers of students choosing history in Year 10.

107. There has been continuous good improvement since the previous inspection, both in the quality of teaching and in examination results. History is now a very popular and successful subject.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Very good teaching and learning engages students' interest and encourages them to work hard.
- There are very good attitudes to learning by all students.
- ICT is not used frequently enough to support learning in the classroom.

Commentary

108. Standards on entry are average, although, as students come from a large number of primary schools, they display a wide range of geographical expertise. By the end of Year 9, standards of work of both boys and girls are above average. The gap between the standards of boys and girls is similar to the national pattern. In Year 11, in 2004, GCSE standards were well above average. The proportion of students gaining A* and A grades was particularly good.
109. The current Year 11 is also attaining these well above average standards. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and it is very good in Years 10 and 11. In relative terms, boys' achievement is slightly better than that of girls, whose achievement is, nevertheless, very good. The achievement of the most able students is particularly good.
110. Teaching and learning are very good overall and particularly good in Years 10 and 11. The most successful lessons were those in which students were able to learn in a variety of ways and in which they were given opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. High expectations and a brisk pace were characteristic of most lessons and produced the best response from learners. Students in Years 10 and 11 were able to discuss, select and present ideas confidently and articulately and were supported and encouraged by sensitive and stimulating teaching. Learning was most secure when students were able to review and evaluate their progress with their peers and there is scope within the department to share and extend this good practice. Excellent displays of students' work make the atmosphere of a number of the rooms exciting and stimulating. Teachers recognise and provide for the differing needs of students and combine to form effective teams with teaching assistants. Some very good use of ICT by students in presenting their ideas in lessons was seen. However, the use of ICT to extend and support learning in the classroom is currently inadequate. The development and presentation of students' work and the use of the Internet for research and geographical simulations are hindered by difficulties in gaining appropriate access to ICT suites.
111. Pupil attitudes are good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Students respond well to the ethos of the school and the mutual respect between teachers and students creates a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere in classrooms. Marking of students' work is thorough and provides helpful comments to enable improvement to be made and assessment arrangements are sound in determining National Curriculum levels. There are, however, some inconsistencies in marking across the department.

112. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is an excellent role-model who provides reflective and well-directed leadership with a sharp focus on the quality of teaching and learning through very good monitoring arrangements. There is an informative departmental handbook that includes a clearly expressed development plan and schemes of work. Assessment data is used well in the planning of lessons and the analysis of results is rigorous and shared within the department. Good opportunities for fieldwork are provided in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation is satisfactory in that the department's rooms are spacious, but they are too few in number. Resources are satisfactory overall with some particularly good textbooks and the limited ICT provision is used well.
113. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The standards in Years 7 to 9 have been maintained. GCSE results have improved markedly, especially those of boys, and teaching and learning have also improved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Exciting teaching based on interesting activities, very good subject knowledge and delivered at a cracking pace result in good achievement.
- Poor accommodation and lack of access to computers have an adverse effect on students' achievement.
- Teaching makes a valuable contribution to students' spiritual development and their thinking skills, and to raising their awareness of cultural diversity.

Commentary

114. End-of-Year 9 assessments in 2004 showed attainment was in line with the expectations in the local syllabus. This represents good achievement because students' knowledge and understanding are below average at the start of Year 7. All students in Years 10 and 11 either follow a short or full GCSE course. GCSE passes at grades A* - C in the full course were above average in 2004 and this shows good achievement. In the short course, GCSE results have been variable in recent years. In 2004, passes at grades A* - C were close to the national average, which was good achievement considering that all students in Year 11 were entered for the examination and many experienced gaps in their taught programme because of insufficient subject specialist teachers during the academic year 2003 – 2004.
115. Current Year 9 students attain standards in line with expectations and their achievement is good. Their thinking skills are well developed and they skilfully construct profound questions when considering the concepts of suffering and free will. They have a good knowledge of Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Attainment by students in Year 11 following the full GCSE course (an extra-curricular course) is above average. Those in Year 11 following the short course are average, but students following the same course in Year 10, having benefited from the continuity of specialist teaching, are above average at this stage in their course. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.
116. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good overall. They range from unsatisfactory to excellent. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are consistently very good, but the poor accommodation and lack of access to ICT impede students' achievement in these years and so, despite the very good teaching, achievement is good. The best teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, interesting and exciting activities, great pace, very effective use of questioning, and high expectations, as observed in a Year 9 lesson on '*Why do we suffer?*' In this lesson, learning was excellent and students greatly enjoyed having the opportunity to participate in role-play in analysing the concept of free will in relation to

suffering. On the rare occasions where teaching is unsatisfactory, the pace is slow and behaviour is not effectively managed and this impedes learning. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and achieve well and those who are gifted and talented are given opportunities to shine and contribute profound verbal and written contributions.

117. Leadership is very good and makes a valuable contribution to students' learning as the head of department empowers staff to teach at their very best. Management is good. Assessment procedures are very good and the analysis of data to inform planning to raise achievement for different groups of students is good. Very effective links with an orphanage in India and a school in Leicestershire are used very well to promote students' awareness of cultural diversity. Improvements in planning, teaching and learning, and assessment are good and improvement since the last inspection is good overall.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inadequate and inappropriate resources have a detrimental impact on standards.
- Very good teaching and learning in food technology enthuse students.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in that it does not allow sufficient computer-aided design.
- Students' insufficient grasp of the design process restricts their ability to learn independently.
- Support for students with special educational needs is precisely targeted and effective.

Commentary

118. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly above average. Boys did particularly well, attaining almost half a grade better in design and technology than they did in their other subjects. However, there were almost a tenth of students who started resistant materials, graphics and systems and control GCSEs who did not complete their course. When these students are taken into account, standards are satisfactory, and good in food technology. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average and above average in food technology where students are highly motivated and manage their own projects with only limited guidance from staff.
119. Standards in Year 9 are similar to expectations, with the best work being seen in the practical elements of food technology and graphics. Attainment on entry to the school is average and achievement is satisfactory in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Students in Years 7 to 9 do not have a sufficient grasp of the design process. They underestimate the value of both sketching to aid thinking and detailed planning. Teachers know the needs of every student in their care and target their support with skill. The planned use of learning assistants is particularly effective, encouraging independence in those students with special educational needs. The achievement of these students is good.
120. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching is in food technology, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where it is very good. Teachers are able to target guidance precisely. This leads to students being stimulated and engrossed in their work. Relationships in these classes are excellent. In other design and technology subjects, teaching is satisfactory or occasionally good. Again, the best examples are in Years 10 and 11. Most students focus on their tasks for significant parts of the lessons. Issues relating to inappropriate behaviour are dealt with effectively. On one occasion, a challenging student was dealt with very effectively with the considerable skill of a learning assistant. The quality and

nature of assessment systems are variable across the department, leading to inconsistent practice.

