

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHFIELD TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Workington

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112394

Headteacher: Mrs L Dalkin

Lead inspector: Mr B A Jones

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 4th November 2004

Inspection number: 270944

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

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Terms used in this report

Students in Years 7,8 and 9 are at Key Stage 3, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at Key Stage 4 of their education. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11-19
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 791

School address: Moorclose Road
Workington
Cumbria
Postcode: CA14 5BH

Telephone number: 01900 325260
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr G McCullough
governors:

Date of previous 18/01/1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a smaller than average sized mixed comprehensive school with 726 students on roll in the main school and further 65 students in the sixth form. Workington Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average mixed sixth form that is managed, funded and staffed jointly by Stainburn School and Science College and Southfield Technology College. There are 213 students on roll - approximately two-thirds of students join the sixth form from Stainburn. This report is restricted to the main school only. The sixth form inspection was undertaken separately and reported in an attachment to this report. There are 376 boys and 350 girls in the main school. The school is a little smaller than at the time of the previous inspection. Students are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds, but predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds that are well below average. On entry to Year 7, standards of students are well below average. There are no students whose first language is not, or is believed not to be English. Around 31 per cent take up their eligibility for free school meals, which is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs, including students with statements, is broadly average. Around three per cent have statements, mainly for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The new headteacher is into her second term in the post.

The school has technology college status. The school is involved in local community initiatives and teaches The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. It is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative and participates in the Young Enterprise scheme. In 2003, it was awarded a Schools Achievement award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18462	B. Jones	Lead inspector	
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector	
4926	T. Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics
15079	A. Boys	Team inspector	Science
30941	K. Brammer	Team inspector	English, drama
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	History, work-related learning (WRL)
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design
18447	R. Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education
20287	D. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, English as an additional language (EAL)
1769	M. Holohan	Team inspector	Provision for students with special educational needs
4605	M. Lormor	Team inspector	Music
2048	R. Masterton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT), citizenship
19096	S. McClean	Team inspector	Design and technology
20192	T. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education
11300	B. Smith	Team inspector	Geography, leisure and tourism

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. It provides a good education for its students. The school is led well. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. The management of the school is satisfactory. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the school is good and governors make a very good contribution in helping to provide a clear direction to the school's development.
- The good overall quality of teaching leads to good achievement throughout the school, particularly in art and design, religious education and citizenship.
- Whilst management is satisfactory, weaknesses in monitoring mean that there is some inconsistency in teaching, particularly in mathematics, and inconsistency in the use of assessment to inform students about the progress they are making.
- Technology school status has led to very good provision of information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology facilities, which are used effectively to promote good learning.
- The very good and innovative curriculum meets the differing needs and aptitudes of students very well. This, linked with students' good behaviour and their generally positive attitudes, ensures a good working atmosphere in lessons, where achievement is valued.
- Attendance is below average and a minority of students are disaffected; too many students leave school without any GCSE qualifications as a result.
- Pastoral care is very good and students appreciate the opportunities given to be involved in the decisions made about running the school. The study centre provides very good support for the most vulnerable students.
- Links with the local community and colleges and schools are used very effectively to promote the social and cultural development of students and help in their move from Year 6 to Year 7.

Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. This is an improving school where, in recent years, Year 11 examination results have risen significantly and at a rate above the national trend. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. The response to the previous report has been good overall.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	E	E	D	B

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

Achievement is good. The 2003 GCSE results show that in spite of below average performance against all schools, this group of students performed better than those in similar schools. When account is taken of their well below average starting point in Year

10, their achievement was good. In 2004, the as yet unvalidated results continued to rise both in the Year 9 national tests and in the GCSE results. In work seen in the inspection, standards in most subjects are below average in Year 9 and in Year 11. Overall, the standards of the current group of Year 11 students were well below average when they started Year 10. Students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve as well as others. In recent years, around ten per cent of students left without any GCSE qualifications. The school experiences significant difficulties with a minority of disaffected students and some whose attendance is poor. Innovations that have improved the curriculum and made it more accessible and appropriate to the needs of such students are making a positive impact in tackling underachievement. However, despite the school's best efforts, there is still a minority whose achievement is adversely affected by poor attendance.

Students' personal qualities are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students' attitudes to work and their relationships with each other and staff are good. Behaviour is good and exclusions are broadly average. Attendance is unsatisfactory, but punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good. As a result, learning is good and students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11. The curriculum has some significant strengths due the initiatives taken to provide for the differing needs of the diverse school population, and is very good overall. Pastoral care in the school is very good. Students receive good, well-informed advice and guidance to choose subjects that best meet their choices and fit their needs based on very good tracking of their personal development. There are too many inconsistencies in the assessment of students' work to inform them accurately about the more immediate progress they are making. The school has satisfactory links with parents and very good links with other colleges and schools and with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Leadership by the headteacher and other key staff is good, with a very good level of teamwork. The post 16 co-ordinator for 6th form provision is also a member of the senior management team of Southfield College. This ensures clear lines of communication. In addition, it ensures that students in Southfield receive good advice and guidance in their choice of post 16 options.

Governors do a very good job in supporting and challenging senior staff, based on a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Management is satisfactory rather than good because there are some inconsistencies. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are undertaken regularly but the impact is lessened because there are some inconsistencies in teaching that need to be tackled. There are inconsistencies, too, in the way in which different subjects approach assessment and marking and in some areas marking is ineffective in taking students' work forward. Not all statutory requirements are met in providing information to parents and the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, but these omissions do not affect standards.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are supportive of the school. Their children settle very well and make good progress. Parents are comfortable in approaching the school and appreciate teachers' high expectations of work, but some say they would like more information on their children's progress to be able to help them more at home. Students like the school and feel trusted. They find expectations are high and a significant number like their teachers. They particularly like sport and physical education. A significant proportion is concerned about behaviour and bullying, but inspectors found behaviour to be good and the school to have good procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve monitoring to ensure a greater consistency of good teaching, particularly in mathematics;
- improve attendance and reduce the proportion of students who leave school without any GCSE qualifications;
- ensure more consistency in the use of assessment to inform students about the progress they are making.

and, to meet statutory requirements ensure that:

- the school provides a daily act of collective worship;
- all necessary information is included in the annual governing body's report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, but students achieve well throughout their time in school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in most subjects, and very well in art and design, religious education throughout the school, and in citizenship by Year 9 and German by Year 11.
- Students' literacy and mental arithmetic skills are a barrier to achievement; whilst provision for improving their literacy skills is good, weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics are holding back achievement.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.2 (29.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	31.0 (30.2)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	31.5 (31.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 151 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	59 (50)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	74 (70)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	90 (90)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	30.8 (28.5)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 126 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average. Taking account of their well below average standards on entry to the school in Year 7, this group of students achieved satisfactorily. The rate of improvement in these tests was broadly in line with the national trend over the past five years. Results in 2003 GCSE examinations were below average. The trend in results over the past five years to 2003 was above the trend nationally. This group of students did well in relation to other similar schools and very well in relation to their starting points in Year 10. In 2004, the as yet unvalidated results continued to rise, both in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in the GCSE results.

2. In Year 9, students' standards are below average overall. When account is taken of their starting points on entering Year 7, this reflects good achievement. Standards are below average in English and science; they are well below average in mathematics. This group of students entered Year 7 with standards in these subjects that were well below average. They achieve well in English and science and satisfactorily in mathematics. In most subjects, students started Year 7 with well below average standards. In Year 9, current standards of work are above average in art and design and citizenship; they are average in physical education, religious education and German. Standards are below average in all other subjects. Students achieve very well in art and design, religious education and citizenship. They achieve well in design and technology, history, geography, music, physical education and German. In ICT and French, achievement is satisfactory.
3. In Year 11, standards are below average overall. This reflects good achievement because the standards of this group of students were well below average when they were at the end of Year 9. Standards are well below average in mathematics, below average in English and average in science. This reflects good achievement in English and science and satisfactory achievement in mathematics. In other subjects, standards are well above average in art and design and above average in German, physical education and religious education. Standards are average in all other subjects except French and history, where they are below average. In art and design, German and religious education, students achieve very well. Achievement is good in all other subjects except French and citizenship, where it is satisfactory.
4. The levels of achievement closely mirror the teaching students experience, which is mainly good. The exception to this is French, where there is too little time for the subject and despite good teaching, students' achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Two other factors in the good achievement are the behaviour of students in class and the positive attitude shown by the great majority of students towards their work and their teachers.
5. Literacy skills are well below average when students enter the school. Many students' reading, writing and speaking skills are weak and their vocabulary limited. By the time they leave, the overall standard has improved to below average. This reflects good provision; however, weaknesses in literacy are still barriers to achievement in mathematics, ICT and design and technology, particularly in the middle and lower attainment range. Students' standards of numeracy are well below average in both Year 9 and Year 11, but are usually sufficient to support learning in other subjects at the level at which they are working. For example, the level of students' written calculation skills and skills in interpreting data enables them to cope with using these skills in other subjects; on occasions, however, their below average mental arithmetic skills impede learning. Standards of ICT skills are average. The additional resources funded through technology college status have been used effectively to raise standards and improve teaching and learning. Students have a level of competency that enables them to undertake learning tasks using computers and use specialist pieces of software in their other subjects. Students also have the skills to access resources from the Internet and other on-line educational resources and this helps students to learn well using ICT-based modern methods throughout the school.
6. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls are not significantly greater than those found nationally. There are no students at an early stage of English language acquisition or from minority ethnic groupings. The achievement of students with special needs is good, in line with their fellow students. The provision of alternative curricular arrangements ensures that students at risk of exclusion gain qualifications in

vocational courses. All students, including those who are gifted and talented, achieve well throughout the school in response to the very good curricular provision and the good teaching they receive. All these different groups of students achieve well because teachers plan their work carefully to ensure that levels of challenge are appropriate to their particular needs. Many students are given good additional challenges through extra-curricular work and opportunities for additional study outside the normal school day.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to work and behaviour are good. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good attitudes to learning and behaviour enable them to achieve well.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection, but is still below national averages.

Commentary

7. Students learn well as a result of their good attitudes. The vast majority of students are interested in their work and keen to achieve their best. Attitudes are best in the higher attaining sets where students are confident, well-motivated, have good concentration and persevere well to complete tasks. A small number of lower attaining students, especially the boys, sometimes lack confidence in their ability to achieve and find it hard to concentrate in lessons. Students particularly enjoy practical work such as physical education, design and technology and art and design. They work well on their own or with each other in pairs and groups. They accept community responsibilities willingly, such as routine classroom duties, participating in sports matches and charitable fund-raising activities. They feel the school trusts them to act sensibly.

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
726	70	2

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

8. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. On the pre-inspection questionnaire, a large proportion of students expressed concerns about behaviour. However, during the inspection, students responded well to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour. In art and design lessons behaviour is often exemplary. It is very good in modern foreign languages, history, geography and religious education. A significant number of students stated that teachers do not treat them fairly and with respect, but this was not evident during the inspection and most staff used the school's reward and discipline procedures well. Exclusions are average in number and remain at a similar level to the previous inspection. Most are the result of verbal abuse of an adult or persistent disruptive behaviour. Exclusions of students in Key Stage 3 were significantly higher than those of older students. As with the national pattern, more boys were excluded than girls. Behaviour in the corridors and at break times is usually good, although there is some smoking in the girls' toilets. Students are careless with their litter around the school, but there is little vandalism or graffiti.
9. Relationships across the school are good and students work well together in mixed boy/girl groups. There are no students from different ethnic groups but students respect and appreciate visitors of different races. New students in Year 7 appreciate the help they receive from older ones when they arrive new to the school. There is a high awareness of bullying and although a large proportion of students are concerned

about harassment, the school has good strategies for dealing with incidents and most students and parents are pleased with the effectiveness of action taken.

10. The school makes satisfactory provision for the students' spiritual development; for example, within English students study the major works of literature. The assemblies seen during the inspection were interesting and did raise a range of cultural and moral issues and some provided a very spiritual and moving experience, for example when students watched an Indian dance based on a Bible reading. Some others lacked opportunity for reflection. In religious education, students' spiritual development is effectively promoted through study of a range of religions and displays of art and other artefacts throughout the school provide students with a range of spiritual opportunities. Provision is limited in a range of subjects, such as music and mathematics.
11. The school provides good opportunities for the students' moral development. There is a clearly understood code of conduct and the good relationships that exist between students and staff encourage the development of a clear sense of right and wrong. Social development is also good. Students have a voice in the running of the school through the school council. Within lessons there are frequent opportunities for students to work together, enter into discussion and exchange ideas. The work of the study centre is an important element in the development of the social skills of the most vulnerable students. Students' social development is further enhanced by opportunities for team games in physical education, fieldwork in geography and a range of school visits. Students' cultural development is good. The school does much to raise students' awareness of living in a multi-cultural society. For example, very good displays in modern foreign languages and art and design, combined with visiting workshops by dancers and drummers, give students good insight into other cultures. This is further developed for some students by trips abroad, such as the recent visit to Egypt. There are also strong links with local culture, with some students involved in the local theatre and football workshops.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.3	School data	1.2
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.

12. Attendance is unsatisfactory. It is below the national average and has a negative impact on achievement among a minority of poor attenders; the poor attendance of a small number of Year 11 students resulted in them not achieving any GCSE passes last year. Attendance is significantly better in Years 7 and 8 than in other years. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased its efforts to improve attendance and there has been a slow year-on-year improvement so that attendance is now only slightly below the national average. The majority of parents appreciate the need for good attendance, but a significant number do not ensure their children attend regularly. Unauthorised absence is higher than national averages. Registration procedures are sound but the time given over to the form period is not always used well enough to enhance students' learning and personal development. Good systems to monitor attendance to school and individual lessons enable the school to tackle

problem areas and individuals effectively. The educational welfare officer and student support officer know students and their parents well and make a valuable contribution to raising attendance. The provision of courses more suited to the needs of individuals has also helped to improve attendance. Punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pastoral care and the curriculum are very good. Links with other colleges and schools and the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and leads to good learning throughout Years 7 to 11. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant element of very good teaching throughout the school and occasionally some that is excellent.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and plan their lessons well to ensure good learning takes place.
- Teachers structure their lessons well, but not all subjects use the Key Stage 3 strategy consistently to ensure that time and resources are always used to best effect.
- ICT is used well to make lessons interesting and learning engaging.
- There is some very good practice in individual subjects where assessment is used very well to evaluate achievement and help students to improve, but there are inconsistencies in marking and in the way some subjects use targets to help students improve.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 122 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (7%)	32 (26%)	57 (47%)	22 (18%)	2 (2%)	0	0

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

Commentary

13. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in nearly all subjects; it is very good in German, art and design, religious education and citizenship; it is satisfactory in mathematics, French and ICT. This consistency ensures that good learning takes place in most lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is also good in most subjects. Throughout Years 7 to 11 some excellent teaching leads to learning of the highest order, most commonly in art and design. There is evidence in the scrutiny of students' work of some unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics. Otherwise there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, and where it was seen, in music and physical education, it was not characteristic of the teaching students normally receive.
14. The college has not yet developed the consistent use of the Key Stage 3 strategy. There is some good practice in the use of the strategy and here students clearly

benefit from the common structure to lessons and the sharing of aims and achievement in class. On other occasions, lessons lack a clear focus on what is to be learned and a clear structure that students understand and come to expect. Where this occurs, time and resources are not used to best effect and teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good. Teachers mainly plan effectively and ensure that good learning takes place. This is true whether students have special educational needs or are gifted and talented. Teachers are fully committed to including all groups of students, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties. Measures to ensure equality of opportunity are good in most subjects and very good in art and design and vocational subjects. There are some inequalities in the curricular provision for boys and girls in physical education. Arrangements to meet the learning needs of all students are good, with effective support from the learning support staff.

