

INSPECTION REPORT

HONITON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Honiton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113499

Principal: Mr N Tyson

Lead inspector: Paul Cosway

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th November 2004

Inspection number: 271637

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the college. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the college must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1176
College address:	College Lane Honiton Devon
Postcode:	EX14 8QW
Telephone number:	01404 42283
Fax number:	01404 44491
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lynda Price
Date of previous inspection:	27 th September – 1 st October 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

The college is an average-sized, mixed comprehensive school in the small market town of Honiton. It serves the local area and outlying villages and farms. Around one-third of students live at a significant distance from the college and travel to the college by bus. It caters for students from the ages of 11 to 18 and has an average-sized Sixth Form.

The area that the college serves is socially and economically mixed, with some relatively affluent households and some that are relatively deprived. Almost all the students are white. There is a smaller proportion than nationally of students who speak English as an additional language.

The attainment of students on entry to the college is close to the national average overall, but it has relatively few of the highest attaining students, because of competition from neighbouring schools, including a grammar school. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students who have been identified as having special educational needs is close to the national average, but the number who are on School Action Plus (who have a statement of educational need and the help of outside agencies) is above average.

The college was last inspected in September 1999. Since then it has won a number of awards, including Sportsmark, Investors in Careers Award and Investors in Education Business Partnership.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

		Subject responsibilities	
2734	Paul Cosway	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
9334	Jenny Mynett	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
12594	Marina Jeavons	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Special educational needs
1709	Sandra Tweddell	<i>Team inspector</i>	English (and English in the Sixth Form)
15485	Roger Butler	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education and citizenship
11672	Peter Harle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and music
19152	Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History and sociology in the Sixth Form
31830	M Williams	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages
19043	David Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science, biology (in the Sixth Form)
1353	Paul Canham	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education
19528	Roland Portsmouth	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics (and in the Sixth Form)
1779	David Leonard	<i>Team inspector</i>	Health and social care in the Sixth Form
30457	David Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	History
2741	Chris Glynn	<i>Team inspector</i>	Performing arts in the Sixth Form
7054	Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology and work-related Learning
4615	M Bostock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology
1049	Brian Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education
The Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS	5
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	18
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	21
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory school, with many good and very good aspects to its work. Students have very positive attitudes and behave very well in lessons. Achievement is satisfactory. The good ethos for learning ensures that they concentrate in class and benefit from the good teaching. Attainment on entry is slightly below average but, by the time they reach the end of Year 11, students' levels of attainment are close to the average nationally. The leadership of the college is satisfactory overall. Difficulties with staffing and accommodation, especially in science, have hampered progress, but there are significant strengths in the ways that the Principal and the senior team have provided opportunities for all and begun to raise standards. The capacity for improvement is good. Management is sound and the college gives satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Attitudes and behaviour are very good, because of the very positive climate for learning.
- Teaching is good overall; this helps students to learn well.
- This is a very inclusive college, providing good opportunities for all learners and it is developing a very good range of courses and after-college activities that meet a wide range of needs.
- Attainment is above average in some subjects, such as art, but could be higher in others, such as science, where teaching is not as effective and problems with literacy affect standards.
- Leadership throughout the college does not focus rigorously enough on raising standards.
- Good systems that have been recently introduced, such as marking and assessment, need to be consolidated and implemented fully across all departments.
- Students' personal development is good; their welfare and support are very good. There is very good advice on careers and higher education.
- The provision for gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs (SEN) is good.
- Good links with parents and very good links with the community assist students' learning.

There has been **satisfactory** improvement since the last inspection. Improvement in the accommodation has been good; the quality of teaching has developed well and teaching and learning are now monitored regularly. New management systems have been introduced, particularly for behaviour management and assessment; consequently, there are signs of rising achievement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Currently, achievement is satisfactory and attainment is close to the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11. The inspection finding is that standards are rising as a result of the college's strategies to raise attainment. Students have not always made satisfactory progress in the past, but most are now doing so

In 2003, results in the national tests for Year 9 students were in line with the national average. They improved significantly in English in 2004. This shows that students had made good progress from their levels of attainment on entry. Results have not risen in line with the average nationally in recent years, but they improved in 2004. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results were close to the average nationally, but slightly below those in similar schools. They improved in 2004. The best results were in English, English literature, geography, history, technology and information and communication technology (ICT). Performance was comparatively weaker in mathematics, textiles and economics. Results have improved over the last two years, but the trend in improvements in recent years has been below that nationally. Currently, attainment is close to average overall. It is average in English, mathematics and science, above average in ICT and below average in religious education.

In the Sixth Form, 2003 results in A/AS Level and vocational examinations were below the national average, but improved in 2004. Almost all students attained their predicted grades or better, based on their results in Year 11 and achievement is good, with a pass rate above the national average.

Students' personal development is good. They are very well behaved, with very positive attitudes to college and to their work. High numbers of students take advantage of the very good range of after-college activities, even though some live long distances from the college. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.** Almost all students behave very well and they form very good relationships. Attendance is satisfactory and students are punctual to college and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the college is good. Good teaching ensures that students learn well in the majority of lessons. The teachers' good, often very good, subject knowledge and their good relationships with students ensure that they concentrate, work hard and learn quickly. Where lessons are less effective, it is because the teaching does not provide enough challenge. The curriculum is well planned, innovative and broad, but there is not enough time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11. Support for students is very good. Accommodation (except in drama, where accommodation is unsatisfactory) and levels of staffing are good. There is a good partnership with parents, and there are very good links with the community and other schools. The new systems for assessment give good guidance to students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the college are satisfactory overall, with a number of areas of strength. Although progress has been slow, the groundwork has been laid over the last few years for the raising of attainment, and systems are now in place to bring this about. The senior team needs now to focus very clearly on strategic planning to further this aim. The college's capacity for future improvement is good, because of good key appointments and the improvements that have been made with the support of external advisers. The governing body contributes effectively to the work of the college, although it has not complied with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Most heads of subject areas give good leadership.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Almost all parents think that this is a good school that helps their children make good progress. Twenty per cent or more of parents were concerned about behaviour and about how well informed they are about their children's progress. The inspection found that information to parents is good. Where lessons are taken by non-specialist or temporary teachers, it can have a detrimental effect on behaviour. Almost all students like the college and value all that it does for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to work to raise attainment at the end of Year 11, especially in science and literacy.
- Continue to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management throughout the college.
- Use the new assessment policy to ensure that teaching is meeting the learning needs of students and setting challenging targets.
- Use the monitoring information from lesson observations more effectively to strengthen the quality of teaching further where it is less than good.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good Sixth Form, with some very good aspects. Standards are close to the national average. Students' attainment on entry to the Sixth Form is below average and almost all meet or exceed their targets, based on their attainment in their GCSE examinations. Achievement is good, as are teaching and learning. The curriculum is broad and includes a good range of vocational subjects as well as traditional A level courses. The new links with other schools and colleges provide a good range of additional courses. There are very good enrichment opportunities. The Sixth Form gives satisfactory value for money – even though it is not cost effective at present – because of the benefits it brings to the students, to the ethos of the college and to the local area. The students are very positive about the education they receive and the guidance they are given. Retention rates are high; almost all students remain in the Sixth Form to complete their courses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and, as a result, students gain examination results in line with their predicted grades or better, based on their results in their GCSE examinations.
- The very positive attitudes of students, and their very good behaviour, help to create a very positive environment for learning.
- The curriculum is broad and provides a good range of appropriate courses that meet the needs of most students well. There is a very good range of enrichment courses and opportunities.
- Students grow in their personal confidence through the opportunities which they are given to take responsibility; and they are given the support they need to complete their education.
- Not all subjects develop the students' independent learning skills well.
- Students' communication skills are not developed well enough.
- The Sixth Form is not cost effective, because many courses have small numbers of students.
- The Sixth Form provision encourages and enables many students who would otherwise have left college at 16 to benefit from further education.
- Sixth Form social and study areas are cramped.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Inspectors' judgements about the provision in the eight 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, language and communication	Provision in English is good . Students achieve satisfactorily, building on their good achievement from Years 7 to 11 because of effective teaching and learning.
Mathematics	Provision is good . Good teaching by knowledgeable teachers helps students to make progress. Achievement is satisfactory.
Science	The provision for biology is good . Good teaching and very good attitudes by students lead to good achievement. Very good subject knowledge helps teachers to inspire all students to do well.
Technology	The provision for design and technology is good . Teachers' high expectations are drawing the best from students, who achieve well.
Humanities	The provision for history is good . Very good classroom relationships help students to learn and achieve well.
Sociology	The provision for sociology is good . Students are opting for the subject in increasing numbers and are achieving well, because of good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	The provision for theatre studies is good . Problems with the accommodation and resources are more than made up for by the quality of teaching and learning. Students achieve well.
Health and social care	The provision is very good . Relationships are excellent and teachers ensure that students aspire to gain high grades. They achieve very well.

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

Induction to the Sixth Form is good. Students are given very good personal support and guidance. They receive very good guidance on university applications and courses, and good guidance for future employment. In those subjects in which they attain and achieve most highly, they are given very good feedback on their work. They can use this assessment information to learn how to improve and so make very good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form benefits from sound leadership and management, with significant strengths. The college's senior team works hard to improve the curriculum and thereby attract more students to the good provision offered. Federation links are being developed with three other local schools and it is expected that these will broaden the curriculum offered for students in all four schools. The head of Sixth Form and the Sixth Form team work well together to provide a caring and effective learning experience that is valued by students and parents, giving good guidance to students on their personal development, academic progress and future options.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The inspectors spoke to many of the Sixth Form students. They are all happy in the college and value what it does for them. Almost all the students enjoy their time in the Sixth Form and would recommend it to their friends. They find the Sixth Form teachers and tutors very helpful and supportive. They would like improvements to their accommodation and facilities; the inspection team found that some of their concerns are justified.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve **satisfactorily** overall in the main college and **well** in the Sixth Form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in almost all subjects was close to or above the national average in GCSE examinations in 2003 and improved in 2004.
- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was above the national average in English.
- Achievement is above average in some subjects (such as design and technology and art) in GCSE examinations.
- Students make sound progress overall: good progress in the Sixth Form.
- Attainment could be higher in some subjects.
- Low levels of literacy affect the progress of a large minority.

Commentary

1. The attainment of students on entry to the college is close to average overall, but there is a smaller than average proportion of higher attaining students – those who gained Level 5 or above at the age of 11 in the national tests for English, mathematics and science. Students make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and in the national tests at the age of 14 their scores have improved to become more securely in line with the national average. They made particularly good progress in English in 2004. They are responding well in these early years to the quality of the specialised teaching and they are forming good attitudes to learning, both of which help them to improve.

2. Through Years 10 and 11, progress has slowed in the past. Since the last report, up to and including the results of the 2003 GCSE examinations, achievement was unsatisfactory overall. Boys, especially, were making less progress than they should. The proportion of students who were attaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes (passes at grades A* to C) was below the national average and overall performance was well below what would be expected of students with the same prior attainment at the age of 14.

3. Results improved in 2004. As a result of an increased focus in the college on the raising of attainment, together with increased mentoring of Year 11 students and successful efforts to raise the attainment of boys, the proportion of students who gained 5 or more higher grade passes at GCSE increased from 47 to 50 per cent. Boys achieved almost as well as girls: the difference was less than it was nationally. All except one student attained at least one pass in their GCSE examinations: this is well above the 2003 national average and an improvement on the 2003 figures, emphasizing the growing inclusiveness of the college.

4. The finding of the inspection is that this improvement is continuing. Achievement is likely to be at least satisfactory and in many cases good at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, although it will vary from subject to subject. Some subjects, art and English among others, are drawing the best out of students through good, well-directed teaching and very good leadership. Others, such as science, have made progress, but still have some way to go. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the last report. Much of it has been very recent, but reflects a concern over a number of years for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning and for ensuring that students have positive attitudes to learning.

5. An important factor in motivating students is the effort that the college makes to provide appropriate courses, especially in Years 10 and 11, to meet students' needs and aspirations. In addition, the good relationships that teachers form with their students, as well as the good teaching,

ensure that students listen and learn well in class. The main hindrance to learning, in those classes that are not achieving well, is teaching that does not challenge or motivate the students, or does not take into account the low levels of literacy of a significant minority. Over time, achievement has been affected by the loss of teachers in key subjects such as science, largely because of illness or maternity leave, and the difficulties that the college has had in recruiting replacements of quality. Some classes have been taught by a series of temporary teachers. This situation is improving slowly.