121. Teaching is not leading to better standards because of the inadequate and inappropriate accommodation and resources. Accommodation is dilapidated and uninspiring. The construction of all of the teaching rooms is poor and results in extremes in temperatures. Ventilation in food technology and the computer room is inadequate. GCSE courses for graphics and systems and control are run in old materials workshops, with students having to use damaged woodwork benches for written and graphical work. This is unsatisfactory. There are large spaces taken up with heavy, redundant machinery, yet a significant absence of subject-specific computer-aided manufacturing equipment. Students studying systems and control use pencils and paper to design circuits. This poor resourcing of computer-aided design and manufacturing systems is capping the achievement of the most able. Teachers are not preparing students for modern industrial society and make it impossible to cover the statutory curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9.
122. As a result of language college status, the department has taken part in two international design projects working with schools from the Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and Finland. Students also show appreciation of after-school coursework sessions. The opportunities for extra-curricular work are satisfactory.
123. Leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader has initiated change, but this has been limited by a considerable lack of funding to enable necessary capital developments. There is evidence of good practice throughout the department, but this is isolated. Management is satisfactory. Health and safety monitoring is in place and issues raised are reported, but not acted upon by budget controllers. There is good management of technicians, their role is clear and they work productively. The complexities of managing rooming for a large department are dealt with effectively within the considerable constraints imposed by unsatisfactory accommodation and resources. Two teachers on long-term absence have been covered by design and technology specialists and they are well supported. Computer-aided design is almost exclusively taught as a discrete topic. Consequently, students do not routinely use it in the development of project work, even in Years 10 and 11. Student use of computer-aided manufacturing is less well developed. The department has introduced extension tasks to challenge the most able, although those observed tended to extend the range of skills rather than extending intellectual challenge. All staff effectively use data provided by the school to inform them of students' potential, strengths and areas for development.
124. There has been satisfactory progress on issues raised in the last inspection. Projects are delivered more effectively and graphical skills are now taught. Improvements have been made on the teaching of computer-aided design. Standards have been maintained. Improvement overall is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama was sampled. Art and design and music were inspected in full.

Drama

125. This is a department with a new lease of life provided by the recent appointment of a dynamic leader and a skilled teacher. The department has been through a very dark patch when standards steadily declined year on year. In the short time that current staff have been in post, standards of performance in drama are already average in Year 9 and just above average in Year 11. This represents very good achievement in relation to the poor standards with which students start in Year 7. However, the current Year 11 students have a lot of ground yet to make up, particularly in writing, to ensure the standards in examinations they deserve.
126. At the heart of the department's recent revival lies the quality of teaching, which is very good, with some that is excellent. The new members of staff have brought about a renaissance in

the teaching of drama. This shows itself in the enthusiasm of the students for their work and the sudden renewed popularity of the subject. The students are very good learners and are determined to refine and improve their work to the point of perfection. The department is very well led and well managed, but struggles to attain the excellence it strives for in the poor accommodation provided for the subject. Since the last inspection, the subject has declined, but is now involved in a dramatic recovery.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were well above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and occasionally very good because the work is challenging and well planned.
- Leadership is good and staff work together well.
- There is insufficient use of ICT or work based on other cultures to broaden the experience of students.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not clearly linked to National Curriculum levels for students to understand.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the small rooms restrict the range of work that can be undertaken.

Commentary

127. In Year 9, standards are above expectations and achievement is good. Students develop a good range of artistic skills and knowledge by the end of Year 9. They are encouraged to explore and creatively use a selected range of media. Examination results in 2004 were well above the national average. Current Year 11 standards are above average and achievement is good for both boys and girls. Expectations are high for students to explore ideas and use a variety of media to develop creative outcomes. Very good use is made of sketchbooks as a resource for coursework and these clearly show the development of creativity.
128. There is a good team of specialist teachers and teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Where lessons are good or better, the planning is thorough, the work is challenging, expectations are high and good use is made of resources to extend thinking. Teachers have a good working relationship with students and this contributes to their good motivation and good progress in lessons. Good use is made of sketchbooks to record work and as a resource for project development. Students gain a good knowledge and understanding of other artists, but there is insufficient work relating to other cultures and very little use of ICT to broaden their experience. Students with learning difficulties are supported effectively in lessons and make good progress.
129. Leadership is good and this leads to good teamwork. Management is good because curriculum planning is effective in meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Topics are planned in detail and supported by well-prepared resource material, for example, for activities relating to different artists. Planning also shows progression in the development of knowledge and how cross-curricular aspects are covered, for example literacy, numeracy and citizenship. The language college link with Japan has influenced some of the work undertaken, for example, through making Japanese-style masks. There is very limited use of ICT to extend the quality of students' work.
130. There is regular assessment in Years 7 to 9, but it is not clearly linked to National Curriculum levels for students to understand. In Years 10 to 11, assessment is good and directly linked to

coursework requirements, leading to students having a better understanding of how to improve their work. There is good cross-moderation of work by staff to agree standards in Years 10 to 11, but this approach is underdeveloped in deciding the statutory Year 9 teacher assessments. The department is actively involved with teacher training and this adds a productive and refreshing dimension to planning and teaching. There are good resources to meet the practical requirements of the activities planned. However, very little use is made of resources beyond the school. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because rooms are small and this limits the range of work possible and the teaching strategies that can be used. Rooms are well organised and the best use is made of space to display students' work. There is insufficient technician time to support the work of the department.

131. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and standards are above average. There is less underachievement by boys in Years 10 and 11. However, accommodation is still unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards and teaching in the instrumental lessons are very good.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory because very limited resources for music technology adversely affect standards.
- The third music room is unsuitable for teaching full-sized classes.