15. Teachers are mainly specialists and have a good level of expertise about their subjects and the examination requirements in their areas. Students respect this and the good relationships teachers have with students and engender among students. The result is a good working atmosphere in classrooms where students want to learn and achievement is valued. This is extended beyond the classroom and very good use of computers to extend students' research skills often takes place in adjacent classroom areas outside the immediate sphere of control of the teachers. This is successful because teachers can trust students to work independently, on their own or with their peers.
16. Teachers maintain a good level of expectation and demand and students respond well to this and play their part by taking responsibility for their learning, for example in the way they respond to questioning, and in their approach to completing homework. Homework is used satisfactorily and the school is working towards making access to information available from home-based computers so that the school moves towards an "anytime/anywhere" approach. The technology status of the school has enabled teachers to develop their skilled use of ICT, and the school is well resourced with computers as aids to learning. Learning is enhanced in many lessons by the very good use of ICT. As a result, students are engaged in their learning and encouraged to explore different ways of learning that they find interesting and rewarding.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 9 lesson in art and design demonstrated how well students respond to the teacher's high expectations and carefully focused planning.

There was an excellent start to the lesson as the teacher consolidated work of the last lesson. Students were very keen to communicate and this informed the teacher which aspects needed clarifying. Students used correct terminology accurately and made very effective use of their sketchbooks. From analysing previous art modules in Year 9, the teacher found that students were floundering with traditional figure and face-drawing techniques, so a new module based on Japanese Manga drawing was offered as an unusual starting point. Students had already investigated the Manga artists, discovered about Manga history and something of the culture and language of Japan. The teacher's demonstration was excellent and gave students information and skills and the confidence to try for themselves. They related well to the stylised figures and were stimulated by the novel approach taken by the artist. The teacher built in success because she ensured students measured accurately to gain correct proportions, and encouraged them to emulate particular ways of depicting attitude and expression. Students were encouraged to be patient when

drawing to gain good results. Well-drawn support sheets showed students techniques in drawing difficult areas, which lifted standards. Students' achievement was very good because their efforts from this entirely new project were far better than previous ones as they responded to the teacher's high level of expectation of the quality of their work.

17. Teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall and in the study centre (for those students at risk of exclusion) it is very good. Students with significant literacy learning needs achieved well in a Year 8 English lesson. Here, the teacher created an effective learning atmosphere where good learning was managed well through encouragement and reward. All students worked well on analysing how language could be used. Work in lessons is well matched to students' needs. Where support staff are available, they provide effective support and enable students to have full access to the curriculum. Students who are at risk of exclusion, or whose behaviour restricts their learning, derive great benefit from the teaching and support provided in the study centre. This provision enables them not only to gain in self-confidence and self-esteem, but also to access the curriculum in a way which is relevant to their needs. Teaching by subject staff is good overall. Students benefit from the good relationships and, in the best lessons, the way in which teaching is adapted to their needs. In one very good Year 8 ICT lesson, the detailed explanations and use of computers gave the students confidence to attempt new tasks. There are occasions, however, when behaviour management of difficult students does not make sufficient reference to the students' targets so that students clearly understand their teachers' expectations.
18. The teaching of literacy skills is good overall. In this respect, the school is using the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy effectively to improve students' skills and is working closely with the literacy consultant from the local education authority. Inspectors saw evidence of the effective implementation of the strategy in which learning objectives were clearly stated and lesson planning reflected a three- or four-part lesson structure. However, there are some inconsistencies, both within departments, such as in mathematics, and between different subjects. The links between some lesson activities and the learning objectives are not always explicit and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning, both during and at the end of lessons, are not always taken, or too little time is given to them. In some subjects, students are not encouraged to use group talk as a tool to assist their learning. Achievement is best in subjects where teachers regularly identify and address students' literacy needs in their lesson planning.
19. The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. The contributions needed and made by subjects other than mathematics have been identified and there are clearly identified plans in place to take this work further. The teaching needed is identified in planning, and skills are taught appropriate to the demands of the various subjects. Technology college status has given ICT a high profile throughout the school. Most subjects use ICT as an integral part of their teaching and teachers and students have access to computers in many areas of the school. Most subjects use ICT well to enhance students' learning by developing their ability to communicate and research for information.
20. Assessment data collected from standardised tests and national examinations are used to set targets for students in all subjects. In Year 9 these targets are based on

students' performance in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. The effectiveness in setting realistic targets is limited by the high proportion of students who enter school in Year 7 without records of attainment in English, mathematics and science, as well as a lack of data related to other subjects. From Year 7, assessment data from each subject are collected each term and used to track the achievement of individual students. The value of these data is also limited by some inconsistency in methods used within subjects to assign National Curriculum levels or part levels to students. It also makes it difficult for the school to evaluate overall achievement effectively. Assessment is used well to inform all staff of students' special educational needs. Significant amounts of data are made available to staff to support the planning of lessons and to help measure these students' achievements.

21. The assessment and marking of students' work are generally satisfactory, although there is a lack of consistency in some areas, for example in mathematics and music, and here students do not always clearly understand how to improve. This issue was also raised in the previous inspection. There is also some very good practice, for example in art and design where students' work is carefully marked so that students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to raise their standard and what targets to aim for. Assessment in art and design and religious education is also used very well to meet the needs of individuals and this has a direct bearing on the standards attained in these subjects. Assessment and its use are more effective in Years 10 and 11 in most subjects where there is a clearer link to what students need to do to succeed in their examinations.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good overall, and it is enriched well with a particularly good focus on the arts. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of courses in Years 7 to 9 is good and helps students to achieve well.
- The range of courses in Years 10 and 11 is very wide, innovative and meets the needs and aspirations of students very well.
- Support for students with special educational needs is good, and the provision for those at risk of inclusion is very good.
- The qualifications of teaching staff are very well matched to their subjects.
- Time for teaching some subjects in Years 7 to 9 is below that which is normally found.

Commentary

22. At the time of the previous inspection the curriculum was considered sound in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. It is now better in both cases.
23. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum provision is good overall, has good breadth, and is well balanced. It exceeds the minimum statutory requirements. All students take lessons in ICT. However, to have this increased range of provision requires that some subjects have their time cut to below that which is normally found in the large majority of schools. This is particularly true in modern foreign languages, where this reduction in time is affecting the standards reached by those students who elect to take two languages.

24. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum provision is very good. The school has worked in a highly innovative and imaginative way to increase the range of courses in Years 10 and 11. It has extended the subjects which all students must follow beyond the traditional diet of English, mathematics and science, to encompass a vocational subject, a taught course of ICT, a technology subject, and a modern foreign language. These courses are accessible to students of all abilities. A number of students have opportunities to follow additional practical work-related courses at the local college of further education. For students not suited to the full range of GCSE courses, a reduced GCSE timetable is available. These students receive additional support with their studies, and also follow other accredited courses, in the space created. The curriculum is very well matched to the students' needs and aspirations.
25. Opportunities for enrichment and other support for learning are good overall, and very good in modern foreign languages, art and design and music. Students considered to be in need of additional support are very closely monitored and tracked. Subjects provide good support for examinations with after-school improvement or extension classes, and homework clubs. This support is very good in science, modern foreign languages and art and design. Students make good use of the library at breaks, lunchtimes, and after school to support further their learning. There is good support for gifted and talented students, particularly in design and technology where several students take their GCSE examinations in Year 10 and then take a GCE AS-level course in Year 11. A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered in physical education, with representative football teams for girls being a feature in all five year groups. Drama students participate in local festivals and whole-school productions, and music students regularly perform in both modern and traditional settings. The school is changing the arrangements for the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Strong and convincing evidence based on past performance and previous evaluations indicates that good systems and strategies are being put into place to teach the subject.
26. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. Teaching and support staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Provision is well planned through a combination of support, withdrawal and small group teaching. The strength of the curriculum is the alternative provision made for students who are at risk of exclusion from school. Links with colleges and other outside bodies enable them to follow a rich curriculum, which results in successes in vocational courses such as horticulture, or achieving apprenticeships. The study centre provides a curriculum which addresses the need for students to develop communication and social skills as well as raising their self-esteem. There are no students disapplied from the National Curriculum or national tests. All students have full access to the National Curriculum. Curricular programmes are mainly effective in ensuring equality of opportunity, with vocational courses on offer to all students in Years 10 and 11. These vocational courses make a strong contribution to ensuring equality of opportunity for students of all abilities and aptitudes. In some subjects there are special arrangements to tackle differences in attainment, for example in English some classes are taught in single sex groups to encourage fuller participation from boys.
27. Overall, the match of teachers and their subject qualifications to the curriculum is very good. In Years 10 and 11, all students are taught by specialist teachers. The match of

support staff to assist the teaching of the curriculum to students with special educational needs is good. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum. The secretarial and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running and overall condition of the school.

28. Resources to support learning are good. The provision of ICT resources is very good. There are several computer areas in the school, which give very good support for learning. Teachers have computer facilities in their teaching rooms. The library is an attractive and well-managed environment that encourages students to read and study. The library is well stocked with reference materials for all subjects of the curriculum. It includes networked software and video resources, and fiction that is very attractive and used well by the student body. The fiction section has led directly to a significant number of boys accessing reading materials.
29. Accommodation is good. The buildings are well maintained and the site is clean and tidy. The design and layout of the art and design, design and technology and humanities facilities create a very positive environment for learning. The library is centrally located and computer suites are easily accessible. Accommodation for physical education is good but has the disadvantage of being widely dispersed. This results in lesson time being wasted as students move from one site to another. The importance that the school attaches to the provision for students with special educational needs is reflected in the very high quality accommodation provided for them.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of students' welfare, health and safety. The advice and guidance based on effective monitoring is good and has a positive impact on achievement. The school takes very good account of students' views and involves them very well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good health and safety procedures.
- Induction arrangements for new students are very good.
- Pastoral care is very good and students have trusting relationships with adults in school. This gives them the confidence to achieve well.
- High quality support is given to vulnerable students.
- Good advice is provided on post-14 and post-16 options.
- The use of registration time to promote learning and personal development is variable and too often the time is wasted.

Commentary

30. Procedures for dealing with students' welfare, health and safety are good. Satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with child protection issues, but there has been no recent training for the new staff involved. Training is scheduled for this term. Very good heed is paid to students' safety in lessons and on visits out of college. Risk assessments are completed routinely with the good support of the governing body. Internet service provision is safe and secure. Supervision at break times is good, but the girls' toilets are used as a refuge for smokers. There is inadequate supervision of

the transfer of students to physical education lessons on the sixth form site. The canteen offers a range of healthy foods but demand is usually greater for chips, chocolate and fizzy drinks. To offset this, the college has wisely introduced a non-chip day.

31. Pastoral care is very good and enables students to achieve well in a secure and happy environment. Induction arrangements are very good because of the very good links with local primary schools and students settle very well. The newly introduced house system has been organised to provide a team that supports the needs of individual students very well. The roles of the head and deputy head of houses are complemented by a learning co-ordinator and all have a good oversight of both academic and personal development. There are good records of personal development to back up the college's star charts, which are used to provide advice and guidance at half-termly review meetings between students and form tutors. Students are aware of their attainment levels in most subjects. Students enjoy good relationships with their form tutors but the use of registration time is variable. In the best cases, the time is used well to extend learning and personal development, but too often the time is wasted. Students like their teachers and are happy that there is always an adult they can turn to for help and advice.
32. The college has good systems for analysing and reviewing the progress of boys and girls and students with special educational needs. This ensures that action can be taken to tackle any identified differences in achievement for these groups. The learning mentor, funded through Excellence in Cities, provides very good support for a small group of vulnerable students. There is also good use of outside support agencies such as the local education authority behaviour and attendance consultant to support students. The educational welfare officer and student support officer offer good support for students. Targets for students with special educational needs are well structured and are fully known to students. In the study centre, students benefit from well-structured counselling and behaviour management sessions. In subject lessons, however, there are occasions when the control of students' behaviour is not related to their specific targets.
33. Although it is being reorganised this year, a sound and comprehensive programme of PSHE is planned to guide students through college choices and prepare them well for life after college. The careers programme is good and supported well by the Connexions service. Advice on the option choices for Year 10 is good. Students in Year 11 do a week of useful and well-organised work experience. Very good links with the sixth form and local colleges successfully inform students of the range of post-16 options. Students' views are regularly sought and valued through review meetings, surveys and the college council. Students were involved in the behaviour audit used to develop a new behaviour policy. A geography project resulted in the design of a safer traffic flow system in the college and students all had a vote on the choice of names for the new houses. The large majority of students feel the college is interested in their views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college has satisfactory links with parents. There are very good links with other colleges and schools, and with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents like the college but too many do not ensure the good attendance of their children.
- Good information is provided to parents to help them support their children's learning at home, but not all statutory requirements are met in the information provided in the governors' annual report.
- Very good links with the local and wider community widen students' experiences and enhance learning.
- Very good links with primary schools ease transition to the college.
- Very good links with other colleges and schools support the development of technology and extend learning opportunities.

Commentary

34. The college's sound links with parents enable parents to support their children's education satisfactorily. Parents consider this to be a good school, where teaching is good, expectations are high and their children make good progress. They are very pleased with the way their children settle in college and are comfortable in approaching the college with questions or problems. A few parents are concerned about behaviour and bullying, but inspectors found behaviour to be good and the college to have good procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying. Some parents would like more information on how well their children are doing and on how they can help them learn at home. Formal and informal links with the parents of students with special educational needs are good. Parents have the confidence to approach the college and value the support provided.
35. The college values its links with parents and has an 'open door' policy. The newly introduced newsletters are well presented and informative. The governing body's annual report to parents and prospectus are informative, but do not have information on arrangements for the admission of disabled students, steps taken by the college to help disabled students to be treated on equal terms with others, or facilities to help access for the disabled. There is no information about the next election of parent governors, resolutions from the last meeting, progress on the action plan since the last Ofsted inspection, academic targets, local and national averages for GCSE and vocational qualifications or national information about Key Stage 3 tests. Students' diaries are used effectively to communicate with parents and are regularly checked by form teachers. Homework is used satisfactorily to reinforce and extend the work in the classroom. The vast majority of parents support their children's learning well at home by providing computers and Internet access but a significant minority do not ensure the good attendance of their children.
36. A small number of parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. They are invited to termly reviews with their children to meet tutors but many do not attend. Annual reports are good. The format is good and informative but subject comments are variable and action plans are not always useful in helping students know what they need to do to improve. A large number of parents do not attend annual consultation meetings. The college is quick to contact parents when there is a problem and likes to send letters of praise as well as complaint. Parents are consulted on issues such as the way Year 7 students settle and the college takes good account

of their views. Most consultation is informal, but the majority of parents appreciate that the college values their views. Parental attendance at governing body annual meetings is low and the college has difficulty in recruiting parent governors. The Community Association supports the social and financial life of the college well. The complaints procedure is published and all complaints are addressed correctly, but it is unsatisfactory in that there is not yet an efficient log of parental complaints and concerns.

37. The college's leadership has worked hard and to very good effect to ensure that it has very good links with the local and wider community to enhance students' learning and personal development. A wide range of visits and visitors broaden students' knowledge and social development very effectively, for example visits to theatres, concerts and places of interest and residential trips to France and Spain. Some students have recently returned from an educational cruise to Egypt. Very good use is made of outside agencies to support learning and to help raise students' confidence and self-esteem. A very good range of useful work experience placements is found locally for students in Year 11. The college takes into account the likely future skills needs of the area when guiding students' career choices. Very good support and sponsorship were found from local business and industry for the college's successful technology college status bid and they continue to support the college and work-related learning. Members of the community make very good use of the college's facilities to promote lifelong learning. Students support local and national charities such as Comic Relief and the Shoebox Appeal well.
38. The college has very good links with other colleges and schools, which make a significant contribution to students' achievement and personal development. These are enhanced by its technology college status and collaboration on a behaviour improvement programme. Work in primary schools is very successful in easing transition between Year 6 and Year 7. Students with special educational needs participate in a paired reading project in primary schools. This improves their confidence and helps to put new students at their ease. Staff teach technology and French in local primary schools. The college works closely with local colleges and schools to provide a wide range of alternative vocational courses to suit the needs of individual students. Shared arrangements are managed well. There is a wide range of sporting links and students joined two other local secondary schools for a trip to Strasbourg. The Aim Higher project has been used successfully in enabling students to visit universities and raise their aspirations. The very good links with the sixth form and with other colleges support work-related learning and transition to post-16 education very well. The college makes a very good contribution to the training of teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership. Governance is very good, though statutory requirements are not met for collective worship and in the provision of some information to parents. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher's open, consultative approach has won the support of governors, staff, parents and students.
- Senior staff and those in other key positions contribute well to the leadership of the college.
- Governors know the college very well and play a very effective role in supporting and holding it to account.
- Strategic planning at all levels is not sufficiently focused on the action needed to raise standards even further.
- The good practice that exists in monitoring and evaluating performance is not equally established in all subject departments.