Attainment at the end of Year 9

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

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	34.8 (31.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.4 (35.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.1 (32.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 209 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. It was close to the average in similar schools. Results improved significantly in English in 2004. The English department is very successful in raising students' levels of attainment and they make rapid progress. The department teaches the skills necessary for students to succeed in the national curriculum tests very well. However, students do not transfer these skills to their work in other subjects. Across the curriculum, the problems with literacy, especially with writing, are affecting standards.

7. Overall, both boys and girls have attained results below average in the national tests in recent years. Boys have attained slightly less well than girls, as has been the case nationally.

8. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. Recent improvements in teaching and behaviour management have had more effect in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, so achievement is generally good; better than it is in the later years. Students are currently achieving well in English and making good progress. In science and mathematics, their achievement has improved since last year. It is good in mathematics and in science. Elsewhere, there is good achievement in most subjects, in which students' standards have risen from below average on entry to the college to average by the end of Year 9. The findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students have made since entry to the college.

Subject	Standards in year 9	Achievement
English	Above average	Good
Mathematics	Average	Good
Science	Average	Good
Art	Above average	Good
Citizenship	Above average	Good
Design and technology	Above average	Good
Geography	Average	Good
History	Average	Good
Information and communication technology	Average	Good
Modern foreign languages	Average (French) (Spanish classes do not start until Year 9)	Good
Music	Above average	Very good
Physical education	Average	Satisfactory
Religious education	Below average	satisfactory

Attainment at the end of Year 11

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91.9 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.5 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.0 (34.4)	34.3 (34.7)

There were 186 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

9. Overall, students' performance in GCSE examinations in 2003 was close to the national average and well below that in similar schools – a backlog of underachievement which is now largely eradicated. Results improved in 2004 and are now likely to be closer to those in similar schools. The proportions of students who gained five or more A* to G passes in their GCSE examinations was slightly above the national average in 2003. The proportion of students who passed one or more subject at GCSE at any grade was well above the national average and below the similar schools' average. When the validated national data for 2004 is available, it is likely to show an improvement on the 2003 grades.

10. In 2004, the best results were in English, English literature, geography, history, technology and ICT. There was comparatively weaker performance in mathematics, textiles and economics. Results have improved over the last two years, but the trend in improvements over recent years has been below that nationally. Currently, attainment is close to average overall. It is average in English and science, but below average in mathematics.

11. Both boys and girls have attained results below the national average over recent years. Although girls' results have been higher than boys' results, boys attained better than girls compared with their peers across the country in 2004. The inspection did not find any significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.

12. The college was close to meeting its examination target for 2004 and is on course to do so in 2005.

13. Students are now achieving satisfactorily at GCSE. The inspection findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students are making over the two-year courses.

Subject	Standards in year 11	Achievement
English	Average	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Average	Good
Science	Close to average	Satisfactory
Art	Above average	Good
Citizenship	Above average	Good
Design and technology	Above average	Good
Geography	Average	Good
History	Average	Good
Information and communication technology	Average	Good
Modern foreign languages	(French) Average (Spanish) Below average	Good Good
Music	Above average	Very good
Physical education	Average	Satisfactory
Religious education	Below average	Good for students on the full GCSE course, unsatisfactory for the short course
Work-related learning	Average	Good

14. A factor that is affecting attainment is the students' ability to express themselves in writing. Teachers of subjects other than English are not all teaching their students the skills they need to write well. Overall, attainment in literacy is below average and in numeracy it is average by the end of Year 11. Oracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are satisfactory.

15. Students with SEN achieve well overall and at least as well as others in the mainstream classes, because teachers know them well and respond sensitively to their needs. Where there is support from teaching assistants, achievement is sometimes higher. Students achieve very well when withdrawn to the learning support department, because of the very good teaching and support they receive and the positive attitudes and good behaviour they bring to lessons. There are small numbers of students for whom English is an additional language, but none is at an early stage of learning English and all are achieving satisfactorily.

The college's results and achievements for students in the Sixth Form

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.1 (88.0)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	30.2 (15.9)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	224 (212.9)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 49 students in the year group. The figures in brackets are for the previous year.

The Sixth Form

16. Attainment in the GCE A Level and AS Level examinations has fallen since the last inspection. It was close to the national average in 2004. Overall performance has improved since 2003, when it was below average. Students achieved satisfactorily in 2004 and the finding of the inspection is that they are now achieving well. Most gain or exceed their predicted grades, based on their levels of attainment on entry to the Sixth Form, which are below average overall. Higher attaining students are attracted away from the college to other providers, such as grammar schools, for their post-16 education. The college is increasing the number of vocational courses available to students in order to meet their needs better, and this is changing the composition of the cohort, attracting more students who would not, in the past, have considered staying on at college beyond the age of 16.

17. In 2003, the difference overall between the attainment of boys and girls was no greater than it was nationally and this reflects the current position.

18. The GCE A Level subjects with grades above the 2003 national average (validated data for 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection) in 2004 were art and design, psychology and history.

19. Students are achieving well overall, making good progress from below average levels of attainment on entry to the Sixth Form. Where they are not, it is often because their low levels of literacy prevent them from responding to the demands of the course as well in writing as they can in speaking. In the table below, the subjects are those inspected in depth. Other subjects were sampled.

Subject	Attainment	Achievement
English	Average	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Average	Good
Biology	Average	Good
History	Average	Good
Health and social care	Above average	Good
Sociology	Average	Good
Design and technology	Above average	Good
Theatre studies	Average	Good

20. Numeracy and ICT standards in the Sixth Form are average. Literacy is below average and in some subjects is affecting achievement.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The **effective** provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is having a very positive effect on students' personal development, and results in the **very good** attitudes, behaviour and relationships in the college. Levels of attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good attitudes and behaviour of most students help them to make good progress, because they are well motivated and eager to learn.
- Relationships are very good and create a positive learning environment.
- The provision for students' moral development is very good and there is good provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development.
- Statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship are not met.

Commentary

21. The attitudes and behaviour of most students are very good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Both students and parents have very positive views about the college. Parents are particularly pleased by the way their children are encouraged to work hard and become mature and responsible. Students generally like college. They speak enthusiastically about the friendly atmosphere, the good teachers and facilities, and the large number of extracurricular clubs and activities available in the twilight sessions. Where teaching is good, students are highly motivated, listen attentively and respond well. When lessons are undemanding and not interesting, some students lose concentration and become passive or bored.

22. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small number of parents and over half the students who responded felt that students do not behave well. This was not borne out during the inspection. The behaviour of most students was very good, both in lessons and around the college. There is a small number of disaffected students, but the college is very effective at promoting good behaviour. Those who do not respond well are assisted in their learning in the new student support centre, which is already successful in bringing reluctant learners back into the college.

23. In the large majority of lessons, students can learn without being disturbed by others. Students are well aware of the system of rewards and sanctions and feel it motivates them to do well. The new 'inter-tutor group' competition has seen an increased number of commendation slips awarded since the beginning of term. The college applies exclusions as a part of its behaviour management system. The level of exclusions has increased since the last inspection, following the introduction of a new behaviour policy and a clear 'zero tolerance' culture for certain forms of unacceptable behaviour. The procedures are effective: the number of students re-offending is small. There are few incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour; when incidents do occur, they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Overall, students and parents do not feel that bullying or racism is a problem in the college.

24. Across the college, students with SEN have very positive attitudes to learning. They like to come to college and they generally behave well. They are helpful and polite in lessons and around college, because of the college's high expectations of them. Potential conflicts are dealt with well. Relationships between teachers and students are generally very good. However, a few students in lower sets sometimes misbehave when they are bored.

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last college year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1058	224	4
1	0	0

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

25. The religious education syllabus and the teaching in other subjects provide good opportunities for the spiritual development of students. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Students have a respect for the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgments that enable them to develop insights. This is especially the case in English, art, history; and the personal, social, health and citizenship programme of work. Statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship are still not met, because the college has insufficient space for large gatherings.

26. Students are very well aware of right and wrong actions, have a very clear knowledge of what is expected of them and respond very well to the rules of the college. Their knowledge and awareness is reflected well in their actions in expressing concern for others in the community. They also show a concern for those less fortunate than themselves, through regular fund-raising events for charities.

27. Students are keen to be involved in a range of activities, and they relate very well to adults and to their peers. Students work well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in paired work, group work and general discussion. The excellent performance of 'Romeo and Juliet', held on two nights of the inspection week, demonstrated their ability to work closely as a team. Students are self-confident and are developing well as responsible members of the community. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to activities around college.

28. Students are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. This is developed well within curriculum areas and through visits and visitors. It includes trips to art galleries and museums; exchange visits in France and Spain and wider visits to Eastern Europe, Uganda and Mongolia. With small numbers of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, the college is aware of the need to develop students' awareness and appreciation of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country, and does so wherever possible.

Attendance**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/4 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	0.4
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.

29. Students are generally happy to come to college and eager to learn. Overall, attendance is satisfactory and is in line with the national average. Most students attend college regularly and arrive punctually in the mornings. However, there are a small number of 'college refusers' and students with poor attendance, whose attainment suffers as a result of their absences. In a number of these cases, parents are not ensuring their children attend college. There is little evidence of truancy and there are good links with the community police officers to follow up any that occur. The heads of year, form tutors and the student support office monitor students' attendance regularly. They follow up any issues of poor attendance with the educational welfare officer, who is beginning to 'fast-track' those families to court. However, there is currently insufficient staffing time allocated to calling parents when the college has no information about why students are not attending.

Sixth Form

30. The mature attitudes, behaviour and personal qualities of the Sixth Form students have a significant effect on their levels of achievement. Students value the very good relationships fostered in the Sixth Form. They feel they are respected and treated like adults and this encourages them to act accordingly. They talk about their motivation for learning and show genuine interest in their subjects.

31. These responsible attitudes to learning promote a good level of debate and a productive working environment. The behaviour of students in the Sixth Form is very good. Students value and respect each other and feel they get on very well together. Students with SEN have very positive attitudes to learning.

32. Sixth Form students develop into confident and independent young people and act as good role models to other students. A number of students undertake roles of responsibility on a regular basis in the college. They help in Year 7 tutor groups; act as reading partners and peer mentors; contribute to the APAUSE sex education programme; work as laboratory technicians; or manage the computer suites at lunchtimes. The student council is very active, helping to improve the Sixth Form facilities and organising a number of social events each year

33. Sixth Form students show similar levels of attendance and punctuality to the rest of the college. However, the recent introduction of the education maintenance award to students in Year 12 is beginning to raise their attendance and, consequently, levels of attainment. With over fifty per cent of students eligible for the award, the overall level of attendance in Year 12 has improved significantly in comparison with the same period last year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education that the college provides is **good**. Teaching, links with parents and the community and the college's care for students are all features that contribute well to the progress that students make in their academic studies, as well as in their personal development. The curriculum caters well for the needs of students and inclusiveness is a real strength of the college. It caters well for the gifted and talented as well as for those with SEN. Good provision is made for reluctant learners and a wide range of courses is offered to suit those students for whom a narrow, academic curriculum would be inappropriate.

Teaching and learning

Good teaching ensures that students **learn well**, in the large majority of lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with a good variety of activities to interest the students.
- Students are told what they are to learn at the start of the lesson, so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Relationships are very good, so that in almost all lessons students are willing to learn.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of their students, who respond well.
- In some lessons the pace of learning is too slow and the work lacks challenge.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 154 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1.5%)	39 (25%)	75 (49%)	36 (23%)	2 (1.5%)	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.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent lesson, a Year 9 ICT class learnt how to use control systems to control, automate and analyse a theme park ride.

The teacher had planned in great detail a very useful series of class and small group activities to teach his students how to understand flow chart symbols and their use. His excellent subject knowledge enabled him to assist and extend them very well. He presented the problem in a very interesting way that won their interest and motivated them highly. He gave very good individual support, adapting his teaching well to students' individual learning needs. The higher attainers were encouraged to go on to more advanced work, a challenge which they relished and met very well. All achieved well: a significant minority reached a good GCSE standard. There was a buzz of interest and enjoyment throughout.