Commentary

132. Standards are below expectations when students start at the school. By Year 9, standards are still below expectations. Students develop a satisfactory understanding of musical features and terminology, but their practical skills are more limited. They have no opportunities to use music technology to create compositions, which adversely affects the standards. Students' achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory for all groups of students.
133. At GCSE, standards were average in 2004. Work seen in the inspection is of a similar standard. Students play a variety of instruments and they work independently at their practical tasks. Their listening and appraising skills are good, but, with limited access to music technology, their skills in developing compositions are limited. Option group sizes are smaller than usual. Achievement for these students is good. Standards in the instrumental lessons are very good. In woodwind lessons, students develop skills in improvising and aural work as well as good instrumental technique.
134. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have very good subject skills and most make good use of inclusive questioning to ensure students understand their work. Varied tasks increase all-round understanding of the topics studied. However, in some lessons, too much time is spent learning facts and theory and students have too little opportunity to develop practical skills. Teaching is purposeful and lessons are carefully planned, but a few tasks are not suited to students' abilities. In a minority of lessons, constant chatter from some students slows the pace of learning too much. In part, this is a result of the poor sight lines caused by the shape of the room. Teachers assess students' work regularly and students know how to improve their work. However, in making their assessments, teachers use two different systems in Years 7 to 9, which has led to some inaccuracy.
135. The subject leader provides satisfactory leadership and management. Monitoring and organisation of the department staff, which includes six peripatetic teachers, are satisfactory. The aim to increase numbers in the option groups is being addressed, in part, by the

increased curriculum time in Years 7 to 9, enabling students to develop the necessary skills. More emphasis on developing practical skills in these years should form part of the current curriculum review and a music technology suite is needed to develop the necessary skills in composing. The lack of music technology breaches the requirements of the National Curriculum and means that the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Extra-curricular activities have been restricted by the split lunch hour, but the African drumming group is successful and the school combines with another local school to increase performance opportunities for those involved. The shape of the third music room is unsuitable for large-class teaching and this affects standards adversely for those students who, unable to see all their peers, are not fully involved in the learning.

136. Standards have improved in Years 10 and 11 since the previous inspection and the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 studies a suitably wide range of musical styles through performing, composing and listening. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good extra-curricular programme has developed very good working relationships and attitudes.
- The department is well led and supported.
- Well-planned, knowledgeable teaching leads to good learning.
- Day-to-day management is good, but some policies need further reviewing and embedding.
- There has been a decline in recent GCSE results.

Commentary

137. Current Year 9 standards are above expectations as students demonstrate good games' skills and body control in gymnastics, and are developing evaluation skills. These skills are further developed in Years 10 and 11 where standards are also above expectations. GCSE results have declined from above average to average over the last three years, but 2004 results were well below. Some timetable, staff and facility issues have caused this decline, especially in girls' results, but current standards and predictions suggest that 2004 results were a one-off.
138. Boys and girls achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11 for the majority of students. Students with special educational needs achieve well as they are integrated into lessons with individual lesson plans. Students' achievement is hindered by the shortness of the lessons and the limited indoor space, which leads to a very traditional games-biased curriculum.
139. Very good relationships and attitudes have been developed, producing good behaviour from students who are keen to learn, and this makes for most effective use of time. Good, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and caring teaching with well-planned lessons leads to good learning throughout the college. Consistently good teaching enables all students to develop their skills and tactical awareness, but this could be further enhanced by more selective and probing questioning, along with more challenging tasks for the more able. Students are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' work, but this lacks consistency in its application, although some useful work was seen in very good lessons.
140. This is a department that is well led and supported with a clear vision for the future. The real strength is the strong team spirit where all teachers have ownership of the department's aims and policies as the leadership welcomes new ideas. Management of the department is good with good delegation of responsibility. Many policies are in place and working well, but a few are not yet fully applied, such as constant use of different levels of challenges and the use of analysis and assessment data for learning and planning.

141. There is a very good extra-curricular activities programme which is open to all and provides opportunities for a large percentage of students to participate despite the limited facilities and split lunchtime. College teams do well locally and nationally. The setting up of the Tavistock Community Sports project has led to good links with local clubs providing coaching at both the college and the club. The college's involvement with the schools sport co-ordinator scheme provides leadership awards to help raise standards in 16 primary schools.
142. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, as all issues have been sorted out, especially equal options for boys and girls. Statutory requirements have been met, all documentation has been updated and leadership is good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

The provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning promote very good achievement.
- Assessment is used rigorously to inform planning and target setting.
- Leadership and management focus on raising students' achievement.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11.
- Links with local businesses are not managed productively.

Commentary

143. The GCSE results for 2004 were below average. This was an uncharacteristic dip in the trend over the previous four years, when results have been at or above average. Current standards are above average and students' achievement is very good. In Year 11, students show a good understanding and application of course concepts, such as flow and job production, and can write evaluatively about their relative merits.
144. Teaching and learning are very good. Particular strengths are the high quality of teaching materials, planning and the effective use of a range of teaching methods. In an excellent lesson, Year 11 GCSE students produced an outstanding range of well-constructed arguments for and against membership of the European Union and these included more advanced viewpoints on issues such as the legacy of the pound and the implications for trading and foreign exchange transactions. These were the outcome of excellent teaching materials and a range of interactive tasks that encouraged students to think independently and adopt points of view that were not their own. Students of lower ability are well supported in lessons and additional guidance sheets make tasks much more accessible to them. Students' files are very well presented and it is clear that they take pride in their work. Coursework assignments show very good evidence of independent research drawn from previous learning and use of the Internet. In some instances, this has led to students producing their own original ideas for evaluating their business plans. Assessment is very good and is used systematically by staff. Detailed analysis and interpretation of data also inform planning and target setting. This has contributed to the development of the student review sheets that play a significant role in motivating students to raise their aspirations. Marking is diagnostic and consistently directs students towards extending and improving on their performance.
145. The existing option of GCSE business studies does not meet the needs of all students, especially those of lower ability, whom it does not prepare effectively for further study or training. Links with local businesses exist, but these do not productively extend the range of

students' learning or work-related experiences. Most teaching rooms are fit for purpose, but for the larger groups space is restricted and students have to share the use of computers.

146. Leadership and management are good and the improvement plan is realistic and clearly prioritises the areas for development. Teaching is monitored systematically and the analysis and interpretation of data are used very effectively to track students' progress. Links with the wider business community have not yet been developed. Staff work together as an effective, mutually supportive team and are good role-models, which undoubtedly contributes to the very good classroom relationships.
147. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning and management.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

This subject was sampled. No lessons were taught during the inspection period.