Commentary

39. In the relatively short time since her appointment the headteacher has made a priority of getting to know her key staff and gaining the support and confidence of staff and governors, as well as parents and students. In this she has been successful. This consultative approach is a key factor in the recent change to a new pastoral system based on houses to which both staff and students are adapting well. Students are happy and proud of their college. Parents share their satisfaction. Morale is high. It is an open, inclusive and enabling culture that encourages success and builds confidence.
40. Central to the headteacher's vision is the further improvement of standards. Not content with the three recent School Achievement awards, the headteacher's ambition is to raise standards over time so that the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C is above the national average. To this end, for example, the college has renewed and strengthened its very good links with primary schools. This helps to ease the transition of children to the college and thereby contributes to the raising of their achievement. To achieve its aims the college's leadership has successfully taken advantage of a number of initiatives and sources of funding. The continued technology college status has brought improvements in resources as well as improving links with other local schools.
41. Quick to recognise areas for improvement, the headteacher has made a strong new appointment to the senior leadership team. This has strengthened the team, spreading responsibilities and making for clearer lines of communication. Leadership at this level is good and has been largely instrumental in the creation of a very broad and inclusive curriculum. At the level of subject and pastoral areas, too, leadership is strong. Subject leaders and heads of houses are good role models for staff and students and, through regular meetings with the headteacher, have become increasingly accountable for the performance of their areas of responsibility. The links between subject leaders and other members of the senior leadership team are not clearly enough structured, although this is now being reviewed by the new headteacher. As a result, there are currently inconsistencies in managing the monitoring and evaluation of the college's work. This has led to varying standards between departments and sometimes within departments, as for example in mathematics. However, the senior team and governors have a good awareness of a weakness in the teaching in mathematics and have put into place measures to improve the situation.

42. Strategic planning is satisfactory. The breadth of the plan means that the focus on the raising of standards and students' achievement is not clear enough. It is also not clear enough in explaining the actions needed to achieve its aims. Planning at subject level adequately reflects the college's aims, but similarly lacks clear focus. There is scope for greater involvement by all staff in the planning process. The senior team and governors have embraced fully the importance of curricular innovation. Students' good achievement testifies to the success of these initiatives, because students enjoy the very good breadth of opportunities offered in Years 10 and 11.
43. Governors act very effectively as critical friends to the college, both challenging and supporting senior staff. They take a very active role in the leadership of the college and make a very positive contribution to the decisions that are taken that help to shape the vision and direction of the college. They have good quality information about the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They draw upon their very good insight into these to hold the college to account for the standards and quality produced. The statutory breaches that occurred in the last annual report of governors to parents arose from a confusion of responsibilities between the new headteacher and the governors. This has since been put right and the omissions are being rectified in the current reporting. The college does provide acts of collective worship, some of which are of very good quality. However, there is no daily act of collective worship, and students' spiritual development, although satisfactory overall, is not as good as other aspects of their personal development.
44. The college is managed satisfactorily. There are good systems and strategies in place to guide its progress. Overall, the college has made a good response to tackling the key issues raised in the last report. The effectiveness of initiatives taken in terms of their impact on raising standards is monitored and evaluated satisfactorily. There are a number of management issues that remain to be resolved. The college gathers data very efficiently and uses the information well to analyse its performance and to compare with other like institutions to ensure that standards and the quality of its provision are as high as they should be. The information gained is also used effectively to identify and tackle underachievement. However, there are some inconsistencies that detract from the overall impact in setting and using realistic and accurate targets to guide improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are undertaken regularly but the impact is lessened because there are some inconsistencies in teaching that need to be tackled. For example, the very good practice that exists in the college in the use of the Key Stage 3 strategy to give students a greater consistency in their learning experiences across different subjects is not shared sufficiently. There are inconsistencies in the way in which different subjects approach marking, and in some areas marking is ineffective in taking students' work forward. None of these issues are impacting on standards sufficiently to make management unsatisfactory, but they do detract from the good aspects of management to make it satisfactory overall. The post 16 co-ordinator for 6th form provision is also a member of the senior management team of Southfield College. This ensures clear lines of communication. In addition, it ensures that students in Southfield receive good advice and guidance in their choice of post 16 options.
45. The college has an equal opportunities policy and policies on dealing with racial discrimination and ensuring racial equality. The implementation of these policies is monitored through reports to the governing body to ensure that they are effective.

Senior staff provide very good leadership in ensuring that teachers and students are aware of equality issues. This ensures good provision for equality of opportunity in most subjects, with very good provision in art and design and vocational education.

46. The whole-college approach to managing the provision for special needs has a range of good features. The college has a strong commitment to ensuring that students at risk of exclusion remain in college. There is a similarly strong commitment to the development of students' social and communication skills. The opening of the study centre is an important feature of the college's provision. The limited number of support staff are used effectively. The department is provided with very good quality accommodation. Currently, the college is without a manager for special needs, but an appointment has been made for a teacher to take up the post next term. The college has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous report and has made good progress through development of the curriculum and the provision of support for the most vulnerable students.
47. There is a very good match between the number, qualifications and experience of teachers and the needs of the curriculum in most departments, with the exception of physical education, where deployment of staff is not always satisfactory. The balance of age and years of service to teaching and to the college is good and the college does not usually experience problems in recruitment. Subject specialists, mostly graduates, teach all but a few lessons and have a positive effect on the quality of education provided. There are good procedures for induction as all newly qualified teachers and those who are new to the college have a mentor from whom they gain help, constructive criticism and advice. Arrangements for professional development are good and are linked to the development plans for most departments. Teachers attend courses and disseminate the information to colleagues when they return. This helps teachers to plan for changes in methodology and philosophy. The teachers are supported well by technicians and assistants. Students with special educational needs have the support designated to them, but in general, more support staff are needed in the special needs department. The college is also a very good provider of initial teacher training.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,839,316
Total expenditure	3,880,011
Expenditure per student	4,936

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	185,338
Balance carried forward to the next	144,643

48. Financial planning and management are good. The principles of best value are applied effectively and the college consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Planning procedures ensure that educational priorities are costed carefully. The college has been active and successful in attracting additional funding, for example through maintaining its technology college status and in attracting funding associated with Excellence in Cities, for example, for use with gifted and talented students.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- WRL is led very effectively, giving a clear direction for its further development.
- Vocational provision is very well established.
- Innovative curriculum development has resulted in the provision of a very wide range of courses.
- The Connexions service makes a very effective contribution to provision overall and the work experience programme offers a wide range of opportunities for all students.
- Very good links have been developed with local business over a number of years.
- There are very good post-16 opportunities with clear pathways towards further study.
- An audit of existing provision in curriculum areas is not yet complete, which limits planning.

Commentary

49. Provision meets statutory requirements. This judgement is based on discussions with the co-ordinator for WRL and with students. In addition, 12 lessons were sampled: three vocational science, two health and social care, two leisure and tourism, two business studies and one each of manufacturing, art and design and ICT.
50. Students gained qualifications in a wide range of vocational courses at both GNVQ and foundation levels in 2003. In 2004, students gained qualifications in three new vocational GCSE courses, with a 100 per cent pass rate in two courses and a 75 per cent pass rate in a third. The number of passes at full GNVQ intermediate level was 129. The number of students taking foundation level qualifications in 2004 was the same as in 2003 with all gaining passes in the courses they followed. These results show good achievement overall and, for many individuals, very good achievement from their starting points in Year 10.
51. In sampled lessons, standards seen were below average except in art and design, where standards were average, and in manufacturing where they were above average. Achievement was good overall. Teaching and learning were good in vocational science, ICT, business studies and in leisure and tourism. They were very good in manufacturing and excellent in art and design. They were satisfactory in health and social care. Students gain a wide experience of the world of work through vocational courses studied. They learn about quality assurance and quality control in manufacturing, they advise "real" clients about healthy living in health and social care, and they use work experience placements effectively as examples for investigation assignments in business studies.
52. There is a good programme of careers education and work experience with the Connexions service making a very valuable contribution. The very good Connexions library in the college provides students with a valuable additional source of information. The place of careers education in the curriculum is currently under review. Innovative planning for this year includes younger students learning decision-making skills through the "real game" with staff trained to teach the programme.

53. The leadership of WRL is very good. The gaining of technology college status gave significant impetus to the development of business links and they have developed very well over a number of years. The college also works in close co-operation with the local business education consortium, which conducts risk assessments for all work experience placements and provides a comprehensive database of local employers. Through these very good links the college ensures that its curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities in vocational areas that match the changing patterns of work in the local area. The college's long-term commitment to including a wide range of vocational courses in its curriculum has meant that it has been very well placed to meet the requirements for work-related learning. It has been at the forefront of developments locally and nationally. It is constantly striving to enhance its provision with, for example, the development of enterprise learning. The innovative development of the curriculum has significantly enhanced WRL. The very good opportunities are well matched to a very wide range of needs. Students have opportunities to gain a very wide range of qualifications. In addition to studying ICT, all Year 10 and virtually all Year 11 students have chosen at least one vocational course. Opportunities for post-16 progression to further courses are clearly identified in planning and provision. A thorough audit of WRL provision is planned, but this process has not kept pace with curriculum development, which limits further planning.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the Year 9 national tests and in GCSE examinations are rising.
- Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes and good teaching.
- Teachers make insufficient use of National Curriculum assessment information when marking students' work.
- Good departmental leadership and management ensure strong commitment and teamwork.

Commentary

54. The percentage of boys and girls reaching level 5 and above in Year 9 national tests in 2003 was well below average. These results were an improvement over the previous years and the improvement continued in 2004. Girls outperform boys, as they do nationally, but not significantly. Students do better in English than in mathematics but not as well as in science. In 2003, performance in GCSE English was average, both at grades A*/A and at A*-G, but it was well below the national average at grades A*-C. In English literature, A*-B grades were above average, but results were below the national average at A*-C, and less than half of the year group entered this examination, compared with 77 per cent nationally. Overall, the as yet unvalidated 2004 A*-C results in both English and literature show a slight improvement over the previous year's, but with fewer top grades.
55. Standards in Year 9 are below average: however, this represents good achievement because these students were well below the national average when they entered the college. The college's data shows that nearly half had a reading age two years or more below their actual age when in Year 7. Standards are also below average in Year 11, but again achievement is good because these students were well below average in their earlier Year 9 national tests.
56. Speaking and listening skills develop well and are approaching average by the end of Year 11 because students have regular opportunities in most lessons to discuss, collaborate and explore ideas. Although higher attaining students read aloud competently, many middle and lower attaining students have problems understanding their reading because of their poor vocabulary and their failure to recognise meanings of words. The levels of reading in the lowest set in the current Year 9 means that many of these students cannot show what they can really do in examinations because they are unable to understand the questions. Higher attaining students make good

progress in writing and by Year 11 they write cogently and accurately, but lower attaining students still have difficulty sustaining argument and their overall standards are depressed by their limited vocabulary and inaccurate grammar, sentence construction and use of standard English. Overall, creative writing is often lively and entertaining, but critical writing in literature and media, by all but the most able, tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. In all years, writing to describe is better than writing to inform or explain.

57. Overall achievement by students of all backgrounds and abilities is good because of their positive attitudes, their desire to succeed, good teaching and a curriculum which meets their needs well. All regularly use computers to improve their writing, research and presentation skills and there are many opportunities to enrich their learning through a good range of extra-curricular activities, which includes theatre visits and drama productions. Students with special educational needs receive good quality individual support from teaching assistants whilst those needing extra help with literacy in Year 7 have regular lessons using progress units which enable them to make rapid gains. Successful grouping of students by ability ensures that higher attaining students are constantly challenged through more demanding tasks. Until this year, only half of the students made sufficient progress through the college to be entered for both English and English literature at GCSE: however, double entry numbers are now increasing and the department is also about to introduce a GCSE course in media studies.
58. Teaching and learning are good. Classes are managed well and teaching carefully planned to ensure that learning is rewarding and enjoyable. The department has successfully researched students' learning styles and methods for encouraging boys to learn. There are choices and challenges and, when necessary, lower attaining students receive well-designed prompt sheets to help them to structure their writing. Teachers use test and GCSE assessment information well in their newly introduced schemes of work to plan appropriate learning experiences and to identify students who are underachieving. They share learning objectives with students and work very well with teaching assistants to support lower attaining students: however, in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not regularly refer to National Curriculum level descriptors in their marking to show students exactly what they need to do to improve. Experiments with single sex groups in Years 10 and 11 and the introduction of smaller group sizes in Year 9 are improving learning and helping to drive up standards.
59. Leadership and management are good. Commitment and teamwork are strong; there is a shared vision and philosophy of English teaching, and the department is very willing to innovate and experiment in order to improve the quality of learning. The department evaluates its performance well and its development planning is good, though its targets are not always clearly linked to improving standards. Assessment and marking are carefully monitored and new teachers inducted very well into the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are rising and both achievement and teaching are now good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Students enter the college with levels of literacy which are well below those found nationally. Many have weak reading and writing skills and their limited vocabulary and

lack of confidence often impede their oral communication. Because of good provision in most subjects, students achieve well and their overall standard improves to below average by the end of Year 11. However, weaknesses in literacy in mathematics, design and technology and ICT affect students' progress in these subjects, especially in middle and lower attaining groups.

61. Students' achievement is best in subjects where all teachers consider students' literacy needs in every lesson. There is good practice in science, history and geography, for example, particularly in the careful development of subject vocabulary and in the use of prompt sheets and models of effective writing to help students with the structuring of their work. In art and design, there is a strong emphasis on reading and research skills and the modern foreign languages department makes good use of ICT to demonstrate the link between French and English grammar. Oral skills are also being developed well in many subjects, but in some there are few planned opportunities for students to use group discussions to share and extend their ideas, to explain, justify and evaluate their own ideas, opinions and performances, or to speak at any length. A reading-for-pleasure culture is still being developed. Some impact is lost in developing students' literacy skills because there are some inconsistencies in practice, both between departments and within some departments.
62. A member of the senior management team leads literacy, thus emphasising its importance in the college; he is assisted by a newly appointed co-ordinator. It is managed well, with regular reviews and careful monitoring, and effectively promoted through a teaching and learning group. Assessment information is used well to set students targets and to measure achievement, and progress units help lower attaining students in Year 7 to move from level 3 in English to level 4. Additionally, the English sets for these students are smaller and have extra support from teaching assistants. The librarian also provides very good advice and resources for both students and staff, and the college's work is augmented extremely well by the county's advisory service.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in German is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in German in Years 10 and 11 are above average and students are achieving very well.
- Good teaching, much of it very good, ensures that the majority of students learn well.
- Many students are not reaching high enough standards in Year 9 because of the very low allocation of time.
- Most students enjoy learning a foreign language and are very well behaved.
- Keen students benefit from a very rich offering of visits, clubs and activities that enrich their experience of learning a foreign language.

Commentary

63. In 2003, GCSE results at A* to C in German were below average. This represented satisfactory achievement for the majority of that group of students, especially those of

higher attainment who gained an average percentage of A* and A grades. Girls did better than boys, but by a smaller margin than occurs nationally. Results in 2004 marked a significant improvement over 2003.