Commentary

34. Just over three-quarters of the teaching observed in the college was good, very good or excellent. In almost every lesson, students' attitudes to learning are good because of the good, often very good, relationships that teachers have with their students, the trust that the students have in their teachers' expertise and good class control. As a result, over the college as a whole, students' make sound progress, despite the learning difficulties of many. Teachers plan work that is interesting and plan sequences of activities that help the students to develop the skills and understanding that they need to achieve the lesson objectives. There is a good range of teaching and learning strategies in most lessons. These are varied, so that at appropriate times the students are listening to the teacher, at others they are learning independently or in small groups. This keeps their interest, develops learning skills such as co-operation and discussion skills, and helps them to learn by involving them in their learning.

35. The very good work that the college has done on developing teaching strategies has improved teaching in many parts of the college. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented well and all teachers make good use of the underlying principles in their planning. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was described as a strength, since the proportions of good and very good teaching have increased further since then.

36. In the best lessons, the teachers use their subject expertise and their knowledge of examination requirements to give students very good, practical advice that helps them to attain and achieve well. In geography lessons with Year 10 and 11, for example, the teachers give very well informed guidance to students on the course work requirements, and this enables students to plan and present their work well. Where teachers have high expectations, and these are matched with good use of examples and models of good work, the students have high aspirations and work hard to succeed. Lessons are planned to interest and motivate them and they respond very well, showing interest, concentration, and the ability to work independently.

37. In a good English lesson with lower attaining students, the teacher used her skills well to help the students to understand and to appreciate a challenging poem by Browning that contained difficult ideas and archaic language. By turning the analysis of the poem into a practical activity – a puzzle for them to solve – she helped them to achieve well. In the few instances where teaching is not interesting and motivating, because it does not take students' learning needs into account and they are talked at rather than involved, it is less successful and there are sometimes discipline problems.

38. In most departments there is a range in the quality of teaching from satisfactory to very good. It is important for the college to ensure that the information gained from the monitoring of teaching is used constructively to guide the less effective practitioners and help them to improve their practice.

39. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, design and technology, ICT, work-related learning, art (very good in Years 10 and 11), music and physical education. It is satisfactory in science.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form

40. Teaching and learning are good and often very good in the Sixth Form. Students learn well because they have confidence in their teachers and feel supported and cared for. Some groups are very small. Students are given a degree of individual tuition that is impossible in many schools. Teachers know their students very well. They know how to help them to succeed, because they understand their individual strengths and weaknesses. In a mathematics lesson, very good teaching of a single student being prepared for Oxbridge entrance was observed. The only one in the class, he was enjoying a session reminiscent of a university tutorial and it met his needs precisely, by challenging and extending his understanding. In a good A level English lesson with three Year 13 students, the teacher's very good knowledge of both his subject and the participants ensured that he listened sensitively to one student's presentation and was able to help to develop his ideas further because he knew the student's capability. Staff understand the next steps that students need to take in their learning. Independence is encouraged very well in the best lessons and, as a result, students learn very well both in and out of class.

41. In vocational courses and practical subjects, teachers ensure that students know what to do and how to do it well. They make the activities varied, appropriate and interesting. There is good level of challenge and individual needs are met, so that all make at least satisfactory progress in their learning and many achieve well. In a very good lesson for Year 13 health and social care students, for example, the very good relationship between the teacher and students led to students enjoying the session and being keen to give their best. They had the confidence to participate fully in an evaluation of their work experience placements and were able, with the teacher's skilled help, to draw out key learning points from them, including coming to an excellent understanding of the need for key skills such as communication. The lesson was planned very well, with a very relevant and interesting range of activities.

42. In the few lessons where teaching is less successful in the Sixth Form, it is not developing students' independence. The students are not fully involved and their learning skills are not being developed, because the teachers dictate information to them.

43. Teaching in the Sixth Form was found to be good in English, mathematics, history, sociology, health and social care, biology and in theatre studies, where it was often very good.

The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs

44. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good for students with SEN in every year group. Teaching is often stimulating, enthusiastic and challenging, stemming from good subject knowledge, and knowing the needs of the students with SEN. Lessons are well planned, interesting resources are used and well-directed teaching assistants usually reinforce and support learning well. Assessment and review is carried out effectively, but the recording of individual students' results needs improvement. The progress of students with SEN was difficult to track, in some cases.

Assessment

45. Assessment is satisfactory and the newly introduced assessment policy is giving good guidance to teachers and is bringing about improvements. Most teachers now understand the range of data that is available to them and many are beginning to use it to help them to modify their teaching to meet the needs of individual students. Centrally, a good range of assessment data is collected on students throughout the school. The information is evaluated thoroughly and used to set targets and track students of all backgrounds and abilities. Staff in all departments are being given appropriate training to manage this well. Most students know how well they are doing and how they can improve, and are partners in their own assessment. This is done particularly effectively in some subjects, such as English. Students are also given specific targets, and their progress is regularly monitored and discussed with staff. Where practice is particularly good,

assessment information is used directly to influence the teaching strategies used in lessons, with a beneficial impact on achievement. This is not common, but the newly appointed assistant principal with responsibility for assessment is working effectively to promote and extend good practice.

46. Marking is carried out thoroughly in all departments. In some subjects, such as geography, French and English, it not only gives the students grades, it also gives them useful indicators as to how they can improve their work. This has led to particularly good coursework grades in two of these subjects. This good practice needs to be spread more widely, along with a stronger emphasis on the use of marking to improve students' literacy standards.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** and the range of enrichment activities is **very good**. Accommodation and resources in many areas enhance the quality of provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many students participate in the wide range of enrichment activities.
- The curriculum is responsive to the needs of students.
- Accommodation and resources are generally good, but are poor for drama.
- Despite much work on literacy across the curriculum, there is still inconsistency in its development across departments.
- Provision for SEN is good.

Commentary

47. The curriculum is broad, meets the needs of all students and access to the curriculum for all students is very good. It has been reviewed over the past two years and includes an appropriate range of vocational courses, taken by about 25 per cent of students. Some that have been recently introduced involve students in work placements and attendance at other colleges. These courses are popular with the students. Members of staff are alert to new opportunities, such as the introduction of a course in photography and the piloting of media studies as an alternative to English literature. These are good examples of the ways in which the college has sought successfully to motivate and raise the achievement of boys, in particular.

48. Citizenship is taught through tutorials and has been extended, so all departments include it in their teaching. There are no specialist teachers for the subject, so this approach needs to be kept under review to ensure that the staff involved have sufficient expertise to teach the subject successfully. The college does not comply with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship, as space is limited. This was an issue at the last inspection. All the other curriculum areas for development have been tackled satisfactorily.

49. Careers education is of a very good quality. The PHSE programme has a specific careers content, starting in Year 7, and the provision becomes increasingly detailed and relevant for older students. Guidance is intensive from Year 10 onwards, so that all students follow a structured programme. In addition, each one is provided with very helpful individual advice and support matched to his or her needs. The advanced skills teacher provides a very good level of co-ordination and management. Very good use is made of local employers to support the programme through presentations and discussions.

50. The very good range of enhancement activities extends the learning of a large number of students, many of whom live some distance from the college and who face long journeys home afterwards. The programme has been growing over the past few years; a tribute to the large number of adults who give up their time willingly. Twilight activities are extensive and offer a wide range of options, such as lace-making, which draw on local industry, in addition to courses in the arts and sports.

51. Many departments have adopted the national strategy for teaching and learning from Years 7 to 11. The college is focusing on the literacy strand of the strategy this year and ICT is the next focus. A co-ordinator has very recently been appointed to lead the numeracy strand. Work on literacy across the curriculum has been ongoing for three years, more recently with support from the local authority. Some departments have responded well to this. For example, design and technology staff encourage discussion and advise students on how they can extend their written work. Most departments teach key words of their subjects, but many have not gone beyond this. The co-ordinator this year has a dedicated slot to promote literacy and has an action plan. The teacher in charge of the library also has an action plan which overlaps with the literacy plan. There is little co-ordination between the two and this needs to be established for the college to move forward more quickly.

52. Provision for SEN is good. Students with SEN have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets their needs well. Most departments offer extension activities for gifted and talented students.

53. The buildings have been refurbished and additional rooms built since the last inspection, so the accommodation and resources are good. The purpose-built library has been equipped with good ICT facilities and now provides a good study centre for students, supporting independent learning and which is open from 8.30am to 5pm. New buildings for music and science provide excellent accommodation, but there are still too few laboratories in the new block and the old ones offer inadequate facilities. Disabled access is good to all parts of the college. Accommodation for drama is poor: there are no specialist facilities, so staff use the hall and the dining room. In one lesson in the dining room, the teacher had to adapt her teaching to cope with noise from the staff preparing food. At the crucial point of the lesson when the students were preparing to evaluate their work, the shutters clanked open loudly and the staff came out to prepare the area. Further noise from refrigeration prevented any discussion being heard. It was a tribute to the skills of the teacher and behaviour of the students that some learning took place. Poor accommodation in drama is lowering standards.

Sixth Form

54. The curriculum offers students a wide range of courses, vocational and non-vocational, and new courses, such as photography, cater for the interests of students. A course in textiles is starting next year. Students in the Sixth Form have good opportunities to work with younger students to develop social skills. A very wide range of enrichment activities extends their knowledge of areas beyond the ones they study. Students attend enrichment courses at a local college for mathematics and science, amongst others; they visit places of educational interest such as art galleries and they have the opportunity for exchange visits in France and Spain. Work experience adds to their personal skills. Although accommodation is generally good, students have few areas for private study and this concerns them. The inspectors found that their concerns were justified.

55. Key skills of ICT are taught in a separate course. Key skills of communication, problem solving and application of number are taught through general studies and GNVQ courses. A significant number of students who do not take English or mathematics have weak skills of literacy and would benefit from dedicated courses with input from specialist staff.

Care, guidance and support

Systems to ensure students' support, guidance health and welfare are **very effective** and students are **very well** cared for during their time at college. Guidance regarding career opportunities and future educational possibilities are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good pastoral systems in place.
- The procedures to support students' personal and academic development and to monitor their progress are in an early stage of development.
- Students receive good guidance as they move through the college to enable them to make well-informed choices.
- Students think the college listens to them and values their views.

Commentary

56. Students have very positive views about the college and the care, support and guidance they receive there. They value the education they receive, the range of extra-curricular twilight activities and the whole learning environment. The induction processes to the college and support for new students are very well structured and developed, enabling them to settle into college life quickly. This level of care continues. For example, there is a very good amount of information readily available to help students make important decisions as they progress through the college. Support for students' academic and personal development, however, is satisfactory overall, but in a number of subjects is still underdeveloped. Monitoring and assessment procedures have recently been reviewed and academic mentoring procedures have yet to be offered to all students. The lack of this ongoing support and guidance means that students do not, in all subjects, have clear targets and a comprehensive view of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The effective pastoral system, based on form tutors and heads of year, and the student support office provide a sense of stability and ensure that students have members of staff they can turn to if needed.

57. The pastoral head has responsibility for 'looked after' children and child protection arrangements. She manages these responsibilities well and has good links with the relevant support agencies. She keeps up to date with new legislation and training and ensures that new staff are kept informed each year of the relevant procedures. The governors take their responsibilities for health and safety issues conscientiously. Health and safety procedures are well thought through, with appropriate risk assessments undertaken.

58. Specialist advice and additional support is provided through the student support centre, learning mentors and 'drop in' sessions with the college nurse or the two counsellors. This helps many individuals, including disaffected students, those in danger of exclusion, those who are having personal difficulties, or students who may be falling behind. The care of staff and focused assistance is helping to raise students' confidence and self-esteem and 'turn round' disaffected individuals. Careers advice and students' work experience is very well structured and carefully integrated into the citizenship programme. Students also take advantage of the very good resources in the careers library, support from the Connexions advisors and the advice available at career conventions.

59. The majority of students like the college and think it treats them fairly and with respect, and are confident that there is an adult who knows them to whom they can go if they have a problem. Students feel they are consulted and that the college is interested in their views and takes them into consideration. While the college council is being re-organised, students' views are sought through the students' food user group, annual questionnaires, or consultations about their college uniform and safety around the town.

Sixth Form

60. Sixth Form students are happy at college and have positive views about life in the Sixth Form. Those joining from other schools feel the teachers and other students make them very welcome. Students are very satisfied with the courses on offer, both in college and the vocational

courses available at Bicton and East Devon College. They speak positively about their tutors and the good rapport that is soon established. They value the way in which they are helped and encouraged to work and study independently yet their teachers are always there if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work.

61. Students are encouraged to be independent and make use of the plentiful advice available. All students receive intensive help and guidance to enable them to complete university application forms. This ensures all students know what is required, whether they are applying now or later. In addition, those students not intending to go on to higher or further education are given well-informed advice from college or Connexions advisers as to what they can do after they leave college.