148. The subject has close links with citizenship and is well planned to ensure that all relevant areas are covered. It is delivered in personal development and citizenship lessons, which are taught by form tutors. Complete coverage is ensured through good monitoring by deputy heads of year. Curriculum planning is thorough and there is an interesting and relevant programme of study. In particular, the peer education project on drug and alcohol education is innovative and potentially very effective.
149. Statutory requirements for sex and relationships education, drugs education and careers education and guidance are all met.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior management team support the subject well and there is good clarity of vision for further development.
- Assessment is underdeveloped and is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

150. Students attain average standards and achieve satisfactorily. They show good attitudes to their work and behave well.
151. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Questions and answers are used satisfactorily and students' work is evaluated as lessons progress. Relevant materials are prepared to aid their learning. The students engage themselves well in their tasks. The procedures for and the use of assessment are unsatisfactory. There is not yet a clear format for the assessment of students as they progress to identify what they know and where they need further help to aid their understanding.
152. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A member of the senior management team has done a great deal to develop the subject across the school. There is a new co-ordinator who has not yet found sufficient time to continue these developments. There is a good clarity of vision to support further developments. Most departments have a suitable scheme of work to address citizenship in their subjects. Good detail on the progress of the students in citizenship is provided in the written reports to parents. Further monitoring of the time allocation and the evenness of the curriculum delivery of the subject across the school have not yet been

completed. The language status of the college has supported well the students' understanding of aspects of citizenship in many countries. Many students visit other countries and benefit their understanding of citizenship in these countries. The subject was not taught at the time of the last inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, thirteen 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 school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	13	84.6	78.3	30.8	21.6	33.1	28.5
Biology	19	73.7	63.5	0	10.4	18.9	19.8
Business studies	8	62.5	75.3	12.5	15.4	21.3	25.7
Chemistry	8	25	70.3	0	13.2	8.8	23
Communication studies	14	78.6	87.2	7.1	24.9	24.3	32.8
English/English language	10	80	85.3	20	16.1	32	29
English literature	9	55.6	86.2	22.2	17.4	23.3	29.7
French	5	60	79.8	60	19.4	30	28.2
Design and technology	7	71.4	72.6	0	13.9	17.1	24.3
General studies	6	50	73.6	0	16.9	13.3	25.5
Geography	6	50	75.5	0	20.4	13.3	27
German	1	0	81.6	0	18.8	0	28.8
History	10	70	82.2	20	20.8	26	29.2

Information technology	7	71.4	66.6	28.6	8.8	27.1	20.6
Mathematics	15	66.7	59.9	33.3	14.1	28.7	20.5
Music	2	100	79.8	50	16.9	45	27.5
Other languages	11	36.4	82.5	0	47.7	10	37.8
Other sciences	5	60	67.4	20	14.8	22	22.8
Other social studies	29	62.1	67.8	25.5	23.2	24.1	15.1
Physics	15	66.7	66.4	13.3	14.8	24.7	22.4
Religious studies	5	40	82.2	0	26.1	12	31.2
Sociology	10	70	72.1	10	19.6	22	25.9
Spanish	1	100	77.1	100	17	50	26.5
Sports/PE studies	8	62.5	72.2	0	11.8	17.5	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	16	100	98.3	43.8	50.2	86.3	87.1
Biology	22	100	96.6	36.4	40	81.8	79.3
Business studies	7	100	98.9	42.9	39.4	85.7	81.8
Chemistry	14	100	97.7	50	50	90	85.7
Communication studies	9	100	99.2	22.2	40.4	73.3	83.5
English/English language	9	100	99.2	22.2	36.4	82.2	81.1
English literature	23	100	99.4	39.1	44.9	85.2	85.5
French	8	100	99	50	53.1	95	88.9
Design and technology	10	100	97.8	10	35	60	77.9
General studies	1	100	94.9	0	30.5	40	72.9
Geography	12	100	46.4	100	98.8	75	85.2
German	2	100	98.6	100	49.6	120	86.3
History	32	100	99	37.5	45.6	85.6	85.1
Information technology	10	100	99	37.5	45.6	85.6	85.1
Mathematics	18	100	96.8	50	56.6	86.7	89.5
Music	2	100	98.2	50	37.1	90	79.5
Other languages	8	87.5	97.3	50	66.7	80	95.6
Other sciences	7	100	97.4	71.4	44.2	105.7	82.5
Other social studies	52	98.1	97.4	61.5	42.5	91.2	81.6

Physics	15	100	96.7	60	45.3	93.3	82.6
Religious studies	7	100	99.1	28.6	49.5	85.7	87.4
Sociology	5	100	98.5	100	45.3	108	84.6
Spanish	2	100	98.2	100	53.5	110	88.7
Sports/PE studies	9	100	97.8	11.1	30.9	60	75.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were the subject focus for the inspection. Japanese was sampled.

153. Japanese is taken by a small number of students and recent results in GCE A-level have been consistently above average. Provision in the subject builds effectively on students' previous learning and the very good results in GCSE. Teaching sampled during the week of inspection was highly effective because teachers have a high level of knowledge and understanding of the subject and are passionate about it. This was clearly reflected in the students' high level of motivation and increasing grasp of the intricacies of the language. As a result, students' achievement is very good and is a clear indication that provision in the subject is a key strength of the department.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy lessons and achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers' very good knowledge of what they teach helps students to feel at ease with even the most demanding texts.
- Imaginative teaching helps students to acquire an increasing refinement in their analysis of poetry.
- Deficiencies in accommodation and resources make it difficult for teachers to always provide stimulating lessons.

Commentary

154. Standards in Year 13 are above expectations. Students build consistently well on the overall average levels of attainment they bring to their courses. They gained above average results in both English language and English literature in the Year 13 examinations in 2004. This represents good achievement for all students and is a significant improvement on results for 2003.

155. Teaching is good overall, with some that is very good. A real strength lies in the teachers' knowledge of their subject. This shows itself in the quality of their feedback on students' work and in the way teachers extend students' discussion to high levels of analysis. The teaching of poetry is a particular strength. Teachers take students to high levels of critical analysis. The students, in turn, enjoy the challenge and show considerable perseverance, even when they experience difficulties with the more demanding texts. Students are good learners and are attentive and engaged in lessons and participate actively in discussion. They become increasingly skilled in the close reading of a wide range of texts and in writing in a variety of forms and styles. Higher-attaining students write well-structured essays, which demonstrate good analytical understanding. The work of middle- and lower-attaining students is weakened

through failure to justify or qualify their opinions adequately. Occasionally, students' progress is constrained when the teacher does not notice that individual students are not fully in touch with the lesson. However, an abiding feature of most lessons is the extent to which teachers know their students and meet their needs.