64. In Year 9, standards are average. They are affected by the very low allocation of time given to each of German and French. It is not possible to cover certain aspects of grammar in enough depth. This means that higher attaining students have not yet got a firm enough understanding of past and future tenses. In spite of this, however, students are achieving well because they speak and understand German with unusual confidence and, through very good teaching, are very highly motivated. In Year 11, standards are above average in German. Students are achieving very well because of consistently very strong teaching and their very positive attitudes. Particularly striking is their confidence in speaking and understanding German, which comes from systematic exposure to the language. This applies equally to students of lower attainment and those with special educational needs. Even in their written work, which many find hard, these students are reaching average standards and show a fair grasp of German grammar.
65. Teaching is very good. On occasion it is excellent. Teachers speak the language fluently and use it all the time in lessons so that students understand it through constant exposure. Outstanding features of teaching are the colourful and ingenious methods teachers use to capture students' interest and involve them in learning. In all lessons there is a joyful buzz of purposeful activity that expects a great deal of students and leads to very fast and seamless learning. Students enjoy their learning and are very well behaved as a result. Marking of students' work is regular and encouraging but sometimes lacks rigour in demanding correction and pointing to ways of improving further.
66. The German department is led well, with real vision and enthusiasm. The head of department and other staff are very good role models for their students. Management of the department is satisfactory. On a day-to-day basis the department is very well managed: documentation is very good, as are the systems for assessing and tracking students' progress. However, the department is not yet sharp enough at analysing its performance and taking necessary action. Teachers are highly competent specialists. The department, too, has become very experienced in the training of student teachers, benefiting staff and students alike. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Excellent displays in the classrooms create a very good context for learning. Students benefit greatly from the rich menu of language activities on offer outside the curriculum.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, much of it very good, ensures that the majority of students learn well.
- Where students are taught predominantly in French, they are achieving well.
- Standards in French currently lag behind those in German and are below average. Girls achieve less well than boys.
- Many students are not reaching high enough standards in Year 9 because of the very low allocation of time.

- Keen students benefit from a very rich offering of visits, clubs and activities that enrich their experience of learning a foreign language.

Commentary

67. In 2003, GCSE results at A* to C in French were below average. Students of higher attainment achieved well and gained a fair percentage of A* and A grades. However, girls did much less well than boys, contrary to the national picture, and many of them underachieved. This trend appears to have been repeated in the as yet unvalidated 2004 results, which were lower than those of 2003.
68. In Year 9, standards are below average. Students achieve satisfactorily. As in German, most students in the younger years have a very low timetable allocation, which adversely affects their standards in French. Students who receive the good teaching in the department use French a lot and partly make up for this by good speaking and listening skills. Others, again, are too passive and their speaking is under-developed. In Year 11, standards in French are below average overall. Achievement is satisfactory. However, where students are taught predominantly in French, they are achieving well and have at least average standards. Their speaking and listening skills are well developed and many have good pronunciation. Other students who receive teaching that gives much less exposure to French in class speak with very English-sounding pronunciation and understand relatively little. These students have plenty of opportunity to read in French, often using ICT, but they are passive learners because they are not given enough chance to practise their speaking. Girls in particular are underachieving because they have too little opportunity to shine.
69. Overall teaching is satisfactory. The teaching of French varies considerably, as does the learning. Half of the teaching is very good and, as in German, gives students copious opportunities to listen to and speak in the foreign language. These students learn very well because they are active and well motivated, making strong headway in their use of French. In too many lessons, however, other teaching makes little use of French and focuses excessively on the explanation of grammar. This is done engagingly using ICT but students are too passive and have little opportunity of practising in French. Learning in such situations is unbalanced, with excessive emphasis on reading, note taking and the absorption of grammar. Students are well behaved but unenthusiastic.
70. The head of modern foreign languages leads and manages both French and German. As with German, the department is led well, with real vision and enthusiasm. The head of department and other staff are very good role models for their students. Teachers are highly competent specialists. Very good links with primary schools have been forged through the outreach work of the department's two advanced skills teachers. Student teachers benefit from training alongside experienced colleagues. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, especially in the achievement of boys. As with German, excellent displays in the classrooms create a very good context for learning. Students benefit greatly from the rich menu of language activities on offer outside the curriculum. Management of the department is satisfactory. On a day-to-day basis the department is very well managed: documentation is very good, as are the systems for assessing and tracking students' progress. However, the department is not yet sharp enough at analysing its performance and taking necessary action. The disparity in standards between German and French, and within French, remains to be tackled, caused as it is by less effective methods in some French teaching. Associated with this and also needing to be tackled is the relative under-achievement of girls in French.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average in Year 9 but improving steadily.
- There is a lack of rigour in checking the quality of teaching and students' work and using this information to improve teaching, and as a result there is some unsatisfactory teaching.
- Data analysis is very good and used effectively to indicate areas for improvement.
- Not all teachers have taken sufficient note of the most recent national guidelines for teaching mathematics.
- Initiatives recently taken by the senior management team and governors are improving provision.

Commentary

71. In 2003, results in the Year 9 national tests were well below average when compared with all schools and those with a similar background. Detailed analysis of all available data shows that almost all these students made at least satisfactory progress in their learning and for a significant minority, achievement was very good. However, the very ambitious targets set by the college were not achieved. Provisional test results for 2004 show a seven per cent improvement in those reaching level 5. This continues a steady upward trend that began in 2002. In 2003, the proportion of students gaining A* in their GCSE examination was well above the national average. The proportion of students in the year group gaining A* to C was well below average and A* to G below average. Provisional results show that results are lower in 2004, with fewer students attaining the highest grades, but data analysis shows that this actually reflects a small improvement in achievement when account is taken of the standards of these students at the end of their Year 9.
72. Students in both Years 9 and 11 entered college with standards that were well below average in mathematical skills and these remain well below average throughout the college. While achievement overall is satisfactory, there is variability across classes in students' achievement due to the variability in the quality and styles of teaching. Students' standards of literacy and mental arithmetic are a barrier to learning, particularly in coursework activities for GCSE. Although students learn facts and methods to solve problems, there is an inconsistency in the development of presentation skills and use of notation. In some classes students draw diagrams accurately and label graphs clearly, while in a minority of classes, presentation is poor and students do not develop good work habits because the teaching they receive does not demand this. The provision of smaller than average class sizes is helping to raise standards.
73. Teaching is satisfactory overall, leading to satisfactory learning. There is a significant amount of very good teaching, but also evidence of some unsatisfactory teaching seen in the scrutiny of students' work. The college has identified this problem, given good support and is now taking effective action to ensure that unsatisfactory teaching does not occur. In most lessons, class routines are well established and teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. The weakest element of teaching is planning for the differing needs of students within ability groups, based on ongoing assessment of students' responses. Although most work is marked, comments do not consistently show students how to improve, or the teacher or students do not follow up comments made. Teachers are beginning to use the most recent national guidelines that provide a strategy for raising standards in Years 7 to 9. However, not all have fully grasped the

techniques that fully ensure that students develop at different rates, nor have all students been taught how to use different strategies to solve problems and complete mental calculations. There is some very good practice, for example in a very good lesson the teacher conveyed to the students a real enthusiasm for the subject and made activities both challenging and fun. This meant students were keen to answer questions and tried hard. In the most effective lessons, when students' answers were wrong their responses were obviously valued by the teacher so they were keen to try again. Subject-specific vocabulary was discussed and words carefully displayed to help students learn to spell them correctly and recognise them in texts and tests. Students were given the opportunity to discuss strategies, developing both mathematical understanding and speaking and listening skills.

74. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, but in the least effective lessons all students engaged in the same tasks, with the most able wasting time while others caught up. Opportunities are sometimes lost to make use of the very good ICT facilities in every room. When teachers or students do use it, it effectively supports learning. There are inconsistencies in the use of homework to improve learning.
75. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The senior management team and the governors have recently put systems and strategies into place to improve provision further by tackling identified weaknesses in teaching, and are in a good position to ensure that unsatisfactory teaching no longer takes place. There is a very comprehensive development plan and data analysis is used very well to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning. There has been, however, a lack of rigour in checking the quality of teaching and of students' work in their books and using this to set targets for improvement. When due account is taken of the strengths and weaknesses and current standards, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. A secure numeracy policy has been established and various initiatives undertaken to improve the use of numeracy across the curriculum. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills in other subjects are frequently identified in planning, and where required, skills are taught appropriately. Provision is good in geography, design and technology and science. In other subjects it is at least satisfactory. A newly appointed coordinator has a clear vision for the next stage of development, and has effectively audited provision.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching ensures that all students achieve well, attaining standards above those in similar schools.
- The department is led and managed very well, with a clear focus on further improving standards.
- The science curriculum is very well matched to the students' needs and includes good vocational courses for older students.

- All students receive good support for their learning, with effective assessment procedures that are used effectively to set targets for improvement.
- Weaknesses in reading, writing and speaking skills limit the progress of some students in all years, despite the department's good strategies for developing literacy. In some groups this is exacerbated by some students' lack of motivation and irregular attendance.

Commentary

77. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were below average but above those in similar schools. The results for 2004 were slightly higher than 2003, continuing a rising trend. The results in both years were slightly below the college's statutory targets. There were no significant differences in the standards attained by boys and girls. Results in the 2003 double award GCSE examinations were above average and well above those in similar schools. Just over half of the students took GNVQ courses instead of GCSE, with about two-thirds of these students gaining grades equivalent to GCSE A*-C grades. No national figures are available for comparison with similar schools. GCSE results for 2004, as yet unvalidated, were slightly higher than 2003. About two thirds of the students took the GNVQ course with a high proportion attaining A*-C equivalent grades. Overall, the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades or equivalent was substantially higher than in 2003. Differences in the results of boys and girls were no higher than the national differences.
78. Standards of work seen are below average in Year 9 and broadly average in Year 11. Students of all abilities achieve well in Years 7 to 9, attaining standards that compare well to those in similar schools. In Years 10 and 11, this good achievement is maintained. There are no significant differences in the achievements of students in different groups such as the gifted and talented and those with special needs. In Years 7 to 9, students' understanding of basic ideas in physics, chemistry and biology is below average but above expectations based on their previous results. Work in Years 10 and 11 shows good progress by students in relation to their past results; they are attaining average standards and achieving well.
79. The quality of teaching is good. Some very good teaching was seen during the inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers plan their work well and manage the students' behaviour effectively, ensuring that learning is good overall. Students generally have good attitudes to their work, although a minority lack motivation and interest in the subject. For some this is compounded by unsatisfactory attendance. Many students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, have difficulties with reading, writing and communication skills. Science work is planned well to help them to develop these skills, with good use of literacy activities in many lessons. Practical work is used appropriately to add interest and relevance to the work, as for example in a lesson on environmental influences where students were testing soil samples using a key to identify different types. Students respond well to these practical approaches and carry out experiments conscientiously and safely. Time is used well in most lessons and work is set that stretches the students appropriately. Regular assessments are used well to set targets for improvement in all years although marking and the use of homework are inconsistent. In both cases, some very good practice is evident and some that is more cursory and less helpful. Teachers use ICT equipment well to enhance their lessons, making good use of, for example, interactive whiteboards to enliven their presentations.

80. Very good leadership and management of the department have ensured that teaching is continuing to improve and the curriculum is developed to meet the needs of all students, with a very good range of alternative courses in Years 10 and 11. These include vocational courses as well as the opportunity for higher attaining students to study three sciences at GCSE level. This curriculum development is beginning to raise standards, with good GNVQ results, although it is too early for its full impact on achievement and teaching to have been felt yet. Teamwork is good and teaching is supported by good schemes of work, effective technicians and very good resources including up-to-date ICT equipment. Assessment data is used very well to monitor the students' progress and set targets, although the use of data to get a clear picture of achievement over time is an area that should be improved. Teaching and learning are monitored very effectively and action is taken to improve quality, with good use being made of national strategies to raise standards by broadening the range of teaching methods used. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. All the issues raised have been tackled and standards have continued to rise. Development priorities are clear and are focused on improving standards and the quality of provision. Very good systems and strategies have been put into place that ensure that the department has very good capacity to raise standards and achievement further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11, the college has made very good provision to ensure that all students can take an appropriate vocational course.
- Students demonstrate a commitment to succeed in ICT; this is particularly true for older students, who are well motivated by the teaching they receive.
- The college has very good facilities to teach using ICT, including specialist staffing and very good technical support.
- Teaching methods used for students in Years 7 to 9 do not always meet the needs of the lowest attaining students nor stretch sufficiently the highest attainers.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is good.

Commentary

81. In 2003, students were entered for either the full GNVQ or the Part 1 GNVQ in information technology. Results were broadly average. Fewer students gained the equivalent in the 2004 examinations, which are as yet unvalidated.
82. In the work seen in the inspection, standards in Year 9 are below average. The quantity and complexity of students' work are lower than average. When account is taken of the students' starting points in Year 7, this reflects satisfactory achievement. They are able to work with a variety of computer applications and can make multimedia presentations, work with simple spreadsheets to form a model for a retailing business, start a simple web site and use a simulation of a computer-controlled greenhouse. However, the detail, depth, creativity and maturity of their work are not yet at the standards expected nationally. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average. This reflects good achievement in relation to this group's attainment

at the end of Year 9. The GNVQ course being studied provides students with a clear structure for their learning and through their growing maturity many students work conscientiously to demonstrate the skills and knowledge that are required in their examinations. This leads to more rapid progress and their work includes the development of applications for clients in the real world such as the design of a theatre seat booking system using an ingenious configuration of a spreadsheet, the development of a web site and the use of a relational database to support the operation of a video rental shop. Some students' work is presented well and extensively documented, but currently few students are producing work at higher than average levels.

83. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory and students make sound progress. Teachers are adopting many of the materials and teaching methods of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3; thus, the work generally has an appropriate content, lessons are planned well and teaching is effective and most students work well. However more effective methods and detailed planning are needed for the many students whose standards on entry to the college are low and for those students who have special educational needs. The many tried and tested techniques of the national strategy that can secure greater engagement are not being used consistently. While satisfactory overall, the learning of more gifted students is not being consistently accelerated through offering additional or more challenging tasks and homework is not being used to good enough effect. Students are generally stimulated and engaged in their learning; they like working with the computers and in general they want to succeed.
84. In Years 10 and 11, the standard of teaching is good. The structure of the GNVQ course is used well to inform the planning of lessons and for assessment. Lessons have clear aims, work for students is clearly laid out, teachers have good command of the subject and there is a good staff-student relationship in the classrooms. In consequence learning is good. Students respond well and want to succeed: they have a greater maturity, know what they need to do and work towards it. Students have positive attitudes towards their lessons in ICT and behave well. These positive aspects help to produce a good working atmosphere where students achieve well and where achievement is valued. In order to raise standards further, these good attitudes need to be further exploited to ensure that students do more work with more pride, in more depth and to a higher quality. The limited teaching time available for the GNVQ course is a barrier to their achieving this. In all years, the work of students is carefully marked and assessed. Students know what they need to do to improve and the assessment schemes for GNVQ are particularly effective in this respect.
85. Leadership is satisfactory. The college has a broad vision for the role of the subject and how it can be taught. The full legal compliance of the curriculum in ICT in Years 10 and 11, with a vocational course offered to all students, fits well with the aims and spirit of technology college status. This is improved provision since the previous inspection. Management of the department is satisfactory. The advantages to be derived from using the national strategy such as monitoring students' progress, setting informed individual and group targets and identifying the most effective teaching methods are not being fully realised. Self-critical evaluation is not yet sufficiently ingrained into departmental methods. Some aspects of management are good. The team of three teachers is coordinated well; common policies and programmes are

adhered to and resources are used well. ICT classrooms are often inspirational places for students to work in. The teaching of ICT benefits from the very high quality of technical support in the college. Technical staff are not only committed to keeping networks and computers working efficiently, but they also unhesitatingly and continuously help students with their learning whenever the need arises. This is particularly supportive for teachers with classes of lower attaining students who are so easily diverted from their work if something goes wrong or if they do not know what to do.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

86. Technology college status has given ICT a high profile throughout the college. Computers are used well in all subject areas following substantial investment. Many classrooms are equipped with data projectors as well as computers and the technology is driving a transformation in teaching and learning. The very good provision of ICT facilities is used effectively to promote good learning as students make extensive use of computers for their coursework, particularly in English and ICT. The college has high-speed Internet access, filtered to protect students, and this is used for research in many subject areas, particularly in the humanities and modern foreign languages. A college licence to use a rich on-line learning resource contributes greatly to the teaching programme for citizenship. A number of departments make full use of specialised applications such as those in science for experiment data-monitoring, design and technology for computer-aided design, and music for score development and composition. In art and design, the computer is used as another creative medium. The college is now beginning to develop access for students via the Internet to be able to obtain college resources for learning when working at home or elsewhere. A pilot project has started in science, which potentially paves the way towards effective provision for "anytime/anywhere" learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good teaching leads to good achievement throughout Years 7 to 11, informed by effective assessment.
- The department uses data and monitoring procedures well to improve students' learning.
- ICT is used well to support learning, but teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT facilities for full-class teaching.