62. The majority of students feel that their opinions are welcomed and that their views are valued. They feel the student council empowers them, by giving them a voice, and involves them in the decision-making processes of the college.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is **good**. The links forged with the local community and the partnership with feeder primary schools, other colleges and universities are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Community links are very good.
- The partnerships with primary schools facilitate a very successful transition into Year 7.
- The college continues to receive the assistance of a supportive parent body.
- The shared provision with partner institutions helps provide additional courses and vocational opportunities.
- The reports to parents are very helpful, providing a clear statement of students' progress and levels of attainment.

Commentary

63. Parents generally have very positive views about the college. Although the responses to the pre-inspection parents' meeting (24 parents) and questionnaire (19 per cent of parents) were small, there is a high level of satisfaction about the work of the college. Parents feel it provides a good education for students and they find the staff very approachable. Parental support is very evident at the high turnout for parents' meetings, sports days, college productions such as the Shakespeare dinner, and career conventions. A few parents expressed concerns about the information they received and the extent to which they were consulted or kept informed about their child's progress. The inspection team followed up these concerns and could not substantiate them.

64. The college keeps parents fully updated about ongoing activities and events through the regular newsletters, and consults with them about various issues such as the change of uniform and the house system. Relevant documentation and meetings ensure parents are kept fully informed about key events as their children progress through the college. Good home/college links are maintained with the tutorial staff, and parents are contacted both when there are causes for concerns and if their child has done well. The college seeks to build a close liaison with parents, enabling them to become involved in their children's education. Where this is working, it is having a positive effect on students' learning and their levels of achievement. However, there are a small number of parents taking their children on holiday in term time or not ensuring they attend regularly or complete their work on time. Parents are regularly advised about the progress of their children through consultation and review meetings. The annual reports are very good and provide a helpful picture for parents. This includes a comprehensive picture of what has been covered, an evaluation of students' progress and achievement and targets for the coming year.

65. Links with the local community are very good. Local businesses provide valuable support for the college, as part of the career programme or by offering work placement opportunities. There are very good links with the community police service. Police officers contribute to the citizenship programme and the mobile phone link enables an instant response and follow-up where there are concerns. The links with the adjacent sports centre and swimming pool are very well developed to meet the needs of the physical education curriculum, as well as to provide additional enrichment opportunities after college. Similarly, the Youth Leader makes a very significant contribution to the alternative curriculum of a small number of students in Years 10 and 11, and the Youth Club is a valuable facility for many students in the college. There are very strong links with the neighbouring Adult and Community Learning Centre, which uses the college facilities in the evening to provide a range of courses for students, parents and other adults. The college has forged very good links with its feeder primary schools, both on a management and curriculum basis. Regular Academic Council meetings help to share good practice, ensure common ground and promote joint initiatives. As part of the transition arrangements, the college provides a number of opportunities for Year 6 students to visit and take advantage of different facilities. This helps promote sporting opportunities and curriculum development, while mathematics workshops challenge a small number of more able students. Well thought out collaborative arrangements with local colleges and universities provide valuable vocational courses for students and staff development opportunities for teachers.

Sixth Form

66. The good links with parents are continued into the Sixth Form, to keep them fully informed and involved in students' progress. Parents are very happy with the Sixth Form provision for students. They value the regularity of communication with staff and the fact that they are kept suitably informed if there are any problems or concerns. The very good reports and student tracking sheets ensure that parents are kept fully apprised of their children's progress.

67. The good links established with local schools, colleges and the adult learning centre have expanded curriculum possibilities and enable students to pursue additional courses that are not available at Honiton Community College. There are well-established programmes of visits and links with universities that help students identify and progress onto the next step in their career development. The very good business links established by the work experience co-ordinator helps support the vocational courses of some Sixth Form students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the college are satisfactory, with good and very good aspects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership team of the college has worked effectively to raise standards of teaching and is now concentrating, rightly, on raising attainment.
- The performance of the college is monitored well and the information is used to raise standards.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection in a number of areas, as a result of the determined work of the Principal and his senior team.

Commentary

68. Since the time of the last report, the Principal and his senior team have brought about a number of significant changes in the college that have improved the environment and the education that it offers its students. Although there are still subjects where the accommodation is barely satisfactory, such as the facilities for drama, the Sixth Form accommodation and some science rooms, the college as a whole presents a good environment for learning in the 21st century. The college has extended ICT facilities, an excellent new science and music block and a good library/resource centre. There have been good developments in the curriculum to extend the range of opportunities for students, including short GCSE courses in citizenship, religious studies for all

and an increased number of vocational courses. One reason for the positive attitudes of students to learning is the innovative range of twilight courses. These include the opportunity to take a short course GCSE examination in ICT as early as Year 9, and this has been very successful. These twilight sessions are fully booked and involve around 400 students.

69. In many cases, the improvements have benefited learning, but there have been setbacks that have restricted the opportunities for development or have diverted the senior leaders from their task. Their vision for the future of the college now needs to be made clear and shared fully with staff. The improved monitoring of teaching and learning has led to improved teaching, but there is not yet a consistent approach to ensuring that the information from monitoring is used effectively to improve teaching where deficiencies are found. Some important new management systems have been introduced, such as new approaches to managing behaviour, a new assessment policy and revised approaches for tracking and mentoring students. At this early stage, there are indications of success, but some systems have yet to be consolidated. The college's main aim, to improve attainment, has at times been thwarted by a range of setbacks, for example with buildings, staffing and funding bids, and improvements in standards have been slow to achieve. It is important now for the college to have a very clear focus on raising attainment. There are talents and strengths in the new senior team that can do this, clarify and share the vision and help to raise standards more quickly.

70. The college monitors its performance and has worked well with the local education authority over the last year, bringing in advisors to help to remedy areas of weakness. There are clear lines of responsibility and performance management is securely in place. There are examples of effective teamwork among staff. The pastoral staff, for example, function very well and are led and managed very well. The management of the college is satisfactory overall, with areas of strength.

71. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. In order to meet the needs of all students, including the relatively high proportion of lower attainers, the 14 to 16 curriculum has been developed to provide a good range of appropriate courses. The SEN department has been encouraged to run certificated courses in basic skills for those who will benefit. The SENCO leads the area well. Support staff are effectively deployed and there is good liaison with teachers. The provision for the gifted and talented students is managed well.

72. The governing body makes an effective contribution to the work of the college, although it has not been able to comply with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all. All governors are linked to curriculum areas and many visit regularly to monitor and support the college. Many of them have considerable professional expertise outside education that they bring to their role for the benefit of the college. They take their duties seriously and are effective as critical friends of the college, questioning and testing in a number of areas, such as performance in national tests and finance. They have a secure understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

73. The administrative and clerical staff and the classroom assistants are deployed effectively and support the teachers well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff work well to ensure that the college buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive.

Leadership and management of the Sixth Form

74. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form are sound, with many good aspects. The head of the sixth form has worked very effectively with senior leaders in the college to improve the curriculum and thereby both attract a wider range of students and meet their needs. Good links have been forged with other schools and colleges. The range of opportunities for students has been extended as a result and the administrative and logistical issues have been tackled well. The initiatives are very recent – the linked courses with other schools began in the term that the inspection took place – but there are clear signs that problems of transport and timings of the day have been thought through and are being overcome. The head of Sixth Form and the Sixth Form teaching team work well together to provide an effective learning experience that is valued by students and parents.

75. Although attainment in the Sixth Form seems to have dropped since the last inspection, this is explained by the increasingly inclusive intake and the broadening range of courses, including vocational courses. No one is denied entry to the Sixth Form and the college works hard to ensure that there is a course available to benefit every student. There have been some remarkable successes and students who do not appear to have an aptitude for academic work have shown that they can develop and stay on to Year 14 in order to complete higher level courses successfully, having begun at a low level in Year 12. One girl is now at university who, in her first year in the Sixth Form, was following an intermediate level GNVQ course. The head of Sixth Form works hard to raise students' aspirations and to ensure that they are not discouraged by setbacks. The Sixth Form management is thorough and efficient and the tutors receive good guidance to help them to give very good personal and academic support and advice to the students in their care.

76. There is good leadership in the extension of enrichment opportunities, such as visits from business representatives, university representatives, theatre trips and Business Challenge opportunities. The careers provision is well managed. The Connexions service offers very good guidance on further and higher education and this backs up a very good support service to students, helping them to make applications to colleges and universities.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,751,029.00	Balance from previous year	56,409.00
Total expenditure	3,725,085.00	Balance carried forward to the next	0.00
Expenditure per student	3,462.00		

77. The management of the college's finances is good. All the necessary controls are in place, and the college has received a favourable audit report. There is a small deficit forecast in the current budget, but it is expected that, in practice, the budget will balance at the end of the financial year. Special educational needs funding and all additional funding is spent very appropriately. The principles of best value are applied well. Income and expenditure per student is close to the national average. Students achieve satisfactorily academically and well in terms of their personal development and so the college is providing satisfactory value for money.

78. The Sixth Form is not cost effective and is being subsidised from the budget for the main college. It gives satisfactory value for money, partly because of its valuable contribution to the ethos of the college and to the opportunities in the immediate area for students to continue their education beyond the age of 16.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and the gap in standards between boys and girls is closing.
- Achievement is good between Years 7 and 9.
- Strong leadership and management have set a clear direction for the department.
- Teaching is good, although there is some inconsistency.
- In some lessons where students are in mixed ability groups, more able students mark time and less able students find the work difficult.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet used consistently enough.

Commentary

79. In 2004, the English department had its best results ever. By the end of Year 9, standards were significantly higher than in 2003, when they were close to average. In GCSE English language, the department exceeded its targets and the gap between the performance of boys and girls narrowed further. Results in English literature improved from the previous year, when there had been a dip in performance. As the college has fewer higher attaining students than nationally, standards are broadly average at the end of Year 11, as fewer students than nationally attain grades A* and A. A tribute to the quality of teaching of the lower attaining students is that almost every student achieves a grade at GCSE.

80. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9, so that they have a good start to the examination courses in Year 10. They continue to achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. This is because of effective teaching. Higher attaining students usually achieve equally well, although there are some occasions in mixed ability groups when they mark time. The lower attaining students achieve well and, in many lessons when they are grouped by ability, they achieve very well, because the teaching is dynamic and appropriate for their abilities. Teachers are effectively assisted in these classes by learning support assistants. Students sometimes find the work too difficult when they are in mixed ability groups and the teaching does not take account of their needs.

81. Management action by the head of department has improved standards of boys' work and boys' achievement is now similar to that of girls. The reasons for this are that many teachers show they value all students, often using humour that the boys generally appreciate. Resources such as videotapes motivate them and texts are well chosen to appeal to boys. Asking students to work in pairs and ensuring, where possible, that a boy works with a girl, encourages boys to talk, so that their learning is strengthened. Setting time limits for activities maintains their motivation. Most, but not all, of these approaches are used consistently.

82. By the end of Year 9, many students have well-developed speaking and listening skills. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining students use technical language with confidence and speak at length. Most students listen to the opinions of others and take them on board when putting forward their views.

83. Most students, by the end of Year 9, show an interest in books and are prepared to read between the lines. Many appreciate subtleties of text, such as humour based on play on words. The least confident readers are hesitant and sometimes have few methods to make sense of the text. By the end of Year 11, the majority of students are skilled at analysing characters, drawing on the text to support their views. Higher attaining students take a quotation and discuss it in depth, making astute and perceptive comments. Most students have sound insights into the meaning and style of nineteenth-century poetry and respond positively and with understanding to challenging texts. The lower attaining students have a feeling for literature, but do not find it easy to analyse.

84. The department has acted successfully to improve writing. In Year 9, higher attaining students write lively pieces. Writing of the lower attaining students starts to become fluent, although vocabulary is not well chosen for effect. The high expectations of teachers are reflected in students' attention to spelling and punctuation, although the lower attaining students often write inaccurately. Students' writing skills become more sophisticated so that, by the end of Year 11, many write lengthy pieces with a good awareness of audience and careful choice of words. Skills of evaluative writing become sharper, although the lower attainers often still write descriptively.