156. Very good leadership and good management have established a clear sense of direction in the department. The new head of department has brought considerable rigour to the teachers' work. There is a sharp focus on improving teaching further and on building on existing strengths in students' learning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in that teachers have to work too often in rooms not dedicated to the teaching of English, with the consequence that it is sometimes difficult to deploy an imaginative array of resources. There is an inadequate range of resources to meet the needs of the subject. This is particularly true of ICT resources, with the consequence that teachers are often restricted in the extent to which they can enliven lessons. Good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the leadership and management of the subject, has put the teaching of English in the sixth form on a firm footing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

157. Reading, writing and discussion are generally used well in subjects. Where appropriate, teachers encourage writing for a good range of purposes. There are some missed opportunities in almost all subjects to extend students' understanding through insistence on justification and reasons for opinions. There are real strengths in the students' collaborative discussion and writing in psychology. In English, too, there are many examples of writing that has been informed by rigorous discussion and debate. Students are encouraged to read beyond the minimum requirements of their courses.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Teachers monitor progress well and communicate effectively with students.
- Leadership and management are good and ensure a high level of teamwork.
- Monitoring of student progress on the on-line courses is allocated insufficient time.

Commentary

158. Results in 2004 were above the national average. Performance in 2004 was above average based on the prior attainment of these particular students in the school.
159. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is above average. The prior attainment of students indicates that the achievement in reaching these standards is good. In Year 13, the work includes a greater amount of extended discursive writing. Here, ideas are well developed and the level of accuracy and complexity of language is appropriate to the students' prior attainment.
160. Good achievement is the result of the consistently good teaching. Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and move along at a brisk pace. In one Year 12 lesson, the teacher skilfully controlled the debate on women's role in society, ensuring that all students contributed, which they did enthusiastically. She used every opportunity to extend the students' range of vocabulary. Teaching is largely conducted in French, but judicious use of English is made when appropriate. In a Year 13 lesson, students showed good recall of previously learnt vocabulary to defend and oppose points of view in a debate. Research and preparation through homework are well utilised in the classroom. Use of the Internet for

research is well promoted and authentic texts taken from magazines or the Internet feature regularly in the students' folders. A high level of challenge is shown in lessons with teachers clearly showing their high expectations. Work includes a good balance of vocabulary development, grammar and topic research and discussion. There is scope for more practice in discursive essay writing in Year 12. By Year 13, regular extended writing is well established.

161. Leadership and management of French are good. The head of department provides a clear structure for the students' learning and establishes a clear shared vision for the course. The scheme of work is detailed. Progress is well monitored by the two teachers involved who communicate judgements well both between themselves and with the students, who feel they are well supported and are clear about the level of progress they are making. Folders are marked well and show clearly how students can improve their work. On-line language courses enable a large number of students who are not following an advanced level course to continue to study a modern foreign language. They are encouraged to take a language they have not learnt earlier in the college. Resources are sound, but the time allocated for monitoring progress is too limited and does not allow the students sufficient time to review work with their teachers.
162. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Recent results have been above the national average and consequently show an improvement since the last report. The quality of teaching remains good.

MATHEMATICS

The department offers a range of modules within mathematics leading to AS and A2 level and this was the focus of the inspection. Further mathematics is also offered and work was sampled. Numbers are too small to make valid national comparisons, although all students secured higher grades in 2004. One lesson was observed and teaching and learning were satisfactory. The lesson was run as a tutorial with the teacher explaining how to do problems that had been perceived as demanding.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and examination requirements.
- Relationships are good and teachers provide help and advice beyond the lessons.
- Teaching in Year 12 does not take sufficient account of the range of students' understanding.
- There is a high drop-out rate on the two-year course.

Commentary

163. Results in A-level examinations in 2004 were average for both males and females. They were an improvement on previous years and these results represent satisfactory achievement. Retention was good on the A2 course in Year 13, but unsatisfactory at 80 per cent of 45 students on the AS course in Year 12. However, half of those who dropped out were foreign students on short-term placements in the school. Results in modules taken at the end of Year 12 were below average with almost half of students failing to secure a grade.
164. The department has an inclusive course entry policy so that attainment on entry to the AS course is below average with a number of students starting the course from intermediate GCSE or from schools abroad. In Year 12, standards are below average with only about one third of students working at higher levels and some struggling to cope with the demands of the

course. Only about half the students who study mathematics in Year 12 progress into Year 13 and standards on entry to the A2 course are average. Standards of work seen are average in Year 13 in all the modules studied. About half of students are working at higher levels, for example successfully using integration and differentiation in a range of contexts. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

165. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are better in Year 13 where the range of students' mathematical ability is less wide. Teachers have very good mathematical knowledge and fully understand examination requirements. They provide clear and structured exemplars and set practice questions, mainly based on a course textbook. Relationships are good and teachers provide good support for individual students outside the lessons. This support is greatly valued. Students are not all fully and actively involved in lessons, especially where the teacher presents material rather than drawing it from students. More able students follow the exposition, contribute ideas and develop well as independent learners. Those with weaker understanding are passive and do not necessarily seek the extra help which is available. In the best lessons, activities are carefully matched to the needs of all students, leading to very good learning. Foreign students do not always have the language skills to understand oral and written explanations and insufficient provision is made for this.
166. Leadership is good. The team of teachers work well together. Management is satisfactory. Analysis of results and monitoring of provision is less rigorous than in the main school. While the underachievement of some students in Year 12 has been recognised, it has not yet been fully addressed. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. While standards have fluctuated, they have remained broadly the same and achievement remains satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

167. Students' mathematical competence is satisfactory. Their skills are adequate for their subjects of study. For example, in psychology, students use statistical techniques with confidence, while in business education they confidently use sophisticated financial ratios. Students have secure graphical skills, which are used to good effect in all sciences. In many subjects, such as history and French, students make little use of mathematical techniques.