Commentary

87. In the GCSE examination in 2003, the proportion of A*-C grades gained was in line with the national average and all students gained an A*-G grade. Students taking geography did better than in all other subjects except art and design. The most recent results of 2004, as yet unvalidated, are below last year's national average.
88. In the work seen in the inspection, standards in Year 9 are below average. This represents good achievement when account is taken of their starting points in Year 7. In Years 7 to 9, basic geography skills are put in place and students are able to measure distance and read maps. Written skills are limited in style, but students learn to take notes and show good examples of extended writing. Students are introduced to investigative work, seen to advantage in Year 9 work on weathering. Students learn to use good, subject-specific vocabulary that in turn gives them confidence in their oral responses. In top ability groups, students work well both in pairs and in group-work and learn to think for themselves. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs are able to make good progress with the help of appropriate learning materials. Much of the work is improved through use of ICT in well-set homework and class work, but at present there is insufficient access to network rooms for full-class use.
89. In work seen in Year 11, standards are broadly average, representing good achievement from below average standards at the end of Year 9 among this group. These standards are, in turn, a reflection of the steady improvement and good achievement of students whose attainment on entry was well below the national average. In Years 10 and 11, students are able to build on earlier skills and knowledge and produce very well presented work in which they are able to hypothesise, develop a methodology, gather and analyse data and reach valid conclusions. These skills are demonstrated in locally based coursework, supported by a good programme of fieldwork over Years 7 to 11. Gifted and talented students are stretched by appropriate extension work. Although girls outnumber boys in the top sets, achievement in examinations is similar. Learning is helped by the very positive attitudes of students, who are enthusiastic and behave very well. The chosen syllabus is suited to the abilities of the students and the pilot scheme they are participating in is being adapted

is being adapted and improved to better meet their needs and attitudes. Care has been taken in choosing the course and the pilot is being carefully guided through its first two years.

90. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is much teaching that is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and present work in a way that holds students' interest and keeps them on task. They use ICT and visual aids well and students benefit from clear aims and explanation. Teachers have high expectation of students' behaviour and learning and students' good achievement is due in part to the constant challenge that they are offered, regardless of level of attainment or gender. Students are attentive and learn to think for themselves. Work is constantly reinforced through good use of Key Stage 3 strategies and students' learning is helped by the department's provision for help after the end of the college day and the use of outside speakers. Teachers use data very effectively to set departmental targets, and assessment is used very effectively to inform students' learning and take their work forward, especially in Years 9 to 11.
91. Leadership is good and management is very good. The new head of department has a good vision of where the department is going, and has made a good start in prioritising the improvements she is putting in place. She is helped by the very good structures put in place by previous leaders and by an expert and united team that has the energy and ability to improve further and to use the good monitoring systems in place in the department. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good and all those areas deemed to be good then have been maintained.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is innovative and effective in striving to raise achievement.
- Skills in history develop well because of the wide range of activities in lessons and secure knowledge of staff.
- Resources are used very well to motivate and interest students.
- Marking does not contain enough information on how to improve.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the development of oral skills in lesson planning.

Commentary

92. Results in 2003 were below average. Results in 2004 were similar to those in the previous year but with a higher proportion of grades in the A*-C range.
93. In Year 9, standards are below average. This represents good achievement because standards on entry were well below average. Weak literacy skills on entry limit students' achievement. Skills in the subject develop well, although weaknesses in literacy remain in providing detailed responses in extended writing. Students scan text to identify features of the Renaissance but find difficulty in organising their ideas in writing. They investigate the history of exploration by finding causes and consequences. They interpret statistics about the export of English cloth. Source

analysis skills develop well, with higher attainers commenting on the reliability of an artist's impression as an historical source. Lower attainers, including students with special needs, achieve very well in writing poems that express the reality of warfare. In Year 11, standards are below average. This also shows good achievement because this group of students' standards were well below average at the start of the course. Weaknesses in literacy are again a limiting factor in students' achievement. Literacy skills are currently stronger in Year 10 than in Year 11. Year 10 students, including lower attainers in the group, produce well-reasoned explanations of why World War One was not "over by Christmas". Year 11 students find relevant information about the American economy in the 1920s from a variety of sources but only higher attainers go beyond a literal interpretation.

94. Teaching and learning are good, including most of the small amount of non-specialist teaching that takes place. Some teaching is very good. Teachers' secure subject knowledge ensures that students quickly gain an overview of events and issues during introductions to new topics. Methods used build students' confidence well with, for example, a series of source analysis tasks leading towards a more challenging essay. Activities encourage the development of skills soon after entry to the college with, for example, Year 7 students producing their own hypothesis and then conducting an investigation into the sinking of the Titanic. Resources including photographs, sound recordings, artefacts and ICT are used very well to recreate images of the past such as the horrors of World War One. Students in turn are motivated to learn and they display good attitudes with a real interest in the subject. The variety of activities typical in the great majority of lessons sustain their interest well although opportunities to develop students' oral skills are not given a sufficiently high priority in lesson planning. Higher-level literacy skills for writing are integrated well into lesson planning so that students learn how to improve the overall quality of their work. Assessment procedures give students clear advice on levels achieved at the end of each unit of work and on what is required to achieve higher levels. Marking, however, does not give sufficient advice on how to improve particular pieces of work.
95. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear sense of direction with a focus on raising achievement and improving provision. More girls chose the subject as an option this year after this issue had been identified previously as an area for improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and there is a consistency of good teaching in the department. There is an innovative approach to developing the subject through, for example, the use of an increasingly wide variety of teaching and learning styles. A wide range of resources has been successfully developed and these enhance students' motivation and interest. Assessment procedures are well organised. Some planning objectives need to be more precisely defined. Relationships between staff and students are strong and students respond with positive attitudes to the subject. Improvement from the previous inspection is satisfactory as issues raised then have been tackled, and standards maintained in what has continued to be an effective department.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Students are stimulated and excited by the high quality teaching so that religious education has attained a very high regard in the minds of students.
- The effect of very good learning is enhanced by the students' very good attitudes to work.
- Very good leadership provides the subject with a clear vision and direction.
- There is less time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 than is normally found.

Commentary

96. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above average and some of the best in the college. Girls performed much better than boys.
97. In Year 9, students' attainment is in line with national averages. This represents very good achievement as they enter the college with skills and knowledge in religious education that are well below average. Lower attaining students describe the key beliefs of the religions studied, and explain how belonging to a religion and a community involves religious beliefs and practices. Higher attaining students place these practices in their historical and cultural contexts. For example, in their studies of rites of passage, students refer to the biblical origins of circumcision and baptism, indicating their deeper knowledge and learning. In Year 11, on both the short and full courses, students attain standards that are above national averages and achieve very well. Lower attaining students show considerable understanding of moral issues that confront people on a daily basis, such as abortion and euthanasia. The higher attaining students display a high level of empathy when regarding religious attitudes towards such questions and they make very good progress, particularly in their maturation and analytical skills.
98. A strong profile of teaching exists throughout Years 7 to 11. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities, which strongly engage the attention of all students. This is ensured by planning for the needs of all students. Students with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve very well because they are challenged by appropriate material. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. The well-planned enquiry work, a strength of the teaching, has clear learning objectives, challenging tasks and good resources. All these strong teaching elements enable very good learning to take place. They strongly develop skills of research, empathy and literacy, especially extended writing. In the very best lessons, students are encouraged to do their own computer research rather than it being taught directly. The discussion of moral issues makes a good contribution to students' moral and social development. Marking and assessment are done well. Students consequently know their attainment level and how to improve. They also have very good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is very good. They show strong interest in the activities, cooperate well and work very effectively for long periods. This is encouraged by the very good relationships with the teachers and with each other. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and this enthusiasm is transmitted to the students.

99. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has produced documents that signal her clarity of vision about the future of the department. The documents are informed and they underpin all aspects of the department's provision. She is aware of the lack of allocated time to the subject in Years 10 and 11 and has already suggested strategies to improve this. The head of department is a very good role model of commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards. In this, she is supported by other staff in the department, whom she in turn supports. The department has made very good progress since the time of the previous report, particularly, but not exclusively, in the areas of students' attainment and achievement. Results have improved significantly and the quality of teaching and the curriculum on offer have improved strongly.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good use is made of technology college funding to secure high quality resources, which are used very effectively to support good teaching and learning.
- Teaching is good and ensures that every student, regardless of ability, achieves well and benefits from their experiences in the subject.
- Good leadership and management are shown in a commitment to continuous improvement, a varied curriculum and effective partnerships with local schools.
- Students do not have sufficiently clear information about their targets and the progress they are making towards them.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not well enough developed to identify and share teaching strengths across the department.

Commentary

100. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, students gained results which were broadly average. In the provisional results for 2004 the trend has been upwards with results rising to just above last year's national average. Significantly, and for the last two years, boys in the college have achieved GCSE results above those of boys nationally.
101. In Year 9, students' work is below average. This represents good achievement as the majority enter the college with knowledge and skills in design and technology that are well below average. Students are able to make appropriate use of ICT, including computer-aided design and manufacture, to research, evaluate, and enhance their designing skills. Across the range of projects undertaken, practical skills are developed well when using a variety of tools, techniques and materials. The technology college status has had a positive impact on learning through the raising of the status of the subject and the continuing improvement of facilities. The highest attaining students have well-developed drawing and annotation skills and a confident understanding of the design process, as seen in their work on a bird-feeder project. Despite having low-level literacy skills, students with special educational needs make good progress

because of well-structured lessons that systemically develop their skills and confidence. In Year 11, standards are average with all students achieving well. Boys achieve well because of the expected and regular use of computers in all GCSE manufacturing projects, regular practical activities and the enthusiasm and knowledge provided by specialist teachers. The design skills of middle and lower attaining students lack sufficient range and depth. The choice of examinations is well suited to students' needs and ensures consistency of core learning experiences for all. Practical making skills are developed to a good standard and the highest attainers are stretched and challenged in their learning because they are given the opportunity to take examinations a year early.

102. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities, which strongly engage the attention of all students. Appropriate, targeted planning for the needs of all students ensures their good learning. Regular use of computers, by teachers and students, makes a good contribution to learning. Those with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve well because they are challenged by appropriate material. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. Marking and assessment are good and well integrated into examination work, but younger students are not made aware of their levels of attainment or how to improve. Ideas from the Key Stage 3 strategy initiative are not yet fully built into teachers' thinking and planning. Students have positive attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is also good because teachers have effective ways of handling difficult situations, preventing conflict and creating a good learning atmosphere in lessons. In return students show strong interest in the activities, cooperate well and work effectively over long periods. This is also encouraged by the very good relationships students have with their teachers and each other.
103. The department is well led and managed and clear vision and direction are provided. The continuing focus on raising standards and providing the best experience for all students indicates a strong commitment to improvement. However, the identification and sharing of good practice across the team is inhibited because monitoring and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom observation are not fully developed. There has been very good progress since the previous inspection: standards are rising; boys' underachievement has been addressed; schemes of work have been effectively revised to meet students' needs; and there are innovative partnerships in place with other schools. The primary liaison project, where each week pupils from local primary schools attend lessons at the college, helps to boost their confidence and makes a strong contribution to the progress these young pupils make. The spacious specialist accommodation and attractive displays of students' work create a rich and stimulating environment for learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and are well above average in Year 11 owing to the very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes to work.
- Achievement is very good and skilful tracking of students' progress ensures they reach their potential.
- Leadership and management are excellent, ensuring high standards and a clear direction to the subject's development.
- Progress since the previous inspection has been very good, owing to the determination of the teachers to address the comments in the last report, provide a broader curriculum and improve standards further.
- Art and design makes a very good contribution to students' cultural education.

Commentary

104. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average for grades A* to C and all students gained at least an E grade. Results have been consistently high for many years and are the best by far in the college. In 2004, the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades was even higher than in 2003. Girls usually perform better than the boys do, but boys' attainment is well above the national average.
105. In Year 9, students' attainment is above average, representing very good achievement, as they enter college with below average skills and limited knowledge. They produce plenty of practical pieces supplemented by thorough research work. Drawing skills are good, as students observe closely, show patience and are careful with detail. They understand about tone and texture and colour blending is excellent. Portraiture and figure drawing are above average as students know about proportion and many of them depict attitude and expressions accurately. In painting, students' work is also above average. Students understand form and their model-making is very impressive, especially from the lower attaining students who lack confidence in drawing. Appreciation of art and artefacts from people of different countries is very strong. Medieval architecture, Aboriginal and Japanese studies are good examples where students' cultural understanding has been enhanced. Sketchbooks are used well and most students add their own pieces to those done in lessons and for homework, thus raising standards.
106. In Year 11, standards are well above average and achievement overall is very good. GCSE is very demanding of students' time and individual effort and their excellent attitudes to work and willingness to work after college bring about increased output and secure high standards. Drawing, painting and sculpture are all well above average. Students plan and experiment freely, research thoroughly and produce very good quality sketchbooks and finished works. They gain very good effects by using a variety of media and successfully translate work into three dimensions, often on a large scale. Annotations in sketchbooks and on trial pieces are well written and are best from the higher attaining students as they demonstrate higher order critical thinking skills. Use of ICT is good. Students use the computers for word processing, distorting images and searching the Internet, all of which add to their understanding in art and design.
107. The quality of teaching is very good and results in very good learning. There are many excellent features that secure high quality learning. The teachers are very well skilled

in all aspects of art and design, which in turn encourages the students and raises their aspirations. Demonstrations are excellent and help to build students' confidence. Expectations and challenges are excellent. Teachers insist that students persevere and concentrate in lessons to produce their best. They prepare very thoroughly, assisted by two very positive student technicians, and choose high quality resources and support literature to ensure students learn what they should and give them the stimuli to discover more. Extremely thorough tracking of individuals, detailed target setting and follow-up have resulted in many students raising their grades and most of them exceeding their targets. Homework is purposeful and marking is clear and helpful, especially on ongoing pieces, to inform students of quality and where and how work needs improving. Relationships are excellent. Teachers obviously enjoy the company of students, share their skills and enthusiasms and give up their free time so all students, especially those needing extra tuition, have every chance to succeed. Teachers are very patient in helping individuals and the lower attainers, who often lack confidence, benefit most from this. Students respond positively, enjoy the challenges offered, try hard and show pleasure in what they produce. Behaviour in art lessons is exemplary.