85. Teaching and learning are good and many lessons have very good and excellent features. The national strategy for literacy is used effectively, which helps lessons to proceed at a good pace. Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge to ask probing questions, which deepens students' understanding. Teachers have an impressive understanding of the techniques that are required to be successful in examinations, so that students are prepared well. An excellent feature of some lessons is the way that the teacher kindles a love of literature at the same time as teaching examination techniques. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher introduced the idea of how language changes over time. This was done in an engaging manner and the class enjoyed their learning because the teacher was so enthusiastic about the subject. Handouts to support examination questions are carefully designed. Marking is usually of a high quality and suggests ways in which students can improve their work.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent lesson, a Year 9 class achieved highly in their study of 'Macbeth'

In a previous lesson, students, in candlelight, had discussed the witches. This had left a lasting impression on them, especially the boys, and they drew on the insights into the supernatural this had given them in their responses. Resources were used well to discuss the setting of the stage and this was followed by a video of *Shakespeare in Love*. By now, students were spellbound and several, including boys, asked questions. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge deepened the students' understanding. During the discussion that followed, many students took notes without being asked. They worked in groups to produce a scene and their work was of a very high quality.

86. The department has a large number of teachers, so that maintaining consistency of effective approaches is a priority. The head of department is aware, through her monitoring, that there is some inconsistency and that some practice lacks sparkle. Some of the inconsistencies observed on the inspection were too slow a pace to lessons and lost opportunities to extend the speaking skills of students.

87. The head of department has set a clear agenda for improvement and results of this are already apparent. She has identified the right areas for development, such as the achievement of boys and writing for all students. A new approach is *best books* in which each student writes a piece of work at regular intervals. These are given a national curriculum level and are already showing the progress that students make. One consequence is that most students know how well they are doing. The college's new approach to assessment is starting to be used, but the staff know that more needs to be done on this. Satisfactory use is made of ICT, but students need to use it more for themselves. The management actions have led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Subject guidance for Years 7 and 8 is supporting teachers well. Guidance for Year 9 is a focus for this year. The gap in standards between boys and girls is closing and students' progress has improved. The head of department is alert to changes that will raise standards further and is supported by a good team of teachers.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

88. The college has been developing methods to promote literacy across the curriculum for the past three years. These have fed into the national strategy for literacy, which is a priority for the college this year. For the past two years, students in Year 10 have mentored students in Year 7 in reading, and the students have continued this into Years 11 and 8. Two tutorials a week are devoted to reading, using book boxes from the library.

89. The literacy co-ordinator has produced an action plan with the aim of encouraging departments to develop methods of promoting literacy. Many departments focus students' attention on specific language for the subject. The design and technology department have gone further with the support of the literacy co-ordinator and have looked at how they can encourage skills of writing that are needed for technology. Teachers of religious education also encourage students to write at length about moral and personal issues and they are teaching specific reading skills that are required for the subject. In other departments, less has been done and the poor writing skills of many students affect the standards of their work. The literacy co-ordinator has more time to work with departments this year, but is waiting for them to make contact. An action plan for the library mirrors some of the work that is planned by the literacy co-ordinator, but as yet, liaison between them has not taken place. More rigorous management action is required to implement the action plan for literacy.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in French by the time they leave college.
- Revisions to the curriculum are helping to raise standards, particularly in Spanish.
- Teaching and learning are good because skills are taught in a balanced way.

Commentary

90. GCSE results in **French** at 42 per cent A*-C were broadly average in 2003, the latest year for which valid comparisons are available. Girls did better than boys, following the national trend. Results improved in 2004, when over half the candidates attained grades A*-C. These outcomes represent good achievement because fewer high attaining students enter the college than is typical nationally. The college has taken the initiative to give students a very good start by supporting the study of French in all its feeder primary schools, who agree to assure a basic provision which the college fits into its assessment system and builds on in Year 7. By Year 9 all groups of students achieve well, reaching levels broadly average for their age and sustaining this progress throughout Years 10 and 11.

91. GCSE results in **Spanish** were well below average in 2003, with a similar proportion of students, less than a third, gaining grades A*-C in 2004. Spanish is introduced in Year 9, until recently as a short 'taster' course, alongside normal French lessons. The college offers the choice of languages in Years 10 and 11 to all students, regardless of ability. Staff realised that the 'taster' gave many students the impression that Spanish was easier than it was, and did not provide them with a sufficiently strong foundation for further studies. With the support of the Local Education Authority, more time has been made available in Year 9, above that of national recommendation, and a new one-term intensive course has been devised, leading to a graded certificate. These changes now allow students to study Spanish in reasonable depth for the first term and to gain a clearer idea of their potential to go further. They later return to French. The work of the current Year 11 indicates that they are attaining below, but not well below, average standards, so their achievement is satisfactory. The work of younger students points to better achievement as the changes take effect: Beginners in Year 9 do as well as may reasonably be expected of students of that age following similar courses.

92. Teaching is good overall, with some very well taught lessons. Teachers know the languages well and know what their students need to learn in order to succeed. They make sure students learn something about the culture of the different countries as well as the languages. There were examples of very good lessons in both French and Spanish. Listening, speaking, reading and writing develop well because tasks are well matched to students' capability. Marking and feedback are well focused. Students with SEN achieve as well as their classmates as a result. At times, however, too much time is spent on detailed grammar, leading to the use of more English than is necessary, and so limiting students' opportunities to use the languages for themselves.

93. Subject management is good. Regular monitoring and opportunities for team-teaching help develop teachers' skills. The issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed and improvement has been good. Links have been forged with a local multi-national company to help students see the importance of languages at work and to inspire them to further study.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistent, good teaching has produced results that have been above national averages for many years.
- Very good progress of students through Years 7 to 9 is the result of good implementation of the national strategy.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students have created a very positive and supportive atmosphere for mathematics.
- Teaching strategies are restricted by the overcrowded classrooms.
- Students have adequate numeracy skills in mathematics lessons, but there is a lack of a consistent whole college approach.

Commentary

94. Compared with all schools, the 2003 national test results for students aged 14 were average. When comparing these results with students' prior attainment, they show good progress, because students enter the college with lower than average levels of attainment. Results at the higher grades (A*-C) in GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average and have been so for a number of years. When compared with other subject areas in the college, mathematics results are good. The 2004 results for students aged 14 were broadly similar to those in the previous year, but there was a drop in the A*-C results at GCSE. This decline was a consequence of the disruption to learning caused by a number of staffing changes during the year and some lower coursework grades. Staffing has now stabilised and there has been a revision of coursework procedures. Standards are now average by the end of Year 11.

95. Inspection evidence confirms that entry levels are below average. There are less than the expected numbers of students at the higher levels of attainment in Year 7. Students currently in Year 7 are numerate, but many lack the depth of knowledge expected; only a few are at the higher levels of attainment. By Year 9, high attaining students' work is above average. They confidently use and apply their algebraic skills to quadratic expressions and functions, direct and inverse proportion. They also use and apply Pythagoras' Rule with confidence. This is above national expectations for students of this age. Records indicate that these students were at average levels when they entered the college, so their progress is very good. Average and lower attaining students make good progress, consolidating earlier understanding before progressing to new topics. Higher attaining students in Year 11 work confidently on all topics in the higher examination syllabus.

Analysis of work shows that they use trigonometry of the highest level to solve a range of problems and can apply knowledge gained in one topic area to another with confidence. The lowest attaining students in Year 11 have already gained the highest award in a basic numeracy examination and this is motivating them to continue to work at foundation level.

96. Students achieve well and work hard to improve. They have confidence in their teachers and are prepared to answer questions and explain their working processes. They are also confident enough in their understanding to explain solutions to their friends or to work out solutions in front of the whole class. When encouraged to work in groups, for example in a Year 9 lesson on three-dimensional loci, all students work well together. The achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar, with only minor differences from year to year. Students who have SEN are in very small groups and make good progress because of their positive attitudes, good teaching and effective support by assistants.

97. Teaching is good; this has led to good results and positive attitudes towards the subject. Lesson planning is thorough and contains material that is relevant to students and challenges them to work hard and achieve success. Teachers use open questions to develop thinking, but their other strategies are limited because of the lack of space in classrooms. Lack of space limits the opportunities for group and practical work and students miss the opportunity to develop and apply their knowledge in this way. Some teaching seen was very good. Unfortunately, there are few formal opportunities for teachers to share good practice and observe others.

98. Teachers mark work regularly, but feedback to students is inconsistent. Some teachers give positive comments that encourage development, but others just indicate that work has been seen. However, a new system has been introduced which monitors and records achievement closely. It also allows students to evaluate their own progress over time. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new procedure. Homework is set regularly to reinforce the work covered in lessons; this is often marked in class and students mark their work and that of their peers honestly.

99. A very experienced teacher leads the department well. Teachers are mutually supportive and have a common desire to raise standards so that all students achieve their best. They use very good subject knowledge to plan lessons well. The scheme of work follows the National Numeracy Strategy in years 7, 8 and 9 and, because students have tables of National Curriculum levels in their exercise books, they are aware of their levels of work. The scheme of work includes a time scale for various topics. This is good, because it sustains pace. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning has kept standards high. Resources to support learning are adequate, but there is a lack of computers for the department to use in the classroom. The classrooms are small for the size of some of the classes; this limits the range of teaching strategies available and does not allow students to experience a wide approach to mathematics. However, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

100. Students' numeracy skills are sufficient for them to access the whole curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place within the mathematics curriculum, and there is regular reinforcement during lessons. Some lower attaining students are over-reliant on calculators. The new co-ordinator has a list of priorities for developing the cross-curricular aspect of mathematics. Very few departments have explicit policies for the development or application of numeracy in their individual schemes of work. There is very good and accurate use in design technology, where students calculate angles, name parts of a circle, work accurately to scale when making drawings and weigh and measure a range of materials. From work seen in science, students are competent, but there is no organised reinforcement of skills. Data handling and the use of graphs, charts and diagrams occur in geography, but again there is no planning within the scheme of work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in 2004 was better than in earlier years, especially in Year 11.
- Support for students who have SEN is very good, and sometimes excellent.
- Progress made by boys is not as good as it could be, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Although teaching is satisfactory overall, good, very good and excellent teaching was also seen.
- The department has a clear and accurate view of where improvements need to be made, and has put procedures in place to secure them, but as yet their efforts have had a limited effect on test and examination results across the college.

Commentary

101. When they come into the college in Year 7, students have reached levels of attainment in science that are below average. In the main, they make good progress in Years 7 to 9, so that their results in national curriculum tests are in line with the national average. Relatively few students gain the higher levels, reflecting their results in Year 6. These results show good progress, and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.

102. Attainment in Year 11, when students take GCSE examinations, was below the national average in 2003, mainly because boys gained significantly lower results than girls. Some students achieved highly, and gained grades A* and A, but the number of students gaining grades A* – C was still below the national average, and lower than in English and mathematics in the college. This distribution of grades is consistent with the lower number of Level 5 results in Year 6, and with the Level 6 and 7 results in Year 9. National data for 2004 is not yet available, but a major drive to raise attainment in 2004 met with considerable success, bringing the overall GCSE average points score closer to the national average, based on 2003 data, and close to the expected figure. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is now satisfactory.

103. Work seen in class and in students' books reflects these results, and there is clear evidence of improvement throughout Years 7 to 11. More able students show that they can explain scientific ideas, and their interpretation of practical investigations is broadly what is expected of students at this stage. Their use of scientific vocabulary improves as they move through the course, enabling them to explain their interpretations precisely. A group of Year 11 students who have a variety of SEN, showed remarkable progress in response to excellent teaching and classroom support, and similar very good learning was seen in a lower Year 9 set. However, many students in the middle range of ability show barely satisfactory achievement. Written work is often based firmly on material given to them directly by the teacher, and shows insufficient evidence of students thinking for themselves. Limited literacy skills for these students are a barrier to learning to which the department has made insufficient response.

104. Teaching and learning are satisfactory; but good, very good and excellent teaching was also seen. In the best lessons, a clear understanding of how students learn best helps teachers to plan activities that appeal to them, so that they become absorbed in what they are doing and make very good or excellent progress. In satisfactory lessons, teachers take insufficient account of what their students know already, and in several lessons throughout Years 7 to 11 students met with difficulties associated with poorly understood ideas from earlier in the course. Not surprisingly, these students lost interest, and both attention and behaviour deteriorated. The department has recently introduced a new marking policy, in line with a whole college initiative, but it is too early to judge whether this will help teachers to use short-term assessment data effectively to secure the best learning, raise attainment and improve achievement.