SCIENCE

In this curriculum area, the college provides courses at AS level and A-level in biology, chemistry, electronics and physics. Biology, chemistry and physics were inspected.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons with a variety of different activities that stimulate and maintain students' interest well.
- Achievement is good, reflecting students' good attitudes towards biology.
- Assessment is well used, so that students are clear about what they need to do in order to improve.
- There are limited opportunities to use ICT.
- Teachers work very hard to ensure the unsatisfactory resources and dreary accommodation do not affect students' learning.

Commentary

168. A-level results in 2004 were above average, but were below those gained at the college in 2003. At AS level, results in 2004 were better than those in 2003 and above national expectations. Current standards are above average. Biology is one of the most popular AS

level subjects in the college, particularly with girls. The retention rate is good, with three-quarters of the students carrying on into Year 13. Students achieve well. Their standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are better than might be expected in relation to their GCSE grades. Students' relationships with the teachers are good and they respond positively to teachers' high expectations.

169. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and syllabus and students are consistently challenged to improve upon their previous best. Teachers plan lessons well and use a variety of teaching styles. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support teaching. There is, however, insufficient use of the networked computers and digital projectors recently installed in laboratories. The décor of the laboratories is drab, but teachers have managed to improve the learning environment to a satisfactory level. Assessment is good. Marking is perceptive and is used effectively to help students to improve their work. The department uses assessment data well to focus sharply on students' progress. In one AS level lesson, a group of Year 12 students assessed each other's presentations on the causes of disease very well, making very good suggestions on how to improve their fellow students' assignments.
170. Leadership is good. The head of biology has clarity of vision, high aspirations and fosters strong teamwork in improving student progress. Technical staff form a very important part of the team, making a very good contribution to learning. Management is good because the head of biology places priority on the development of teachers' skills and deploys them effectively. He ensures that good enrichment activities take place, such as field trips and annual entry in the 'biology olympiad', to enhance the students' experience of biology. The level of resources is unsatisfactory, but teachers and technicians work very well together to ensure that students' learning is not affected. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Health and safety regulations are now rigorously enforced in lessons and standards have improved.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and its applications are very good and students achieve well.
- Lessons are well planned and use a variety of methods that motivate students.
- Resources are very limited, but careful organization ensures that this does not affect students' learning.

Commentary

171. All A-level students passed chemistry in 2004, with half of them gaining 'A' or 'B' grades. Results at A-level in 2004 were above the national average and above those gained in 2003. At AS level, results in 2004 were much better than those in 2003 and above national expectations. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Students are progressing well in relation to predictions made based on their GCSE results and so achievement is good.
172. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Students are confident in their teachers, who have very good subject knowledge and are able to challenge them and extend their thinking. Lessons are characterized by high expectations and a range of stimulating activities. The ethos of lessons is one of relaxed but purposeful concentration and students clearly enjoy their work. They are continuously encouraged and supported. Recently installed digital projectors are used effectively. Teachers are getting more confident in how to use this technology to help students to grasp the principles of chemistry. In a Year 13 lesson, careful questioning ensured that students gained a very good understanding of how to analyse

experimental data from a practical investigation they had conducted. Assessment is good. Marking contains clear advice to students on how to improve. The department is using assessment data well to help students meet exam target grades.

173. Leadership is good. The head of chemistry is enthusiastic, committed to raising standards and encourages a spirit of co-operation and a united vision about future developments. A very good technical team work very effectively to support teaching staff. Management is good. A-level teaching is shared amongst a number of staff, who communicate effectively with one another and share good practice well. There are too few out-of-college chemistry activities. The current curriculum is satisfactory, but the department recognizes that a change to an alternative chemistry course with more enrichment opportunities would improve the quality of students' experience of chemistry. The amount of chemistry apparatus is unsatisfactory and teachers and technicians have to work very hard to ensure that students' learning is not affected. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Students comply very well with health and safety regulations and the amount of practical work is now appropriate.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Students' relationships with the teachers are good and they respond positively to teachers' high expectations.
- Students receive good guidance to prepare for practical assignments.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- The amount of physics apparatus is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

174. In 2004, all A-level students passed physics, with over half of them gaining 'A' or 'B' grades. Results at A-level in 2004 were above the national average and matched those gained in 2003. At AS level, results in 2004 were better than those in 2003 and above national expectations. Current standards remain above average. Achievement is good. Students progress well in physics in relation to their performance at GCSE.
175. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers challenge students to think and solve problems for themselves. Students and teachers show mutual respect and there is a mature atmosphere, which is highly conducive to learning. The students concentrate well and they are committed and eager to learn. In a very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher's expert subject knowledge and well-focused questioning helped students to work out for themselves ways of analysing experimental data about capacitance and potential difference. The physics laboratories have recently been computer networked and equipped with digital projectors, but this is insufficiently used. Assessment is good. Student attainment and achievement are carefully monitored so that teaching and learning are adapted to raise standards.
176. Leadership is good. The head of physics encourages staff to work together and is committed to raising standards. Very good technical staff provide well-targeted support for lessons.

Management is good. Teachers have been well supported in building up their expertise to teach A-level. The physics department has put together a very good bank of teaching resources to assist students' learning. Good enrichment activities, such as the 'physics olympiad' and project work with a local engineering company, help students to see the relevance of physics. Levels and quality of laboratory apparatus and other physics equipment are unsatisfactory. Teachers and technicians have to work very hard to ensure that learning is not affected. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and laboratory health and safety rules are very well observed by students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong teacher knowledge contributes to good learning.
- Students have very good attitudes and work well independently.
- ICT facilities are reliable and well maintained by highly competent technicians

Commentary

177. In 2004, AS level and A-level results were above average and there has been an upward trend over the past four years. Standards seen in lessons reflect those in examinations. Achievement is good. Students are meeting their targets and occasionally exceeding them. They acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons. Students work well independently and collaboratively due to good teaching. They work productively and have very good attitudes. The very small number of girls that take the subject means that it is not possible to make comparisons about their achievement. The specialist language college status has not had an impact on the standards in ICT.

178. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have expert knowledge of the curriculum, which gives students confidence. Teachers, who interact well with students by using stimulating question and answer techniques, find that the students are motivated and want to learn. The very good attitudes and behaviour of students promote a good learning environment. The department analyses students' progress using good informative data, which is used to improve standards.

179. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is enthusiastic and strives for improvement in standards and provision. She has a clear vision for the future and is a good role-model for ICT teachers. Monitoring of teachers' performance is good. Regular development sessions take place to build teachers' skills. There are good strategies to encourage more girls to study ICT in the sixth form in future. The technicians are highly valued by teachers. They are responsive, knowledgeable and ensure that there is a reliable, well-maintained network of computers. There are sufficient computer resources to meet the needs of the A-level curriculum in the sixth form.

180. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, especially because standards have improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

181. Most students gain satisfactory ICT skills because they have access to computers in the ICT department and the library where it contributes to good learning. ICT in English, mathematics and psychology is underdeveloped due to a lack of resources within these departments.

HUMANITIES

History, psychology and religious studies were inspected in this area. Law was sampled. In one Year 13 lesson seen, teaching and learning were good. The lesson was well planned and the teacher's confident approach inspired confidence from students, who achieved well. Students responded well to the quality of teaching. In the other Year 13 lesson, which was satisfactory, good relationships between the teacher and students enlivened the work. Standards were above expectations in both lessons. Examination results are well above average. The course is enhanced by a variety of trips to various courts, a police station and a prison, as well as by visitors such as members of parliament and barristers.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students tend to exceed their target grades.
- Teaching is stimulating in its range of learning styles and expert instruction in examination technique.
- Very good leadership and management are promoting and developing the subject well and raising standards.

Commentary

182. A-level results were above average in 2004 from a large entry of 34 candidates, which was around three times the number entered for A2 in 2003, when results were average. Most students performed better than their predicted grades. Results at AS have been similar.
183. Current standards in Year 13 are being maintained at levels above expectations and many students are already exceeding their target grades, demonstrating very good achievement. This is the result of well-structured courses, rigorous assessment and a high level of support for students. Their files show detailed coverage of topics, and regular practice of examination questions has developed their essay style well. In lessons, students assess their own work and essays by their peers, applying the marking criteria accurately. Students make some reference to the views of historians in their writing, using information from teachers' handouts.
184. Teaching and learning are very good. The expert subject knowledge and enthusiasm of the teachers engage students' interest in the study of history, promoting stimulating discussion and exchange of ideas through a variety of activities. Students receive excellent instruction in writing history essays and develop very effective examination techniques. Marking and assessment provide detailed feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Tutorial help is provided for the personal investigation and a residential visit to London gives ideal opportunity for students to attend lectures and research their special topic further.
185. The head of department provides very good leadership for the team of enthusiastic teachers. Together, they have achieved a meteoric rise in the popularity of the subject over the last two years and are providing every support for the large number of students studying history. Performance data is carefully analysed, courses evaluated and changes introduced to meet the needs of students and enable them to reach their potential at A-level.
186. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, maintaining above average standards and raising achievement from a much larger contingent of students.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' wide range of skills means that students are very well supported in their learning.

- Students show excellent attitudes to their work and achieve very well.
- The way ICT is used is poor.
- The monitoring of performance data, reviewing problems and taking action are excellent.

Commentary

187. Over time, the standards of attainment and achievement of students have been rising. On entry to the course they have broadly average standards. In the 2004 A-level examination, students' results were well above average. They achieved very well. Current Year 13 students' standards are well above expectations. They achieve very well, showing excellent attitudes to their tasks. There is a very thorough monitoring of performance data.
188. Teaching and learning are very good and occasionally excellent when teachers match their input very well to the discerned needs of the individual students. Teachers show an excellent command of the subject and support and encourage the students' learning in an excellent manner. There is an excellent student handbook that underpins the course. As students progress, this informs them very well of sources to further their learning. The procedures for and the use of assessment are very good. These support very well the excellent independent and collaborative learning styles of the students. Students' written work and their ongoing work in class are very well reviewed and addressed and this improves standards.
189. Leadership and management are very good. There is an excellent clarity of vision and sense of purpose to support further developments. Trends over time affecting students' standards and achievements are monitored in an excellent manner. There is a very good breadth of curricular opportunities. Accommodation, although satisfactory, is limited as there is only one designated room for psychology. This is used well and there are very good displays celebrating students' work. The availability of ICT is poor. Students use it effectively, but there is none available in the rooms where psychology is taught. The impact of the college having language status has not been of direct benefit to the subject.
190. There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection, especially as standards have further improved.

Religious education

The provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is demanding, based on challenge and very effective questioning.
- Students develop deep insights into important issues.
- Poor accommodation and a lack of access to ICT have an adverse impact on learning.
- Careful monitoring and thorough planning are features of the very good leadership.

Commentary

191. A small number of students follow courses in this subject and this means that comparisons against the national average at AS and A-level should be treated with caution. In 2004, A-level results were average, representing good achievement. The performance of an individual student suppressed the AS results measured against the national average, but the achievement of the other students following the course was good.
192. Current standards in Year 13 are similar to expectations and achievement is good. In Year 12, students use technical vocabulary in their written work on religion and ethics accurately. Year 13 students demonstrate research skills in their synoptic module in line with course expectations. Students' fluency in essay writing is variable, but they demonstrate verbally high

standards when discussing the meaning of life and so the course makes a valuable contribution to their spiritual development.

193. Teaching and learning are very good. Achievement over time, however, is good because it is hindered by poor accommodation and a lack of access to ICT so students cannot carry out immediate research when required and they have, for example, to move rooms in order to make PowerPoint presentations. Teaching is shared and the three teachers involved work very effectively as a team. They have very good subject knowledge and excellent relationships with students. Because of this outstandingly good rapport, students are keen to ask questions, such as in the Year 12 lesson on the relationship between psychology and religion, and this leads to a deepening of their knowledge and understanding because the answers given by the teachers are based on excellent subject knowledge. Teachers challenge students to think deeply about profound issues such as the different types of religious experience and the meaning of life. Discussion in lessons is fascinating and students' very positive attitudes to learning make a valuable contribution. A model of self-assessment is used very well and contributes to students making valuable gains in their learning.
194. Leadership is very good. Management is good. The shared approach to the monitoring of teaching and learning within the department results in the sharing of good practice. Students' progress is monitored carefully throughout the courses and support is given to any student who struggles with any aspect of the course. Planning to provide a core programme for non-examination students is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.
195. Teaching and learning, assessment and planning are all better than at the time of the last inspection. Improvement is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Film studies

Provision in film studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 13 and good teaching and learning ensure that students achieve well.
- The curriculum is good, providing opportunities for students to experience a broad range of film.
- Students' work is regularly marked, but too little guidance is given to them to improve.
- There are few enrichment activities and a limited film library.