108. Leadership and management are excellent. The very energetic head of department leads a team of very talented teachers who work well together. There is no complacency about success. The development plan includes clear intentions to further ICT work, develop more community and school links, use the website and mount more exhibitions. The scheme of work is continuously reviewed to insert fresh ideas and ensure students are motivated and challenged. Students have opportunities to visit galleries and museums, work alongside real artists and participate in visits abroad and national initiatives. The previous report was a good one, and the department has worked very hard to be the best in college. Progress has been very good. Standards have risen each year; the curriculum has improved by inserting modules to attract boys to the subject and by introducing new GCSE and photography options. The quality of teaching is better and detailed tracking of individual students ensures they all work to their potential. ICT in art is very much improved. The redrafted policy for encouraging students who are gifted and talented has ensured more students gain A* and A grades and their "Masterclass" is full. The department promotes itself effectively by displaying students' work in the studios and around college, which lifts self-esteem, enhances the environment and raises the status of art.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of most students throughout Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Enthusiastic leadership is raising the profile of music in the college.
- An exciting and innovative curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of additional workshops and a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment procedures are under-developed.
- There is no departmental action plan that evaluates the effectiveness of provision and identifies appropriate priorities for improvement.

Commentary

109. There were no GCSE candidates in 2003. Results in 2004 have not yet been validated, but were well below previous averages, with only one student attaining in the grade range A*-C.
110. In the work seen in the inspection, standards in Year 9 are below average. Overall, students achieve well when account is taken of their starting points in Year 7, which are well below average. Students reach average standards in musical knowledge, for example understanding how to form and play simple chords on electronic keyboards, but standards in composing are less well developed and singing lacks confidence. Higher attaining students reach standards that are at least in line with, and sometimes above average. However, lower attainers do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable where the planned activities are not well enough matched to their needs. Students' attitudes are good and in the best lessons they cooperate well in group work, for example when taking responsibility for rehearsing their performances. Occasionally, some lower attainers and those with behavioural problems are disruptive and demand undue attention. This detracts from the support available for other students.
111. Currently, no students study music in Year 11. Students in Year 10 who are studying the GCSE course are reaching standards in composing and performing in line with the requirements of the course. Their achievement is good.
112. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 7 to 9, this enables most students to make good progress in understanding how the musical elements are combined to create mood and in performing together in ensembles. Lesson plans clearly identify talented students and they make good progress, often using their own instruments to perform and compose. Lessons are taught at good pace and with high expectations of students' responses. However, there are occasions when the teaching strategies are not matched to all students' capabilities and interests. Here the progress made by the lowest attainers is sometimes unsatisfactory. In one such case, the teaching was inappropriate to the students' needs and they did not learn enough in the lesson. In this case, teaching was unsatisfactory, but this was not typical of the teaching in the department. In Year 10, teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. Students' individual needs and musical interests are met well and this enables them to make good progress in performing and composing. Reports show evidence of targets being set, but strategies that would enable students to know what they are to learn and how to improve are not consistently established. Students are beginning to use ICT effectively to enhance composing and research projects. Opportunities to improve standards in literacy are clearly identified and reinforced through the good links between the English and music departments, especially in Years 7 to 9. Homework is used effectively.
113. The leadership of music is good. The head of department is enthusiastic and hardworking with a clear vision for the future development of music. Overall, management is satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good. A broad and balanced curriculum extends students' knowledge of music from different times and cultures and also reflects their own cultures and interests. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits from artists and amateurs providing workshops in a wide range of musical

styles and cultures, such as Samba, African drumming, Cuban music, Indian music and opera. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and regular visits to the theatre and musical shows are popular with students. Links with primary schools are developing and there are good links with the community and arts groups. The department is supported well by visiting teachers from the local authority's music service, who provide instrumental lessons to well over 100 students. There are some weaknesses in the management of the department that detract from the otherwise good management. Schemes of work are not yet completed in detail. Policies are currently being revised and as yet there is no departmental development plan that would assist in identifying and prioritising the issues that are most important to the improvements in provision that are envisaged. There is a recognition that standards need to improve but the detailed assessment systems and evaluation procedures that would enable the department to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning, particularly in relation to the progress made by the least able, have yet to be put in place. Accommodation and resources are very good. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection is satisfactory overall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and secures good learning.
- Students are well motivated and achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good, giving a clear direction to the development of the department.
- Staffing arrangements do not ensure equality of opportunity for all students in terms of provision.

Commentary

114. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average and above the average compared to other subjects in the college. Results in 2004 examinations, as yet unvalidated, were slightly lower.
115. In Year 9, standards are average. Higher attaining students, both boys and girls, can pass a soccer ball with speed and consistent accuracy, and lower attaining pupils can participate effectively in soccer games. For this group of students, this represents good achievement in relation to their starting points in Year 7. In Year 11, standards in the core physical education course taken by all students are above average. In GCSE groups they are above average. All the girls studying dance are able quickly to reproduce subtle gestures and can combine them into a flowing and clearly recognisable theme. Some are able to do this with very good expression and extension of form. Based on the prior attainment of these students, this also represents good achievement. There are no significant differences in the progress of boys and girls, or other groups of students.

116. Teaching and learning are good overall throughout Years 7 to 11. An example of excellent teaching and consequent excellent learning in Year 11 was inspired by a visiting Indian dance tutor. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen, resulting from negative attitudes of some Year 8 students and the teacher's inability to tackle the misbehaviour that resulted in lack of learning. This lesson was not characteristic of the other teaching observed. The specialist teachers in the department have good subject knowledge. The best teaching sets challenging work, is brisk, and places high demands on students. This ensures good learning. When pace slows in lessons, difficulties with behaviour management sometimes arise. This reduces learning and thus achievement. On occasion, there is some unsatisfactory behaviour in Years 7 to 9, but teachers are generally skilled in managing such behaviour so that it does not adversely affect the progress made by the class as a whole. Good use is made of ICT as a tool for learning in GCSE groups. The teachers engender among students good attitudes towards the subject in general, but in some lessons, too many students do not participate fully. Students who participate are well turned out and arrive promptly at lessons, in response to teachers' high expectations of standards in these areas. Students in Year 11 are taught effectively to work independently, for example girls leading their own warm-up in soccer. Learning is also good in other areas where students are encouraged to be independent. For example, Year 10 GCSE students are able to measure and record aspects of their own fitness when independent of their teacher. Girls of all abilities in Year 7 work very hard to build their netball skills, and Year 9 boys give each other good support and encouragement in soccer lessons.
117. Leadership and management of the department are good. The college is a hub for the School Sports Co-ordinator initiative in the local area. A vision for improvement is clear, and the skills to carry this forward are in place. The curriculum has a good breadth of activities in all years, but is not balanced. The time available for the core provision in Years 10 and 11 is lower than is the national norm. More able students in Years 7 to 9 are not able to take dance because they are involved in other lessons. Such timetable issues present equal opportunity issues across the college. Extra-curricular sport is good. Assessment information is accurate. Schemes of work are good. The deployment of staff is not always satisfactory and the internal college organisation of student groups makes some single sex groups too large to manage efficiently, or too small as a mixed gender class to have consistent quality of learning. Walking across roads to the dispersed accommodation presents a risk, which is compounded in the changing areas when mixed gender classes are taught by one teacher, which means that some students are not closely enough supervised at the start and end of lessons. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. However, participation rates in some areas have fallen, and standards, which were previously well above average, are now above average. The numbers of students opting to take GCSE in the subject are rising. Some inadequacies in staffing provision remain an issue.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Leisure and tourism

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- The subject is led and managed well with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Assessment and marking are used well to inform students of their progress and what they need to do to improve further.

Commentary

118. There were no candidates in 2003. Results in 2004 were below the previous year's national average. Of the nine candidates, seven equalled or bettered their predicted grades, indicating good achievement.
119. Leisure and tourism is taught only in Year 10 at present. Students studying the course as their required vocational subject are well below average in their attainment when they start in Year 10. Standards are still well below average at this early point in the course. However, students are achieving well and making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. Materials are very well prepared to suit the needs of all the students, and as a result they produce a good volume of notes and extended writing, helped by guidance provided by appropriately levelled work and worksheets. Work is generally presented well and students are able to construct and interpret a range of graphs in their work on identifying issues in provision in National Parks.
120. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are energetically delivered and have good pace. The teachers have engendered positive attitudes in most students and are experienced and flexible enough to adapt lesson plans to suit circumstances such as occasional poor behaviour. The teachers work very well together and some potentially poorly behaved girls are enabled to make good progress as a result. However there are some students who have behavioural problems and on occasion, teachers have to work hard to ensure that some poor behaviour does not interfere with the learning of others. Teachers show good knowledge of the subject and the examination demands in this area. They demonstrate that they take good account of this and plan and present challenging work that gains momentum during lessons. Messages are delivered with great patience and constant reinforcement through repetition and carefully structured and targeted questions. ICT is used well by teachers in presenting material, and students are encouraged to use ICT in research and presentation of work. There are no students in this group who have special educational needs or who are gifted and talented. However, teachers plan and teach to ensure that students of different levels of attainment are sufficiently challenged and stretched. Homework is set appropriately and encourages students to do their own research.
121. Leadership and management are good. Teachers know what they want of the course and prepare thoroughly. A good team of two teachers work well together to provide a useful course for lower attaining students. Coursework is assessed well and students are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in detail and is reported below. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled.

122. Arrangements for the teaching of **PSHE** are in transition. Pressures on the timetable have resulted in citizenship being incorporated with religious education into citizenship and religious education (CARE) and PSHE being taught separately. An audit of provision of PSHE across subjects has been made and plans are well advanced to fill the gaps through concentrated timetable days when students will be taught PSHE by a dedicated team of appropriately trained teachers, enhanced by contributions from visiting specialists.
123. Only one lesson of PSHE was observed during the inspection. Here a visitor to the college made a sound contribution to Year 7 students' personal development by raising awareness of the need to report absence accurately. Clear explanations were given about the sort of absence that is acceptable but opportunities were missed to explain why good attendance is necessary. The planned programme for PSHE is comprehensive and sound. PSHE is valued by students, and senior managers give its development a high priority. The PSHE work of last year's higher attaining Year 8 students is well above average. Projects studied included puberty and relationships and alcohol abuse. Students' work is marked, assessed and reported on appropriately in students' annual reports. Sex education is taught in science and reinforced by contributions from the college nurse. Students value careers education and work experience in Year 11 and find it helpful in making informed choices when they leave the college. The careers programme for Years 7 and 8 has not yet begun, but satisfactory plans are in place to teach it later in the year.

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high standards of teaching ensure very good learning by students of all abilities in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a rich programme of work with many interesting learning activities in Years 7 to 9.
- Students are very positive about their work in citizenship.

Commentary

124. The provision for citizenship was inspected in full in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the subject was sampled. During the inspection period no teaching of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 could be seen as modules are taught within a common framework with religious education and no work in citizenship was scheduled at this point in the college year. Thus there was no teaching taking place during the inspection and only limited work was available to scrutinise. Students from Year 11 were interviewed, schemes of work examined and interviews held with staff in the department.
125. Standards in citizenship are above average in Year 9. Students are aware of their responsibilities and duties as citizens and develop good attitudes to responsibilities towards themselves and others. For example, Year 9 students demonstrated a keen awareness of issues relating to the importance of clean water and its provision as a

basic human right. Students have very limited experience of the concepts of citizenship when joining the college. Their level of achievement during the first three years of their schooling is very good and they rapidly develop their awareness of important issues and their individual responsibilities.

126. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good and some is excellent. Very appropriate topics are developed into stimulating lesson activities that are expertly delivered by teachers. There is particularly good differentiation of approach to support the learning of students with special educational needs. In one outstanding Year 9 lesson, a class of 16 lower attaining students, six of whom are on the special needs register, were taught the important distinction between human wants and needs. The skilled teacher used some card-based materials to stimulate students' thinking in order to discriminate between basic needs such as medical care and shelter from other desired but less essential requirements such as money and telephones. A planned plenary session was used well to bring together what had been learned while still requiring students to think and reflect. It was the consistent application of a wide range of effective teaching techniques that made this lesson so productive. Many of these techniques are used effectively in the teaching of citizenship. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used particularly well to give form and structure to lessons. Teachers use skilled questions and dialogue with individual students that turn students' contributions into valid teaching points that members of the class can appreciate. The net result of these interwoven strands is lessons in which students work hard but also where they greatly enjoy their learning. In general, students' learning in Years 7 to 9 is very good. They are interested in the topics covered, contribute their own previous knowledge and experience and grow in their understanding of what it means to be a citizen. At all levels, students' work in citizenship is carefully marked and monitored. Students' ideas are respected and they influence subsequent teaching. Students know what they need to do to improve.
127. In the work of students in Years 10 and 11 that was sampled during the inspection, evidence from written work and from interviews shows that past arrangements have allowed a comprehensive programme to be taught with a full opportunity for them to cover the required elements of the National Curriculum. Standards in Year 11 are average. Year 11 students demonstrate that they have developed an awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship and forms of government. They participate in a range of activities matching their growing maturity. Work experience had made an important contribution to their awareness and development. Students understand the origin and importance of topical issues such as the Iraq conflict. They are aware of the political and democratic structures in the UK and the nature and importance of the media. However their understanding of the differences between political parties and of world structures is less well developed. Students are very unsure of the differences between communism and democracy. Students participate in voluntary activities and these, together with their work experience, develop their maturity. The achievement of students in Year 11 is satisfactory when account is taken of this group's starting point in Year 10. They are developing an adult approach to the community in which they live.
128. The college is keen to teach students the ideas of citizenship in action. To that end there is some very good practice in the giving of responsibility to students. A college council is in place with form representatives chosen democratically from a system of

house councils composed of form representatives. The council elects its officers (students) and is supported by a specialist teacher of citizenship. These councils offer a real model of participative democracy that students can see working 'close to home' and a structure in which many may participate.

129. Leadership and management are very good. There is an ambitious vision for the contribution that citizenship can make to the education of students and this is translated into a rich programme of planned work throughout Years 7 to 11. Important college policies are incorporated into lesson plans and teaching staff are very self-critical and use systematic evaluation to inform the development of the subject in ways that can raise standards. There has been a recent important reorganisation of responsibilities and the curriculum that has improved provision and management of citizenship. The small department runs well with effective co-ordination between teaching staff. The college is pioneering use of an on-line library of learning resources that is adding much stimulus and variety to lessons.

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

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

INSPECTION REPORT

WORKINGTON SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Workington

LEA area: Cumbria

Headteachers: Mrs L Dalkin

Mr P Shaw

Lead inspector: Mr I Thompson

Dates of inspection: 1-5 November 2004

Inspection number: 268935

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Age range of students: 17-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number on roll: 213

Centre address: Needham Drive

Moorclose

Workington

Postcode: CA14 3SE

Telephone number: 01900 325265

Fax number: 01900 325269

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of Mrs C Tibble
governors:

Date of previous 5/10/1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Workington Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average mixed sixth form centre that is managed, funded and staffed jointly by Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College. There are 213 students on roll - approximately two-thirds of students join the sixth form from Stainburn. Students' standards on entry to the sixth form are lower than for most sixth forms because of the centre's aim to make provision for all who wish to remain in education after the age of 16. The great majority of students complete their courses. Two students have statements of special educational need. The majority of students are white. There are no groups of significant size among the small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. No students are at an early stage of learning English.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12271	I Thompson	Lead inspector	Art and design
19698	D Hirons	Lay inspector	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics
17799	A Stoddart	Team inspector	Physics
15051	L Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology
27666	J Dockrell	Team inspector	French
32211	B Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30749	H Boyle	Team inspector	Sociology
2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form centre is good. It is cost-effective because students are achieving well, standards are above average overall and its costs are balanced by its income. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall because the positive features mentioned remain true and monitoring of teaching, library and resources and staffing support have all improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Provision in art and design and design and technology is of high quality; in sociology it is excellent.
- Teaching is good; students learn well as a result, and their achievement is good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and contribute to their good achievement.
- Students appreciate very much the support they receive, the quality of teaching and the adult relationships that are fostered between teachers and students.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good.
- Leadership and financial management are very good.
- Provision in physical education is unsatisfactory. The centre is making every effort to ameliorate the situation.