105. Leadership is good, and management is satisfactory. The experienced head of department has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in this curriculum area, and recognises what needs to be done in order to improve. However, the department is only just emerging from a considerable period of staffing instability. This has been a drain on departmental resources and has prevented the department from progressing as much as it should, for example in terms of the variety of teaching styles used, or in making the best use of ICT to respond to students' individual needs. Limited opportunities for full departmental meetings have also had a detrimental effect on the development of teaching styles.

106. Since the last inspection, the subject has broadly maintained its position. GCSE results in 2004 were much better than in the recent past, but over time, results have not improved enough, compared with national figures. Performance of boys, especially in Years 10 and 11, remains a concern. The completion of substantial new accommodation of excellent quality last year has given the department a new confidence and brought about a real improvement in the quality of learning, but it remains to be seen what effect this will have on students' attainment in tests and examinations. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 11, the attainment in ICT is above average
- Management of the subject is very good.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes excellent.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 are rising rapidly.
- The use of ICT for learning in some other subjects is underdeveloped.

Commentary

107. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectation, and similar to the attainment levels of students in their other core subjects. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average and an improvement upon 2003. Students who study a short course in ICT for GCSE in 2003/4 as an additional GCSE, achieved results that are likely to be well above the average, when national validated data are available. A group of Year 9 students studied GCSE short course ICT and achieved 100 per cent pass rate in 2004. Around half the students do not follow a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. These students study ICT across their other GCSE subjects, in line with a planned programme.

108. In Years 7 to 9, The ICT strand of the National Strategy has been successfully introduced and is giving rise to more challenging teaching and notable improvements in students' work. Students can create a flowchart to specify the control of a water ride and they can design and build a web page using both HTML code and an editor. The current standard of work of students in Years 10 and 11 is above the national average. They can apply ICT in the vocational context of an accounts department, using mail merge to create payslips, and design a logo and 3-fold leaflet for the organisation. Students' achievement is good by Year 9 across the range of ability, because of the quality of teachers' planning, which aids understanding and progress, yet provides appropriate challenge.

109. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good in relation to prior attainment. The progress made by all groups of learners is good in ICT lessons, in response to well planned and high-paced teaching.

110. Teaching is good overall, with examples of satisfactory and excellent teaching. Students are encouraged to work independently, use ICT fluently and can talk about their work with good levels of understanding. Lessons closely follow coursework requirements, and involve pupils in a range of practical contexts, helping to make the use of ICT interesting and relevant. Where teaching was judged to be excellent, pupils rose to the high expectations of teachers, working at very high levels on complex tasks.

111. Leadership for ICT developments is good. The school has made significant investments in ICT, which are improving standards in this subject. The management of ICT is very good. The adoption of the ICT strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been exceptionally well managed, and is leading to rapid improvement to students' levels of attainment. An able and well-qualified technician effectively manages computers.

112. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. A greater number of students now study GCSE ICT and others experience ICT through their work across subjects. Pupils can now experience the application of control technology and data logging.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

113. There are effective examples of using ICT on the popular digital photography course and in music, sociology and learning support. However, the use of ICT in subjects generally is below the level of use currently seen across schools nationally. There are an above average number of modern computers in the school, which serve the teaching of ICT well, but they are not easily available to all subjects. Many subject areas have some ICT resources located within them, including a small number of whiteboards. There is scope for the school to have more ambitious expectations for what their students might achieve in other areas of the curriculum by using their ICT skills.

The impact of national initiatives

114. The Key Stage 3 strategy in ICT has had a significant impact on raising standards to the levels currently seen. Whiteboards have been made available under a national initiative and are broadening teaching approaches in several subjects. Electronic Learning Credits have increased the software available in most subject areas. Many teachers have the use of a laptop computer and this has raised the level of confidence and interest of staff in making greater use of this medium for teaching and learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys and girls of all ability levels achieve well in the GCSE examination.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers focus effectively on students' literacy needs.
- Assessment procedures and fieldwork opportunities are not effective enough in assisting learning in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

115. GCSE results show an improving trend. In the 2004 GCSE examination, most students attained higher GCSE grades than predicted and results overall were above the national average. Value added scores show that both boys and girls made good progress through Years 10 and 11

and many achieved higher grades in geography than in their other subjects. Students have a good understanding of the range of geographical skills and techniques necessary for success in the examination. Coursework folders are of a high quality and students apply their skills well in studying their environment. Examples include informative presentations on the physical and human factors that affect the Dawlish Warren coastal area. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms the positive GCSE picture; achievement is good and standards are above average in Years 10 and 11.

116. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and students achieve satisfactorily, overall. Higher attainers and those with SEN make good progress. Teachers place effective emphasis on developing literacy skills. Key geographical terms are learnt and reinforced frequently. Positive relationships contribute to progress, because students' opinions are valued. Students are eager to learn and respond well, both individually and in groups. However, two main factors present barriers to higher achievement in Years 7 to 9. First, the new assessment procedures in the department for monitoring students' progress, although good in outline, do not yet support long-term learning. Thus, while most students make good progress during lessons, scrutiny of written work and discussions with students indicate that achievement over time is only satisfactory. Second, fieldwork opportunities for Years 7 to 9 students to develop a deeper understanding of topics are currently much fewer than in Years 10 and 11. For example, students have good mapping skills, but need more opportunities to practise these skills and to analyse their observations outside the classroom.

117. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Behaviour is well managed. Lessons are well prepared and include a wide range of strategies to make work interesting, relevant and enjoyable. New technology is used well by teachers to vary teaching approaches in order to suit students' different learning styles. However, in Years 7 to 9 there is limited integration of ICT and numeracy skills into the geography programmes of study. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is consistently good or better. GCSE candidates have clear targets, know what they have to do to improve and are keen to produce their best work.

118. Leadership and management are good. Good leadership has identified, and responds to, the weaknesses in assessment and in programmes of study. These are addressed well in the subject development plan. Good management is characterised by the strong team ethic in the department. Resources are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards have risen.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving, because teaching and learning are good.
- Very good attitudes and positive relationships encourage students to achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment has improved, but it does not yet inform teaching and learning fully.
- There is insufficient use of ICT as a learning tool.
- Curricular arrangements do not take sufficient account of students' insecure literacy skills.

Commentary

119. Students' standards of attainment on entry to the college are below average and their literacy skills are often insecure. Observation of lessons and analysis of students' work confirm that students' attainment by Year 9 now meets national expectations and students achieve well in relation to earlier attainment. The average-attaining students develop a wide range of subject skills, including interpreting evidence and understanding chronology. Higher-attaining students use their

knowledge and understanding to identify, evaluate and use sources of information and to analyse relationships between features of a particular period. For example, in their studies of the Tudors, Year 8 students critically examined portraits of Queen Elizabeth 1st to determine the use of propaganda and imagery in the Elizabethan period.

120. Results in the GCSE examinations have improved gradually in recent years. In 2004 the results showed a marked improvement and are likely to be close to the national average when national validated data are available. Standards in Year 11 are currently about average and students achieve well. In Year 10, however, there are indications that attainment in one group is already on course to be above average. GCSE students develop their analytical skills soundly and higher-attaining students display an appropriate degree of empathy and sophistication in their interpretation of historical events. For example, Year 11 students studying the Hitler youth movement judiciously analysed video footage of the period and listened sensitively as a former member of the youth cult recounted his poignant experiences of life under the Nazi regime.

121. Students of all levels of attainment generally make good progress and achieve well in Years 7 to 11 because of their positive attitudes to learning and as a result of the constructive relationships which provide firm foundations for their lessons. Students with learning difficulties make good progress because their teachers know them well and provide effective support and guidance in lessons. However, the department is aware that, on occasions, some students do not make the progress of which they are capable, and this is largely because they are assigned to history teaching groups on the basis of their earlier attainment in mathematics. This process, which does not take sufficient account of their levels of attainment in literacy, has an adverse effect on some students' standards of achievement in lessons. Students do not make sufficient use of ICT to research material for their projects and coursework.

122. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers usually prepare their lessons well and share the lesson objectives clearly with their students. Teachers' very good planning and strong subject knowledge are well-established features of most lessons and these encourage students to achieve well. Teaching is usually consistently good in those lessons where specialist teachers have higher expectations and use a wider range of stimulating activities. Teachers set imaginative tasks for homework. Marking is done frequently and provides students with good advice about how to improve their work. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection, but the use of assessment information is an area for development. Target setting is not yet sufficiently rigorous. Accommodation is good and resources are generally satisfactory.

123. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has an effective sense of direction for the future development of the department and has worked hard to raise standards of achievement. She acts as a good role model for the rest of the staff and has established an enthusiastic, collaborative team spirit throughout the department. Monitoring of teaching and learning is underdeveloped, however. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** overall, but unsatisfactory for those students in Years 10 and 11 who follow the short GCSE course.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and this is leading to significant improvements in provision.
- Teaching and learning are generally good with some lessons being very good.
- Students' standards in all year groups are below expectations and achievement is satisfactory overall.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 do not get sufficient time for religious education to allow for the requirements of the Devon Agreed Syllabus to be met.

Commentary

124. Students arrive in Year 7 with a diversity of earlier experience of religious education, but generally with levels of knowledge and understanding lower than those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are now making good progress in lessons, but their achievement over time is less evident, with most having only a sketchy knowledge of the main features of the different religious traditions they have studied and little ability to explain similarities and differences within and between religious traditions; this reflects a backlog of under-achievement which will take some time to be cleared. At the moment, standards in all year groups are below the expectations of the local agreed syllabus and the non-statutory national framework for religious education. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls evident in class-work, although girls produce more extensive and better-presented written work.

125. For students in Years 10 and 11, a barrier to higher standards and achievement for most is the failure of the college to provide them with sufficient curriculum time to cover in required depth the syllabus of the GCSE short course they are attempting. For the small option groups in each of Years 10 and 11, there is sufficient time, and these students are making good progress and are likely to achieve standards at the end of the course in line with average national standards. It is notable that in recent years the proportion of boys opting to take the full GCSE course has been very small, with generally only one or two boys, in option groups of around twenty students.

126. Teaching and learning are good. Good relationships between teachers and students, and amongst the students, lead to productive lessons in which good progress is made. A range of teaching methods is employed to enhance learning for students with different learning needs. In a very good Year 8 lesson seen, the teacher used specially prepared resources to engage students with a range of SEN, and his sensitive and skilful class management, supported by two learning support assistants, ensured that very good learning took place. In other lessons, it was noticeable that particular attention was given to ensuring that all students were able to participate and learn effectively. Good and very good lessons were seen being taught by non-specialist teachers and no evidence was found of students' learning being inhibited by the non-specialists who teach the subject in Years 10 and 11.

127. Lessons are thoroughly and carefully planned. Assessment of students' attainment is not yet well developed, and this results in students being insufficiently clear about the standards against which they are being assessed and what they need to do to improve. However, good practice was observed in a Year 10 lesson taught by a non-specialist teacher, where GCSE grade criteria were being looked at in detail and students were developing skills of peer assessment.

128. Leadership and management of religious education are good. The head of department, who has been in the college for a relatively short period of time, provides very good leadership, giving outstanding support to the non-specialists. She is ably supported by the other specialist teacher of the subject. Day-to-day management is good, although under-developed analysis of students' performance and appropriate target setting are currently inhibiting students from making better progress and achieving higher standards.

129. Improvement in this subject since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards are less good than those reported at the last inspection and the issue of providing enough time for religious education for students in Years 10 and 11 remains unresolved. However, it is clear that there have been significant improvements in the subject since the arrival of the current head of department and these look set to continue.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- The quality of assessment and monitoring of students' progress and attainment are good.
- The quality of students' work is of a good standard.
- The management and leadership of the department are good.

Commentary

130. By the end of Year 9, students' overall standards of attainment are well above the national average. In the 2004 GCSE examinations for design and technology, results were well above the national average for 2003 (validated national for 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection) and an improvement on the college's 2003 results.

131. By the end of Year 9, students have achieved well and standards are above average. They produce articles of good quality and they are developing skills to express their ideas and communicate their designs. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the standard expected nationally. They make good progress. Higher attaining students are capable of high quality work, as can be seen, for example, in the detailed and well-presented project folders, and the good quality practical project work in food technology and resistant materials. Students make good use of computers and computer aided design and manufacture. They are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, they understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades. The high standards seen are the result of better planning of lessons, higher expectations and high quality assessment.