Commentary

196. Current standards in Year 13 are above expectations. Given that students arrive in Year 12 with standards that are broadly average, achievement is good. Students who develop their talents of film analysis, production and understanding of audience achieve well, supported by teachers, who have an enthusiasm for their subject. Students are encouraged to develop their personal tastes and preferences for particular genres, styles and directors and pursue individual projects both theoretically and practically. Current students in Year 12 have a limited understanding and knowledge of the scope of the film industry, but in Year 13 students have developed confidence to express their own opinions and hypotheses regarding complex and often morally challenging films.
197. Examination results are broadly average, with results in 2004 showing students achieve well. However, students have not gained the highest grades in Year 13, and this is a concern. Students develop as independent learners and produce a good body of individual work. They study a wide range of national and international films and express their taste in the topics they follow, such as the output of influential independent filmmakers. Students exhibit maturity and confidence in both oral and written analyses, frequently tackling issues of extreme sensitivity.

198. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Year 13. There is broadly clear and focused teaching and lesson objectives are shared with students. Teachers' expertise is passed on to students and they generally demand very high levels of engagement with the subject. Occasionally, however, students are not challenged sufficiently in questioning and the pace of lessons suffers. Lessons are well planned, and in Year 13 students are attentive and engaged. Marking and assessment are satisfactory, but students are not given sufficient precise guidance on how to improve work.
199. Leadership and management are good. Practice is shared, but there is scope for more promotion of good teaching skills across the department. The curriculum is good. Schemes of work enable students to develop knowledge of film in breadth as well as depth. However, students have little access to regular enrichment programmes, there is no out-of-hours film club and no programme of work-related activities. This limits achievement. Additional funding has been sought to enhance the accommodation and a new classroom is planned. Language college status has had little impact on learning in the department and opportunities to engage in the specialist college area, with Artsmark, or with regional film initiatives, have not been exploited.
200. Film studies was not reported upon in the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business studies

The provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching promotes very good relationships in the classroom.
- The constraints of accommodation limit students' access to computers.
- Staff work closely together to develop consistent values and practices.
- The links with local businesses are limited.

Commentary

201. The 2004 A2 results for economics and business studies were above average and the AVCE business and Leisure & Recreation results in 2004 were well above average. The results for GNVQ business qualification were above average. Current standards for A2 economics and business are just below expectations, although students all achieve well as a result of very good teaching. This is because they start the course with below expected standards. Current standards in the AVCE courses are at expected levels and students' achievement for both A2 and the AVCE courses is good.
202. The quality of teaching and learning across all courses is very good, and is characterised by very good planning and materials, plenty of opportunities for students to work independently and very good relationships between staff and students. Students are well motivated in lessons and they are confident about asking questions and voicing their own opinions. The outcome is a very good learning environment in which students develop their own ideas and this often helps the levels of understanding for the rest of the group. In a Year 13 lesson seen, the use of material relating to a local project engendered a very good level of interest amongst all students. As a consequence, this helped to develop their understanding of the concept of a cost-benefit analysis and they were encouraged to voice their opinions confidently. Students use on-line learning facilities well. In a good Year 12 lesson seen, students accessed a set

worksheet, in the absence of their usual teacher, and made good progress towards learning and understanding advanced course concepts concerned with global production. This was the outcome of very well prepared materials that directed students towards learning independently and drawing on a variety of different sources of material. Students developed their own and often very provocative ideas and shared these with the rest of the group, which promoted a good rate and standard of learning.

203. AVCE students' work files show some very good application of ICT in their coursework and in the best examples seen, students use the more sophisticated tools such as chart wizard and colour coding to highlight their research information. The quality of written work for Year 13 students is mostly above average, but there is variability in the standard across the last two years. Students' levels of numeracy are good and this is evident in work such as balance sheet calculations and the plotting of demand curves. There is little evidence of the use of ICT in the A Level course. This is because of the limitations of the temporary accommodation that affect, in particular, the Year 13 group. Consequently, students' written work does not consistently show the use of ICT tools to enhance quality or to combine different types of information to develop the higher levels of understanding. Assessment is very good and the detailed analysis of students' performance is used rigorously to inform target setting and the individual student progress reviews.
204. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of purpose, and planning for the curriculum reflects a good understanding of how the different optional courses of study can be developed to match students' different learning needs best. Staff work together as a very effective team and this is apparent in their support for one another. The curriculum is good and students' achievement is good in all courses. However, the different types of courses available are not combined in the most effective ways to promote higher achievement for all students. Enrichment is good. Students in Year 12 have the opportunity to travel to Sweden for work experience and in Year 13 students visit the Bank of England and Tower of London on a residential trip. Links with the local business community are not managed systematically and do not tap into local enterprise to strengthen and enhance students' learning experiences.
205. With higher standards and better teaching, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work hard to meet the students' needs.
- Students achieve well. They behave very well and show good attitudes to their work.
- The marking of work is inconsistent and unhelpful.
- Monitoring and evaluation of provision are underdeveloped.

Commentary

206. Students studying this Intermediate GNVQ course on entry are below average. In the 2004 examination, they attained average standards. Their achievement was good. Over time, all students pass, with some getting a merit grade, although few get the higher distinction grade.
207. Currently, students attain average standards, achieving well. The students work hard at their tasks with enthusiasm and good levels of motivation. They behave well, show good attitudes and have positive working relationships with their teachers and one another. Teachers prepare a very good range of supportive materials for the students and these promote their understanding of the course very well. Students with special educational needs are very well supported and achieve well.

208. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers show a very good command of the subject and plan their work very thoroughly. Resources are very well prepared and there is a very good equality of opportunity. Marking is uneven. Not all work is graded and insufficient written comment is given so students do not have enough information on how their work can be improved.
209. The leadership and management of the course are satisfactory. Planning is thorough and the department has a sense of purpose. The teachers have worked together successfully for a long time and they clearly know the strengths and weakness of the course. However, a more formal way of monitoring and evaluating its delivery is not sufficiently developed. The curriculum is good. There is a wide range of opportunities for the students to get practical experience of health and social care with children under five and with the elderly. Students analyse and comment on this work well and are further supported by the good range of resources prepared by the teachers to meet their needs. There is good support for the development of students' moral, social and cultural needs. The language status of the college has not yet has a significant impact on the subject.
210. Health and social care was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	5
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	3	3

How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

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

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