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 language – Satisfactory. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory overall. Though very good teaching is present, teachers do not have opportunities to share good practice. Assessment of students' progress is not effective enough. Standards are below average in Year 13. French – Very good. Standards are in line with expectations. Achievement is very good because of very good teaching that focuses on intensive use of French to support learning.
Mathematics	Mathematics – Good. Teaching is good. It ensures that students achieve well. Very positive attitudes and very good relationships contribute significantly to students' good progress. Standards are above average.
Science	Physics – Good. Standards are above average. Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to learn well. Very good relationships and attitudes make lessons productive.
Information and communication technology	ICT – Good. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well because of the good support they receive. ICT facilities are very good and benefit all students.
Humanities	Sociology – Excellent. Teachers' particularly good explanations and confident delivery of subject knowledge lead to high achievement in the classroom. Standards are well above average. Provision is a model of good

practice.

Engineering, technology and
manufacturing

Design and Technology – Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching supports students very well, and the course is adapted to meet their needs. As a result students achieve very well.

Visual and Performing Arts and Media	Art and design – Very good. Enthusiastic, knowledgeable and challenging teaching enables students to reach above average standards and achieve very well. Much is done to enrich students' experience.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Physical Education – Unsatisfactory. Staffing difficulties affect students' progress. Contingency arrangements have eased the immediate situation but their effectiveness is limited. Standards are below average in Year 13.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Good. Careful monitoring, checking and tracking of progress take place in most subjects: individual students are well known and supported well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Good. Efficient management ensures that students are monitored closely and cared for as individuals. Leadership as exercised through the partnership arrangements is very effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Very good. Students speak highly of the quality of teaching and support they receive, and value especially the good relationships that are established between teachers and students. They appreciate their treatment by teachers as young adults.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the sixth form centre should do to improve are:

- Improve provision of staff in physical education so that course requirements are met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are above average overall and achievement is good for all groups of students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to their earlier learning and capabilities.
- Achievement in physical education is unsatisfactory because of staffing difficulties.
- While achievement in English is satisfactory, it is adversely affected by unsatisfactory arrangements for monitoring progress.

Commentary

1. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 based on students' average points scores were average overall. In many subjects the number of students entered was too small to make meaningful comparisons with national figures, but in art and design, business studies, English language, English literature, French, geography, ICT, music and physical education all students entered obtained at least a pass grade. Provisional results for 2004 were similar to those for 2003 overall. Results at AS level improved in mathematics, physics and sociology.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87.6 (91.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	18.5 (20.2)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	233.9 246.7)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 70 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. For present students, standards in subjects inspected in detail in this inspection are above average overall. Students receive good advice about their choice of courses and good support so that few do not complete their studies. Standards are well above average in sociology, and above average in art and design, mathematics, physics, ICT and design and technology. They are average in French and below average in English language and physical education. Students' attainment is particularly noteworthy in art and design and sociology.
3. Achievement is good overall in relation to students' below average prior attainment and their capabilities. Students achieve very well when they encounter very good teaching. Students' positive approach to learning and strong relationships between teachers and students are significant factors contributing to achievement. In art and design, students also receive exceptional support and encouragement, and they encounter excellent provision in sociology. Although achievement is satisfactory in

English language, progress is affected by ineffective arrangements for tracking students' progress. Staffing difficulties in physical education are leading to unsatisfactory achievement.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students are well motivated and eager to learn. Their attendance is good, as is their punctuality to lessons. As a result of the stimulating tuition they receive, students' attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good. Students themselves value especially the good and often very good relationships that are established between teachers and students. Personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good in response to the opportunities they are given to become mature and responsible young adults.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The sixth form centre provides a good quality of education. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities to which all students have good access. The centre provides well for students' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides them with very good support, advice and guidance. Links between the partner schools and other colleges are very good; other links with the community and business are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Assessment is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge, effective planning and good use of assessment help students learn and achieve well.
- Good relationships between teachers and students and teachers' often very good support and encouragement promote good and often very good attitudes, confidence, motivation and achievement.
- Learning in some subjects is hampered by students' reticence when they are not sufficiently included in discussions or when students lack opportunities to use ICT.
- Occasionally, teachers' arrangements for tracking students' progress are not sufficiently effective.

Commentary

4. All teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and a very high proportion was good or better. This is a similar picture to that described in the previous inspection report. Teaching is very good in art and design, sociology, Year 12 French and Year 12 design and technology.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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2 (5%)	11 (28%)	20 (51 %)	6 (15%)	0	0	0
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The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

5. A strong feature of the good teaching is teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They use these effectively to guide students' learning. In art and design, for example, teachers' very good command of their subject enables them to provide expert demonstrations and to explain difficult concepts clearly so that students learn very well. Teachers combine their good subject knowledge with well-planned lessons conducted at a good pace and activities that effectively meet the needs of their students. In French, for example, the challenge and pace of lessons are often very good and the intensive use of the French language in all aspects of lessons ensures that students are engaged in concentrated learning. These attributes of good teaching are reinforced by good relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. As a result most students have very good attitudes to their work and achieve well. Teachers assess students well and provide much effective support for learning through the imaginative use of resources, including ICT. Excellent support materials, beautifully presented, are a feature of sociology lessons. Students are usually tracked carefully at all stages of their courses and target setting is realistic. Sometimes students are not sufficiently included in discussion and their reticence affects the pace of learning. On these occasions, teaching is not so effective.
6. Assessment is good overall. The performance of students in GCSE examinations is used well to set targets for GCE A-level examinations. Teachers use the information well to support students' achievement and to plan for the needs of individual and groups of students. Progress of students is checked regularly and targets reviewed; students are well informed about what they need to do to improve. In most subjects students' work is assessed thoroughly with examination criteria used effectively to ensure that students know how well they are doing in relation to their targets. Only rarely, such as in English, are teachers' arrangements for tracking students' progress not effective.

The curriculum

The courses offered suit students' needs and aspirations well and the curriculum is enriched well. Accommodation and resources for teaching are good overall. The match of staffing to curriculum needs is unsatisfactory because of continuing difficulties in physical education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The sixth form curriculum provides a good range of academic and vocational courses for students.
- Teachers are well matched to subject requirements except in physical education, where the lack of a subject specialist is affecting students' progress.
- Resources are very good and specialist college status has had a positive impact on students' access to and use of ICT facilities in particular.

Commentary

7. In addition to their chosen courses, students follow a course in General Studies so that their horizons are broadened and they can encounter a wider range of subjects and issues. Students acquire the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT through classes and on-line learning as necessary. Their progress is carefully tracked through consultation between tutor and student and recorded in a key skills log book. Students are provided with good opportunities for enrichment to extend their learning and experience beyond the curriculum.
8. Overall, accommodation is good. In science, with specialist laboratories for separate subjects, and a high level of ICT equipment including data projectors and interactive whiteboards, the accommodation is very good. Other curriculum areas such as geography, mathematics and ICT have dedicated areas for teaching that are of a good standard. Accommodation in other curriculum areas is satisfactory. The social area for students is large but sparsely furnished and although there are drinks and snack vending machines there are no dining facilities.
9. Staffing is unsatisfactory overall because of the lack of a specialist physical education teacher. In other subjects staffing is at least good. In art and design, business studies, sociology, design and technology and mathematics where teachers are all specialists and have very high levels of knowledge, staffing is very good.
10. Resources are generally very good and particularly good in business studies, sociology and geography. Library provision is very good and the library is well used as an additional study area. The schools' specialist college status has had a very positive effect on the sixth form. The quality of ICT equipment is very good and students feel they have easy access to the network, both in lessons and in study time.

Care, guidance and support

Students receive very good care, guidance, advice and support from their tutors. Students are unanimous in praise of their tutors. Relationships between all staff and students are good, and students are involved very well in the work of the centre.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive and acknowledge the very good pastoral support and guidance they receive from all staff.
- Relationships at all levels are good.
- Students are able to study easily using the good facilities available to them.
- Students' views are actively sought and acted upon.

Commentary

11. Students receive very good guidance for their pastoral and academic development. They very freely acknowledge the consistent and positive relationships that exist within the centre which include all teaching and non-teaching staff. This very positive ethos impacts positively upon their ability to study and achieve well. Tutors have very high expectations of their students. As a result, students receive very informative feedback during their one-to-one tutorials as to the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. The sixth form centre provides a very good range of study resources including ICT. In conjunction with extended opening hours, all students are able to study independently to suit their individual needs. Students, through the council, actively and very effectively participate in and contribute to the running and organisation of the centre. This promotes and enhances their personal and social development.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good, whilst those with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information to parents is very good and valued by them.
- Links with Stainburn School and Science College and Southfield Technology College and with other institutions are very good.

Commentary

12. Parents confirm they receive very good information when assisting their children in choosing whether to continue their education on leaving secondary education. In addition, they confirm they receive very detailed information as to the progress they are making and what their children need to do to improve.
13. The links between the partner schools and the sixth form college are very effective. The provision of tutors from both Stainburn School and Science College, and Southfield Technology College, offers students a wide range of courses that have led

to an increase in numbers. The very good relationship that exists between the respective headteachers and heads of department from the contributory schools and the head of the centre ensures courses run smoothly and efficiently. This cooperation enhances students' opportunities to achieve well. It impacts positively upon the overall ethos and climate for learning. The centre organises helpful visits to universities, which ensures all students are able to make informed choices for their future studies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good. Financial management is very good. Management is good. Governance is good overall but statutory requirements are not met for daily collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good partnership arrangements ensure a clear direction and a common purpose for the sixth form centre.
- Very good financial management ensures that best value for money is obtained.
- Management ensures that students have a good environment that enables them to learn well and develop as individuals.

Commentary

14. Leadership of the centre is very good. The centre benefits from the very good relationship between the two headteachers and their determination to ensure that there is an equal partnership. In every aspect of the administration of the centre the principle of partnership is applied to make it clear to staff and students that both schools have ownership of the centre. The range of vocational and advanced level courses makes the centre accessible to all students. Good governance, by a committee formed from the governing bodies of both the partner schools, supports the work of the centre well. Governors play a full part in evaluating the performance of the centre and in shaping its direction for improvement. Governors do not meet their statutory obligation to provide daily collective worship for all students because of timetable constraints arising from the joint management of the centre and the inclusion for some courses of students from other institutions where collective worship is not a requirement. Students' achievement is not affected by this omission.
15. Management of the centre is good. There is a structure for meetings at different management levels between the staffs of the two schools. The centre has a strong focus on improvement through the academic board. The systems for monitoring academic progress are good and offer support to the students as individuals. The subject leaders of both schools meet on a regular basis to plan and review. There are well-established agreed patterns for sharing the teaching. This does not always take account of the strengths of the teachers. There is some monitoring of teaching, and although monitoring by subject specialists is limited, the leadership of the centre can identify the strengths. They review examination results, the regular assessment and the planning to raise attainment. The day-to-day management of the centre and the adult relationships between teachers and students create a good learning environment.

16. The financial management of the centre is very good. The funding of the centre is shared equally, irrespective of the numbers of students from the contributory schools. Good planning enables a broad curriculum and the availability of courses where uptake numbers are small. The centre makes this good provision strictly within its budget allocation. The satisfaction of students, good achievement and above average standards are indicators that the centre is providing good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	80.1	0.0	23.7	30.0	29.9
Biology	2	50.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	15.0	20.6
Business studies	3	100	76.4	66.7	16.3	43.3	26.2
Chemistry	3	66.7	72.7	0.0	13.9	16.7	24.1
English/English language	3	100	82.9	0.0	17.5	26.7	28.7
English literature	2	100	85.9	0.0	19.1	30.0	30.2
French	2	100	78.2	0.0	18.9	30.0	27.6
General studies	25	52.0	73.9	0.0	17.8	11.6	25.7
Geography	1	100	74.3	0.0	19.8	40.0	26.5
German	3	33.3	81.5	0.0	19.3	6.7	28.9
History	5	80.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	26.0	28.6
Information technology	2	100	67.0	0.0	10.9	20.0	21.4
Mathematics	7	42.9	61.9	14.3	17.1	17.1	22.1
Music	2	100	86.5	0.0	21.4	25.0	30.7
Other social studies	13	46.2	69.7	0.0	16.7	13.1	24.1
Sports/PE studies	1	100	73.2	0.0	11.4	30.0	23.1

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	5	100	98.6	80.0	50.2	104.0	87.5
Biology	2	100	96.4	50.0	39.2	80.0	78.6
Business studies	10	100.0	98.7	0.0	36.8	60.0	80.1
Chemistry	6	100	97.6	50.0	49.0	86.7	84.9
Drama	4	100	99.5	100	40.1	100	83.6
English literature	9	100	99.5	0.0	46.5	51.1	86.5
Design and technology	3	66.7	97.8	33.3	35.0	60.0	77.9
General studies	42	88.1	94.7	9.5	31.0	53.3	73.1
Geography	9	100	98.7	22.2	44.5	66.7	84.0
German	2	100	98.4	50.0	47.9	90.0	84.8
History	12	100	99.0	8.3	44.6	73.3	84.6
Information technology	8	100	95.6	0.0	24.6	57.5	69.5
Mathematics	13	100	96.7	61.5	55.6	89.2	88.8
Music	1	100	98.8	0.0	38.9	40.0	81.1
Other social studies	36	97.2	97.4	16.7	42.7	63.3	81.8
Physics	2	100	96.7	0.0	44.6	80.0	81.7
Sport/PE studies	3	100	98.0	33.3	30.9	86.7	75.2
Business	16	96.9	65.0	46.9	14.6	80.6	60.1
Health and social care	10	100	67.7	0.0	14.5	52.6	63.5
Science	6	100	44.8	0.0	3.7	66.7	58.5
Art and design VQ	5	100	69.3	60.0	23.8	80.0	70.2
Information technology VQ	8	100	77.9	50.0	23.4	77.5	64.9
Travel and tourism	5	80.0	71.8	20.0	14.5	60.0	62.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus in this inspection was on English language and French. Currently, French is only taught in Year 12 but German is taught in both years of the sixth form. A lesson in **English literature** was sampled. Teaching was good and students made good progress in understanding the layers of meaning in Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Work seen was at above average standard. Results for 2003 were very low compared with the national

average. Provisional results improved substantially in 2004 and were close to the national average for 2003.

English language

Provision in English language is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes and work hard.
- Very good teaching in Year 12 helps students to make rapid progress in lessons.
- Assessment of students' progress is unsatisfactory.
- Management of the course does not enable all teachers to share best practice.

Commentary

17. There were no candidates for examination in 2003. Provisional results at A2 level for 2004 were close to the national average for 2003. Few students fail to complete either Year 12 or Year 13 courses but levels of recruitment vary widely from year to year.
18. Standards of work of Year 13 students seen during the inspection are below average. Students achieve the standards expected of them in relation to their prior attainment and capabilities. Year 13 students overall have sound knowledge of linguistic terms and use them appropriately when talking or writing. Their individual assignments on language topics are well planned and effectively researched. In class they deliver thoughtful and engaging short presentations on topics such as how language changes over time. In written work, students have a limited range of expression but convey their ideas clearly. Understanding of more complex aspects of language is limited. Notes are not always well organised to provide a good basis for learning. Students work hard in lessons and enjoy the course. They have advance notice of weekly lesson topics for each term, which helps them to plan for good learning. They have good knowledge of examination requirements and understand what they must do to achieve the highest grades.
19. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but very good teaching is also evident where all students are actively involved in lessons. Through exploring topics in groups and presenting their findings to the class students learn readily. A very good lesson introduced Year 12 students to pragmatics. Learning was rigorous and demanded good knowledge from students of all capabilities. Students enjoyed their learning and were keen to participate. They appreciate the enthusiasm and good planning that goes into such lessons. In a Year 13 lesson, students were less secure in their knowledge of linguistic features. As a result, their participation was hesitant and they used terms imprecisely. Progress was slow until they were challenged to talk about features of Middle English, when the pace of their learning accelerated rapidly. Teachers' arrangements for tracking students' progress are not wholly effective in ensuring that all students achieve well. Marking is generally good and recent work with students on their folder notes is leading to better learning.

20. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The way that teachers are deployed reduces opportunities for sharing of best practice between classes. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Recent provisional A-level examination results have slightly improved owing to the higher proportion of very good teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

21. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average. Students' skills in language readily meet the demands of all subjects. Students speak competently and work very well together in groups. Well-planned support in English language, mathematics, science and modern foreign language helps students of all capabilities to improve their written work. In art and design students have excellent opportunities for writing and receive very good support. As a result they produce outstanding written work. Many students make extensive use of the library to extend their reading. The programme of key skills followed by all students helps raise standards of literacy.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, in particular high expectations and the sustained use of French, helps students achieve very well.
- Good relationships between teacher and students promote good learning.

Commentary

22. In recent years, the number of students studying French has been too low to make any valid comparison of their performance in national examinations.
23. Standards are broadly average. In speaking and listening, standards are higher than usually found, because students benefit from the intensity of the sustained use of French in teaching. In one task, based on an authentic French television programme, students were able to identify all the key information. In lessons, they can follow the teaching in French without any problem. In speaking tasks, they are confident and communicate well, even where there are minor errors of grammar. Written work is not as well developed. There are examples of extended writing in response to teachers' guidance on the features of higher grades. At present, students do not have the breadth of grammar and tenses to enrich their writing. Grammar sections in their folders and the teaching programmes show that this has been identified and is being dealt with.
24. Achievement is very good. Students have already bridged the gap from the requirements of the teacher-led GCSE to the independent study expected in advanced level courses. The individual tasks set by teachers support this development.
25. Teaching is very good. There is a high level of challenge in the sustained use of French and in the pace through the activities. Lesson planning is very good and creates opportunities to practise all the four language skills. There is good variety in the style of tasks to sustain students' interest. A key feature of the planning is that it engages all students actively in their own learning. Expectations are high. Students are expected to identify and correct their own mistakes, to avoid any use of English and to give individual presentations without depending too much on a script. In setting homework, teachers direct students to use the internet to supplement the information from the lesson. Assessment is very good. Teachers reinforce students' understanding of the examination requirements by asking them to assess each other against the examination criteria. Teachers have established good relationships with the group that encourage students' participation and initiative.
26. Leadership and management of French are good. Departmental heads work well together in an equal partnership. They meet regularly to agree the framework and the content of courses. The detailed development of the courses is devolved to the teachers. There is some monitoring in the college's own system and through the regular meetings and analysis of results.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an excellent subject knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
- Good leadership and management ensure that teachers' expertise is used well.
- Students' achievement is good because teaching is good.
- Assessment of students' work is good; students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Good relationships result in students' very good attitudes that help them achieve well.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use computers to help in their learning.

Commentary

27. In 2003, GCE A-level examination results were above average. Achievement was good in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course. Females did better than males. Results in 2004 were similar with a significant improvement in AS-level results.
28. Overall, standards of work seen in Year 13 are above average. This represents good achievement and reflects the good progress students have made since the start of the course. Students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Students confidently recall skills for finding equations of circles and understand how to use algorithms to solve problems and make decisions. In Year 12, standards are average and students are building well on their previous learning from GCSE. Students are developing their algebraic skills well.
29. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers' excellent understanding of the subject ensures that new and difficult concepts are clearly explained. Lessons are well planned to develop students' learning and homework is used effectively to extend that learning. As a result, students achieve well. Tasks provide suitable challenge but not enough opportunities are included for students to use computers to develop their knowledge and understanding. Relationships are very good and, as a result, students show very positive attitudes to their work; they make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing and teachers provide good support and guidance so that students overcome their difficulties and achieve well. Although teachers provide appropriate questioning so that good links are made with students' previous learning, students are not always included sufficiently in the discussions in lessons. The day-to-day assessment of students' work is good; it supports their learning well so that they know how well they are doing in relation to examination criteria.
30. Leadership and management are good. Very good cooperation between the subject leaders ensures that teachers are deployed effectively so that their specialist knowledge is used well. They work well together to ensure that the progress of all students is regularly checked and supported. Students' performance is analysed well. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

31. Good provision is made for supporting students' numeracy skills in the sixth form. All students who are not taking mathematics in the sixth form follow a course in Key Skills - Application of Number. Students enter the sixth form with mathematical skills that are broadly average and this course suitably reinforces skills so that students confidently apply them in other subjects.

SCIENCE

The focus in this inspection was on physics. Other science lessons were sampled. In a very good **chemistry** lesson, the teacher used the opportunity of a small class very well to improve and extend students' knowledge of equilibrium constants and to practise mathematical transformations of formulae with an interactive computer program. In a good lesson sampled in **biology**, students were learning about food tests and oxidation/reduction in terms of bonding as a preparation for practical work. In a very good **Advanced Certificate in Education (AVCE) science** lesson, students were making aspirin using a reflux condensation method and were learning very well how industrial chemists set up experimental processes in the laboratory.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers co-operate very well to provide a well-planned, well-taught course.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps students to learn well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Very good relationships and attitudes make lessons productive.
- A below average proportion of females study the subject.

Commentary

32. The number of students studying physics is small so analysis of results is unreliable. However, in 2003, results at A2 level were about average, though there were no higher A/B grades. Provisional results for 2004 suggest they will be below average. Results in the AS-level examinations in 2003 were above average and better than those for 2002. Provisional AS results for 2004 improved to well above average with more than one third obtaining grades A/B. In 2002 and 2003 there was an improvement in standard from AS to A level.
33. The standard of Year 13 students' work seen during the inspection is above average. Students use a very wide range of scientific formulae competently. They manipulate equations, substitute numerical values and calculate results correctly. Students in Year 12 can calculate the expected voltage drop across a resistor and understand how

resistors in series can be used as voltage dividers. As a result of good teaching, good attitudes and the improvement seen from AS to A level, achievement is good.

34. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teachers use data projectors well and provide a wealth of useful, relevant and well-presented information on disk. Students make good use of the program for their individual studies. Teachers use questions well to allow students to recall previous knowledge, to apply it to new situations and draw logical conclusions. They show expert knowledge of their subject and answer questions competently, using their answers to extend students' learning. Students learn well. Their very good attitudes and very good relationships with their teachers play a significant part in making lessons effective. Assessment of students' work is very good.
35. Leadership and management are good. There is good curriculum development with science courses at a range of levels and subjects and the new physics course is having a positive impact. There is very good cooperation between the two 11-16 schools to teach and manage the course and coordinate the work of teachers and the very effective technician. The number of females studying the subject is below average. The department should explore ways to change this situation. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good access to ICT across the sixth form. The facilities support students' studies very well.
- Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good and they are supported well.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not frequent enough.

Commentary

36. Results in the vocational ICT course were above average in 2003 and in 2004 provisional results were in line with 2003. Results in computing examinations in 2003 cannot be compared with national results because of the low numbers of students examined. This is also the case for 2004. A good range of options is offered to students and good advice helps students to follow the right course for them; retention rates are good.
37. Standards seen on the ICT courses are above average, representing good achievement when students' attainment on entry to the courses is considered. Students concentrate well and technical language is used very well as they communicate their understanding of the way a problem is to be solved using their project management and ICT capability. Although students' prior experiences vary, good planning and support ensure that students get up to speed with projects quickly.
38. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work well as a team to ensure that although students have more than one teacher, there is good continuity in their studies. Students know what they have to do to improve through supportive marking practices and their attitudes to the subject are always good. Students work with a good degree of independence but teachers make good checks on progress where extended tasks are being done.
39. Leadership is good. Departmental leaders collaborate well. They manage the use of ICT effectively to review how well students are doing, to provide support and develop the curriculum. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficient to ensure departmental expectations are fully met. The accommodation provides very good access to ICT resources. There are more computers available for students than usually seen in a sixth form of this size. Improvement has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

40. ICT use is good overall. Excellent use is made of ICT in sociology through very high quality research sources on the internet and careful presentation of essays. Very good use is being made in art and design to manipulate images creatively. In physics, very good use is made of CD-based interactive programs for learning and research. Students in design and technology make very good use of digital images and also use design software very well to produce accurate two- and three-dimensional designs and working drawings quickly. This links well to computer-aided manufacturing equipment. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage students and print whiteboard notes. Good use is made of ICT for presentations in physical education. Other sixth form subjects make satisfactory use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

The focus in this inspection was on sociology. Lessons in geography and history were sampled. Of the two lessons seen in Year 12 **geography**, one was excellent and the other satisfactory. Students' achievement reflected the quality of the teaching. One lesson was

seen in Year 12 **history**. Teaching was very good. Students' understanding of the reign of Alexander II was good and they were making good progress in examination preparation.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well in Years 12 and 13 as a result of very good and sometimes excellent teaching.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent.
- The subject is very well managed and coordinated.

Commentary

41. In 2003, A2 level examination results were well above average. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and show a rising trend.
42. Standards are well above average. Students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results and their capabilities. This is a result of very effective teaching which demands much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focus students' learning and pay meticulous attention to examination criteria. Students show very good understanding and knowledge of both empirical and theoretical sociology. Lessons focus on improving students' key skills with appropriate emphasis on specialist vocabulary and accurate terminology. This allows students to develop a vocational language early on in the course.
43. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Students learn very well as a result. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge that enables them to clearly and succinctly explain difficult terminology and theoretical principles. They use well-chosen evidence and illustrations from other sources and contemporary events to illustrate concepts, theories and methods. Resources are of the highest quality. Students are given a great deal of support in the form of course guides and information sheets to support their learning. Effective individual guidance is given through subject reviews and rigorous assessment. Students have complete access to the curriculum via the intranet. They are able to assess their own work and the work of others. This allows them to set their own targets for improvement against examination criteria. Students are given every opportunity to develop their ICT skills both in classwork and in coursework. As a consequence, their research and presentation skills are very well developed.
44. The head of department is committed to raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning and by using assessment to inform curriculum planning. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore very good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus for this inspection was on design and technology (product design).

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good collaboration between teachers is having a significant impact on standards because of the broad experience they provide.
- Individual students are very well supported so that they achieve very well.
- Flexibility of entry level ensures all students' needs are matched.

Commentary

45. In 2003 results at the highest grades were above national averages and all students achieved at least a pass grade. Retention rates are very high. Analysis shows that students have achieved very well in relation to their GCSE results and their capabilities. Entry requirements for the course are very flexible and this works to the advantage of students, particularly those who are capable of achieving more earlier. Some students, mainly girls, are working above expected levels and complete the A2 examination early. Age-related results for national statistics do not reflect this fact.
46. Standards are above average and higher than at the previous inspection. Achievement is very good. All students make very good personal gains in design techniques through very well structured approaches to the development of product design during the early stages of the course, although some are hesitant to share their ideas. Students' case studies are brought to life by contacts, visits and harnessing students' individual interests by, for example, considering modifications to the information systems at Manchester United football ground. Such support contributes very well to students' achievement.
47. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, being very good in Year 12 and good in Year 13. Teachers with industrial experience drive home the advantages of techniques such as speed sketching to help students produce a range of good conceptual design ideas. This feature is stronger in Year 12 than in Year 13. Teachers share expertise and resources very well to give students a very broad experience and this level of collaboration is a key feature in the success of the course. Students have a good understanding of teachers' expectations and there is shared enjoyment of the rigours of innovative designing. Teachers' confident use of industrial quality CAD/CAM (computer-aided design and manufacturing) software improves design modifications and raises standards.
48. Leadership and management of the course are very good and have been modified to meet the needs of students. Teachers now take responsibility for one group throughout the course; this has improved the consistency of teaching, learning, assessment and reporting, to the benefit of students and parents. An outstanding feature of organisation is the departments' ability to work with individuals so that learning can be accelerated or supported depending on the individual student. The high profile honours board in technology raises students' aspirations of career developments in the field of product design. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus in this inspection was on art and design. **Music** was sampled sufficiently to indicate that standards are average and that students achieve well because of good teaching overall. The music course is led and managed well. Students' participation in extra-curricular activities is limited. A lesson in **theatre studies** was also sampled. Teaching was good and students made good progress using the Stanislavski method for developing their interpretations of scenes from Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Work seen was at expected levels. Results for 2003 were above the national average. Provisional results for 2004 were similar.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has established a very strong work ethic among students, who respond very well to the challenges of projects and teachers' expectations.
- Teaching is very good so that students achieve very well. Teachers' excellent support and encouragement are major factors in ensuring students' very good achievement.

Commentary

49. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 were well above average from a very small entry. Provisional results for 2004 were similar.
50. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average in AS, A-level and AVCE courses. From the start of their courses, students make rapid gains in skills and understanding of how to use and control media so that they are able to develop their creative potential. This very good progress is the result of teachers' concentration on the properties of media and how they may be used creatively. Students use ICT well both for word processing and to create and manipulate images. The department's contribution to the development of students' literacy is excellent. Students use the vocabulary of the subject with confidence in explaining their work and annotations in sketchbooks provide clear expressions of thoughts and feelings. Students experiment with tone, colour and texture so that pages of most sketchbooks are small works of art in themselves.
51. Teaching is very good, promoting very good learning and leading to very good achievement in relation to students' standards at the start of their courses and their capabilities. Teachers have very good command of their subject which enables them to provide expert demonstrations and to explain difficult concepts clearly so that students know what is expected of them and how to achieve it. No compromises are made in using the language of art so that students gain understanding. Demanding projects are very well planned to challenge students and to stimulate their creativity. The work of established artists is used very effectively to provide a focus for work. Because students are engaged fully in their work, little time is wasted and classroom management is very good. Significant among teachers' many strengths are the

excellent support and encouragement that they provide, both directly and through detailed, constructive assessment commentaries. These make a major contribution to students' achievement.

52. Leadership is very good. Very clear direction is set for the department's work and its innovative development. Management is very good: documentation to guide and support planning is well developed; assessment procedures are very well organised. A very effective team has been formed whose individual strengths are deployed to best advantage.
53. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards are higher, the high quality of teaching has been maintained and the rate of progress has increased so that students' achievement is better.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus in this inspection was on physical education. The AVCE course in **travel and tourism** was sampled. Numbers have been small in recent years and there are no candidates for 2005, but current Year 12 students are interested and keen to complete the course. They are reaching broadly average standards as a result of very good teaching. Their work is very well monitored and evaluated.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is unsatisfactory because the vacancy for a specialist member of staff has not been filled and students' progress is affected.
- A contingency plan has eased the deficiency by providing the psychology unit of the course 'after hours', but the effectiveness of this session is limited.
- Teachers use ICT in lesson presentations effectively to stimulate students' learning.

Commentary

54. Only three students were entered for A2 physical education in 2003 so no significant comparisons can be made with national averages. All students obtained at least a grade D or higher. The AS results for 2003 were below the national average. The provisional results for 2004 show below average standards at AS level.
55. Standards in Year 13 are below average but not as much below as they were. A few students show good understanding of the coursework but, overall, students' confidence in discussion is low. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall and the continued lack of a specialist teacher to make a full contribution to the course is preventing further progress, particularly for the most dependent students. The AS group in Year 12 has reached average standards and students are achieving well in their knowledge of personality theories; they articulate their answers with confidence. Students' files are well structured and are presented clearly.

56. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and elements of the teaching, including ICT presentations, are good. The method of conveying information in theory lessons shows flexibility and variety, but some discussion flounders because of the lack of response from students. The use of PowerPoint, video and whiteboard assists learning. The 'after hours' session compensates in part for the absent specialist teacher, but it is run at a difficult time for some students to be fully attentive. Students are encouraged to use ICT and relevant homework is set and marked and students know their targets.
57. Leadership and management are satisfactory because the course has been well prepared, a contingency plan has been put in place and a new appointment is being sought so that the unsatisfactory quality of provision can be rectified.

BUSINESS

58. Subjects in this curriculum area were not a focus for the inspection. A lesson in Year 12 **business studies** was sampled. Teaching was good, and students were making good progress in the lesson in their understanding of business management.