132. In the lessons seen teaching and learning are good. Teachers' use their good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations to engage students. Effective classroom management is based on good relationships. The good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. Lessons are sharply focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the students. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and new knowledge is introduced as and when it is needed, so that students use it immediately to develop their understanding. Teachers work well with students with SEN, helping these students to progress well. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging, motivating comments that show students how to improve. These assessment outcomes are used consistently and effectively to adapt future planning and teaching

133. The head of department provides good leadership. Management of the department is good. The focus has been on lesson planning to improve teaching; the use of assessment; and the tracking and monitoring of students' progress and attainment to help raise standards. Assessment systems are well developed and are good. Information from them is used to set targets. The technicians provide a very good level of support for the department.

134. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

The provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good careers guidance.
- There are very positive links with local industry.
- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- The management and leadership of work-related learning are good.

Commentary

135. Students are reaching standards in line with those expected nationally in the vocational subjects offered by the college and they are achieving well. They are very well motivated to learn about work, as a result of very good provision and good teaching. In many cases, students' achievement is very good.

136. In discussion, students showed a good understanding of local employment. They were secure in their understanding of aspects of the workplace, such as health and safety, changes happening in the world of work and their understanding of business enterprise. The link courses provided by two local colleges to study a range of options at NVQ Level 1 are very good. Students said they enjoyed the course and they responded very well to the opportunities and challenges.

137. Students have very good careers guidance, including individual interviews through the Connexions service. Students said they were very happy with the support they were receiving. They are guided well, both about progression to post-16, and about future careers. The teaching of work-related learning observed during the inspection was good, with teachers showing good knowledge and understanding of employers' requirements that enabled them to conduct question and answer sessions with confidence.

138. Work experience is very well planned and the college arranges relevant and stimulating placements for all students. The preparation and debriefing for those on work experience are very good. There is a good range of visits to the college by employers, and students have good opportunities to visit local retail outlets, businesses, manufacturing and public services.

139. There was a very good level of evidence available concerning work-related learning (WRL) during the inspection. Teaching of work-related learning was taking place during the week and there was very a very good quantity of written work. The teaching of work-related learning seen in a French lesson, on links with local companies trading in Europe, was good. Work experience is seen as being a very important part of the curriculum for students in Year 10 and in the Sixth Form. They benefit considerably from the opportunities to learn about business enterprise. The advanced skills teacher responsible for careers and work-related learning is very effective and has reviewed the curriculum offered and supported heads of department to identify work-related studies. The effectiveness of the college's provision for work-related learning is very good.

Child development

140. In a sampled Year 11 child development lesson, most students learnt some useful revision techniques in preparation for forthcoming examinations. Teaching is satisfactory, leading to satisfactory achievement by students. However, several are reluctant to participate, preferring to sit back and wait for others to do the work before copying notes.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

Provision in art is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department's philosophy, based on the pursuit of excellence, leads to high standards.
- Good and very good teaching, linked with good assessment systems that include self-assessment, are helping students to improve their work.
- The quality of display of students' work across the college both celebrates and inspires.
- The work in photography is of very high standard.
- Students achieve and attain very well despite the unsuitable accommodation, which leads to inefficient use of resources.

Commentary

141. Attainment on entry is below the national average. By the end of Year 11, it is above the national average. There are large groups in Years 10 and 11, where art is part of a creative arts option followed by almost all students. Standards in GCSE examinations returned to the national average in 2003 after a weak year in 2002. They were at a similar level in 2004, and are rising further.

142. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The open-ended tasks enable all students to work at their own level and, consequently, they progress well. Those with SEN also achieve well. The most able students excel and produce exciting and vibrant work. Students arrive in art lessons expecting to succeed, and are not disappointed. Within the creative arts examination options, a course in photography has been introduced. It is proving very successful and many lower ability boys, who are potentially disaffected, are making a great success of their coursework and attaining and achieving very well.

143. By the end of Year 9 attainment is above the national average; this level is maintained in Years 10 and 11. Directly observed drawing is linked to observation and analysis, and students are well aware of the high standards expected of them. The quality of work in photography is stunning, and memorable images of exceptionally high quality are created.

144. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Staffing difficulties have been issues over recent years, but the high quality of learning has been maintained. In the best lessons, teacher expertise is high, and is linked to high quality planning and target setting. Expertise in photography is at an exceptionally high level. Very good relationships enable students to feel secure and to take artistic risks. Commitment and hard work are the expected norm. Students learn by observation and analysis, skill development through good use of their sketchbooks, and by making and refining artistic images, using a wide range of techniques. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

145. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department is an inspiring figure, who creates a positive working environment for students and colleagues. His philosophy is the pursuit of excellence, and students respond very well to his belief in them. Individual art rooms are good, but they are not close to one another, and this leads to inefficiency in the use of resources. The fact that art is so successful is that, in spite of the siting of the teaching spaces, it is the result of the staff's determination to overcome these difficulties. The curriculum is broad and balanced and under constant review; world art and ICT are inbuilt, and education for the world of work is well addressed. Assessment is very good, with self-assessment against National Curriculum criteria. Art has maintained its previous very high standards and has continued to develop. It is without doubt a significant strength of the college.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

Drama

Drama was sampled by observation of lessons in Years 8, 9 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are good because of subject expertise that is used to move learning forward, the relationships that encourage students to participate and effective questions that challenge students to improve their work. Most students have positive attitudes to the subject and are supportive of one another. An example of this was a student with SEN who worked with a partner. The partner exhibited great care and patience as they worked and both achieved well in their performance. The poor accommodation is lowering standards, as acoustics are poor and teachers have to work against the background noise of the staff preparing meals. In one lesson, this severely affected the achievement of students, as they lost the opportunity to evaluate their work when the serving area was opened for break.

The subject is led well. There are plans to build a new drama studio, but no starting date. The subject deserves this boost to morale. It provides very good additional enrichment to the curriculum, particularly to students' personal, social and moral development. It contributes well to language skills and its contribution to the quality of life of the whole college is strong.

Music

Provision in music is **good** and steadily improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a steady and significant improvement in standards.
- The recent improvements in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 have already raised standards
- The assessment scheme does not yet reflect National Curriculum criteria or levels fully, and there is no process of self-assessment.
- There is not always an appropriate balance between learning through music and learning about music.

Commentary

146. Attainment on entry is below the national average: by the end of Year 9 it is above the national average. GCSE results have been improving steadily over the last four years, although there was a weak year in 2002. In 2003, they reached the national average and the 2004 results showed a further improvement.

147. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above the national average. Mainstream instruments are very well used, and mixed instrumental groups manage the complex issue of transposing instruments well. Extra-curricular activities are of good quality and, for the significant number of students involved, provide an interesting and exciting extension to the curriculum. Instrumental teaching is strong, and there is an appropriate and effective remissions scheme.

148. Where achievement is at its best, it is linked to practical music making, and the enthusiasm of staff is infectious. In such cases, the power of musical ensemble is clear. With one low ability group, what started as mixed sound effects became music, by applying the criteria of pulse, rhythm, dynamics, tone and texture. Those with SEN achieve as well as others, and the most able are given the opportunity to excel in open-ended tasks.

149. Teaching and learning are both good at all levels. Music is part of the creative arts department. The recent professional background of the head of department is clear, and has a major impact, especially in the use of ICT and the recording studio. Lessons are well prepared and there is a clear feeling that teacher and students are involved in making music together. Students arrive expecting to enjoy their music making.

150. Leadership and management are good. The excellent new accommodation is having a significant effect on students' attitudes and the standard of their work. Resources are good, particularly in ICT and other technology. The curriculum is under intense development as the head of department discovers what works best for these students. However, it is already broad and balanced, involving ICT and world music. The aspect involving the world of work is good and is linked to the recent professional experience of the head of department.

151. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership and management are moving the subject forward.
- The good relationships between teachers and students help to create a positive climate for learning.
- Good teaching helps students to improve their skills.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not yet used in support of teaching.

Commentary

152. Achievement is satisfactory overall, though students made good gains in the majority of the lessons seen during the inspection. The good gains in learning and in the development of skills are the result of effective teaching. The positive relationships between adults and students are used to raise expectations. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are similar to those seen nationally, and the most recent results of students studying the GCSE course have improved since 2003, and were just below the national average.

153. In Year 9, students demonstrated a sound understanding of the principles of health-related fitness. In the core programme, students in Year 11 showed a sound knowledge of tactics and some well-developed skills in rugby and badminton. Higher attaining students anticipated well and used good control when handling the ball and racquet. However, in badminton, movement by the large majority of students was cumbersome. Students studying the GSCE course used well-developed skills in striking and receiving when participating in rounders. These students have a satisfactory understanding of the theoretical aspects of physical education, including the names of the main muscles and how they bring about movement, though recording skills are not so well developed.

154. Teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from a series of well planned lessons which focus on their stage of learning, though ICT is not used sufficiently to assist learning. Teaching places a strong emphasis on the students' awareness of their own skill levels, reflecting the department's systematic approach to assessment. However, these recently introduced procedures have yet to have a full impact on achievement and standards. In the most effective teaching, students benefited considerably from activities which suited their stage of learning; a brisk pace, and detailed explanations in support of accurate demonstrations, such as those seen during a swimming lesson. Weak features, in otherwise satisfactory teaching, included a narrow range of teaching methods and a lack of pace, resulting in some restlessness.

155. The quality of leadership and management has improved significantly since the previous inspection, when it was reported as being unsatisfactory. The head of department, who is well supported by a team of committed specialists, provides strong leadership and management. The good range of facilities helps the subject enjoy a high profile in the college, though students in Years 10 and 11 have limited and barely adequate opportunities to develop their skills and maintain their health-related fitness in the single weekly lesson that constitutes the core curriculum. Students

showed good attitudes and all but a few played a full and active part in lessons; a substantial number participated in the very good range of extra-curricular activities. These gave students good opportunities to strengthen their skills in several activities, which included trampolining, badminton, and sports science. The college is fully involved in local and regional competitions, in which teams and individuals are successful. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has implemented citizenship courses very well; as a result, the provision is good and students achieve well.
- Independence and responsibility are developed well.
- An important reason for the success of the course is that it is led and managed well

Commentary

156. Attainment and achievement in citizenship are both good. The college keeps careful records of students' attainment, with each student maintaining a portfolio of work done and evaluations of the work. Earlier this year the college participated in an NFER study of the implementation of citizenship as a curriculum subject throughout the country. The results of that study showed that students at Honiton exceeded the national average in terms both of awareness of the subject and their knowledge. Students in Years 10 and 11 are being prepared for the GCSE short course in citizenship.

157. During the inspection it was not possible to see any designated citizenship lessons and therefore no judgement can be made concerning the quality of teaching and learning. However, written work was available for inspection and this was generally of high quality. The subject requirements of the national curriculum are met and students reported that they enjoy and value the opportunities to learn about and discuss important issues. Work done by last year's Year 7 students demonstrated honesty in their evaluation of what had been provided. One student was scathing about a visit organised to a landfill site: in his view the only worthwhile aspects of the trip were the journey there and back and the stop for lunch.

158. Designated subject content is delivered mainly within a weekly tutor group lesson that all students attend, which incorporates aspects of careers education and other personal, social and health education. Material not covered within the tutorial programme is covered elsewhere in the curriculum, although staff do not always make it clear to students that aspects of the work they are doing relates to their citizenship studies. Skills of enquiry and communication are developed within different units of work. Opportunities for participation and responsible action occur through many aspects of college life, often within extra-curricular activities and, for some students, in their involvement in clubs and social groups external to the college. The college has organised a number of special events to promote the citizenship curriculum; these have included a mock election for Year 10 students, a visit to the college by local councillors, and participation in events organised by the army. The individual records of each student track such opportunities and allow tutors to monitor that they are occurring for all students.

159. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Responsibility for the development of citizenship sits with an assistant principal, whose expertise has been recognized by local private schools: she has been asked to address them on the implementation of citizenship. She has attended appropriate courses and is fully aware of the requirements of the subject and best practice.

She is entirely clear as to how the subject should be developing. She manages the work done in tutor groups through meetings with assistant heads of year, each of whom has responsibility for co-ordinating citizenship within the year group. Monitoring of the quality of work done in tutor lessons is undertaken efficiently by heads of year.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004. In many cases, nationally validated data for 2004 were not available at the time of the report.

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 & Design	7	100	87.9	86	37.6	56	36.7
Art & Design: Photography	13	100	-	38	-	43	-
Biology	11	82	80.1	55	30.5	38	31.7
Computing	22	68	77.8	5	14.4	19	26.2
D&T Product Design	12	100	86.6	17	28	34	33.31
Drama	5	100	-	60	-	46	-
Economics	5	60	85.6	0	40.9	20	36.84
English Literature	15	100	94	62	34	43	37.8
French	4	100	88.3	25	41.4	38	37.7
General Studies	43	81	76.7	16	21.2	26	28.0
Geography	3	67	88.5	0	37.9	23	36.8
History	6	100	91.8	50	37.3	42	37.7
Law	1	100	-	100	-	60	-
Music	3	67	89.2	0	34.8	27	36.3
Physics	7	86	82	43	36.1	40	34.1
Psychology	6	50	81.2	0	28.7	20	31.7
Sociology	14	86	83.1	29	31.9	33	33.3
Spanish	2	100	89.2	50	41.4	50	38.0
Sport/ PE	6	83	86.2	17	26.4	32	32.4

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 & Design	3	100	96.8	67	50.9	80	86.72
Art & Design: Photography	5	100	-	20	-	72	-
Biology	10	100	94.5	20	43.8	68	80.4
Chemistry	1	100	96.6	0	54.7	80	87.9
Computing	2	100	93.4	0	22.9	70	68.1
D&T Product Design	4	100	96.3	25	36.8	75	78.1
Drama	7	100	-	14	-	66	-
Economics	4	100	98.1	0	59.4	65	92.1
English Literature	14	100	98.6	50	43.8	83	84.6
French	2	100	98.5	100	59.6	110	92.3
General Studies	12	100	92.6	50	29.7	83	71.2
Geography	9	100	98.3	44	50.4	84	87.1
History	6	100	98.2	50	49.5	77	86.7
Mathematics	5	80	96.2	20	60.8	56	91.7
Music	5	100	96.1	0	42.0	52	81.1
Physics	6	83	95.0	0	49.5	53	82.4
Psychology	4	100	95.7	0	41.3	70	80.1
Religious Studies	5	100	98.4	0	55.2	72	90.0
Sociology	3	100	96.3	100	44.6	107	82.6
Spanish	3	100	98.3	33	62.3	73	93.4
Sport/ PE	8	100	96.0	25	33.0	75	75.6
Double AVCE Health & Social Care	4	100	93.9	75	34.6	190	139.14
Double AVCE Recreation	3	100	91.2	17	10.3	160	125.28
AVCE Travel and Tourism	1	100	82.1	0	12.9	80	54.2
AVCE Business	5	60	85.7	0	20.7	36	61.4
AVCE Health and Social Care	2	100	85.4	50	19.0	80	60.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- A few students are too passive in lessons, which affects their learning and achievement.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently to support students' learning.

Commentary

160. Students begin the course with fewer GCSE A and A* grades than is normal in a comprehensive school. For the past three years, all students have attained a pass at A to E grades at both AS and A2 level. Because there have been fewer passes at grade A than the national norm, attainment has ranged from average to below average when compared with other schools nationally. At this stage of the course, students in Years 12 and 13 are on track to reach their predicted grades and a few are already doing better than predicted. Standards this year are close to average. Achievement is satisfactory, because students build on their good progress from Years 7 to 11. Boys achieve as well as girls, motivated by the teaching, and most have the confidence to join in discussions. Few students attain the highest grades, but those capable of doing so achieve well, as do those with SEN.

161. All students acquire an understanding of terms such as tone and mood and apply them to their reading. Higher attaining students write fluently and accurately, drawing on their reading of a range of texts. They give a personal response and sustain a cogent argument. Some students write descriptively rather than analytically. A few of the students are confident speakers who listen well and can sustain a point of view, drawing on their research. A few have difficulty in sustaining their speech and hesitate when answering questions. The least able students do not use language precisely. Sometimes their phrasing is poor, spelling is inaccurate and they do not sustain their writing. Some of the students do not use ICT to produce their work, so laboriously write out extensive scripts several times. They are happy to do this, but it takes time that could be better used for reading and analysis.

162. Marking of work is good, giving students insights into how they can improve their work. Open-ended questions provoke thought and discussion. A key strength of the teaching lies in preparation for examinations. Students are given excellent advice on how to approach questions and are supported by a range of handouts, useful for revision. Relationships are very good, so students have the confidence to try out their ideas. Working in pairs deepens students' learning and they enjoy these discussions, avidly talking about their work. In a few of the lessons, the teacher does all the work because some of the students are passive. This is more so in Year 12 than in Year 13.

163. Good leadership and management and the cohesive teamwork in the department contribute well to effective teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

164. Communication skills are taught through the general studies course and the English department is not involved. More able students have little difficulty with reading and writing, but a significant number of students need to have their skills reinforced. Some departments, for example, health and social care, take great pains to ensure that they teach the literacy skills required for their subjects. Here, students have good communication skills. In other subjects, such as history and sociology, a significant number of students do not have the skills required and this affects the

standards they can reach. Students have few opportunities to extend their writing and many inaccuracies of spelling and grammar are not corrected. Teaching the communication strand of key skills through general studies should be kept under review to ensure the college is meeting the needs of all its students.

Modern foreign languages

165. The provision for modern foreign languages was not a focus for the inspection. Students are able to follow courses in French and Spanish.

166. In the last two years, only small numbers have sat A or AS Level examinations in French and Spanish, so comparisons with national data are unreliable. In 2004, the two students who sat A2 French achieved well, one gaining an A grade and the other B. In Spanish at A2 level, achievement was satisfactory. The three candidates attained grades ranging from B to E.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics in the Sixth Form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching by knowledgeable teachers helps students to make progress.
- Students are dedicated and motivated and so work hard to succeed.
- Rising numbers of students embark on mathematics courses, reflecting the good provision.

Commentary

167. There were only a few students taking A Level mathematics, so meaningful comparisons with national figures are not possible. Students' grades are satisfactory for the individuals concerned, with most gaining grades in the A - E range that reflect their levels of attainment on entry. Results vary over time.

168. There is an open entry policy generally in the Sixth Form, but for mathematics, only students who have gained A* - B grades at GCSE level follow the course. On the current course there is one student who gained a B at Intermediate level: Such students receive extra help so that they can work at the same level as the whole group. The standards seen in both Year 12 and Year 13 compare favourably with the nationally expected standard. Retention rates are high and there is a good increase in numbers in the current Year 12. Discussions with these students indicate that they are prepared to work hard and have good confidence in their teachers to help them to do their best.

169. Teaching is good and has some very good features. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and teachers are very familiar with the different parts of the syllabus. This enables them to link topics, so that students gain good understanding of the work. One very good example was the way in which a teacher, working with a student preparing for his Oxford interview, linked a range of advanced topics, showing the techniques needed for a successful interview. The student responded in a positive manner and in subsequent discussions was very pleased with this arrangement and the help the college was giving. Students' work is marked thoroughly and there is constructive feedback. Much of this is oral and assists the learning of the whole group.

170. Good, clear teaching gives students the confidence to tackle problems with enthusiasm. Teaching a new topic generally starts from a point of familiarity for the students and quickly moves on. Students can discuss their work with each other and give reasons for their method of working and the answers obtained. When required, they work solutions for the group on the board. This enables them to give reasons for their answers and to work methodically. This develops their capacity for independent study and, because all students intend applying for university, this technique is very beneficial.

171. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form courses are good. There is a range of well-chosen modules taught that are best suited to the students' needs. There are sufficient resources available, but little use is made of computers during lesson time.

Mathematics across the curriculum

172. Students' levels of mathematics appear adequate for the courses offered. There is no formal Key Skills course for application of number in the Sixth Form to support GNVQ qualifications. In addition, there is no general course for students who do not study mathematics, but require further knowledge or reinforcement for their courses. There is good use of data handling in sociology and there is good use of graphs, charts and diagrams to analyse and present information in a variety of ways.

SCIENCE

Biology was the focus of the inspection, but lessons in physics and chemistry were also sampled.

173. In a very good Year 12 **physics** lesson, the teacher used excellent discussion techniques and practical demonstrations to challenge his students to a deep understanding of ideas associated with diffraction. Students enjoy the course, and have quickly learned to think as physicists do.

174. In a practical session in Year 13 **chemistry**, students showed that they have become proficient in practical chemistry, producing good samples of oil of wintergreen. In another lesson, with a different teacher, the same students showed very good understanding of theoretical work associated with rates of reaction.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good, and help them to get the most out of their lessons.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good, and they give students good support to help them to learn well.
- Excellent accommodation in the new science block provides a very good environment for learning.
- The range of activities that teachers use does not fully reflect modern thinking about how students learn best.

Commentary

175. When students join the Sixth Form, standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations. Their progress is good and the grades they gain in their AS and A level examinations are at least as expected on the basis of their performance in GCSE. Some students gain the highest grades, A and B. Results are broadly in line with national figures, but relatively small numbers and variations from year to year make it inappropriate to draw detailed statistical conclusions. In lessons, students' attitudes to their work are very good. They take a real interest in the subject and do their best to respond to the many challenges teachers present them with. As a result they make good progress, which is reflected in the high quality written work they produce. Achievement is, therefore, good overall.

176. Lessons are characterised by a scholarly atmosphere in which students apply themselves to very good activities that help them to learn well. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, very good discussions and interesting activities help the students to gain a deep understanding, which makes the work easy to learn. The department understands that these are qualities which could usefully be developed further and is actively considering how new thinking in biology teaching could best be introduced into the curriculum. Assessment is well used to give students and teachers a secure understanding of progress, and students are very clear about what they need to do in order to improve.

177. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department makes good use of the considerable strengths of the three specialist biologists, whilst creating a team which presents students with a consistent view of the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Teachers' high expectations are drawing the best from students.
- Students are developing independence and research skills.

178. Students study product design at AS and A level. They make good progress and their achievement is good. The A/S and A level results for 2003 are above average, but the numbers entered were low. In 2004 there was an improvement in numbers entered and results were also good.

179. The standards of work of current students are above average. They are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results, as a result of effective teaching, which demands much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focus their learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it in a range of contexts: their project work is good and shows the same confidence as their class work.

180. Students learn very well as a result of the good teaching, the principal features of which are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well in discussion and demonstration. The lessons provide opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and their skills and techniques improve as the lessons progress.

181. Students have opportunities to carry out detailed research, working as individuals to formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications. The teachers draw together students' ideas and help to deepen their understanding. Attitudes are good and the students respond confidently, learning well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience.

182. In a good design lesson, students rose well to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. Lesson time was used well. Students helped each other effectively and, in groups, talked and listened to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion and this was seen in the lesson where they were evaluating their designs.

183. The good teaching and learning result from work in the department being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflects the requirements of the course. The recording of progress and target setting, based on careful analysis of student performance through review, evaluation and assessment, is well established. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Geography was not a focus for the inspection. In 2004, the nine candidates for A level geography achieved well. Four attained B grades and the lowest grade was D. Overall, attainment was close to the national average.

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are above average and improving.
- Students achieve very well because teachers encourage them to aspire to high grades.
- Excellent relationships result in students having a thirst for learning.
- Teachers guide students to think for themselves, but sometimes miss opportunities to encourage independent learning.

Commentary

184. Results in 2003 were above the national average and were higher in 2004. They have improved steadily over the last three years, with all entered students now passing and about a third gaining A or B grades.

185. Students enter the Sixth Form health and social care course with overall standards that are below average. They achieve very well and reach standards in lessons and written work that are above average by Year 13. Students concentrate hard on their studies and are keen to do their best, because they have exceptionally good relationships with teachers. All make very good progress in lessons, quickly realising, for example, that *all* aspects of the care of very young children are important to a potential client.

186. Teaching and learning are very good. Learning objectives are usually clearly conveyed to students because teachers refer to them frequently, ensuring that students understand what they are expected to learn. Assignments are well structured. They allow opportunities for students to research their own interests, such as comparing the services provided by a council leisure centre with those of a privately operated facility. The adult atmosphere in lessons leads to high quality discussion and an unusually good understanding by students of each other's strengths and weaknesses. This results in their supporting each other, for example by sharing work placement experiences. Although teachers challenge students to think for themselves, they occasionally spend too long directing lessons, rather than encouraging them to work independently. Teachers use their experience as practitioners very effectively, in advising students about how to cope with invasion of personal space by clients during work experience, for example. Students' work is thoroughly marked; annotations in the text and comments about effort and quality show how the work could be improved. Students are very appreciative of this and follow the advice. A key feature in students' very good achievement is the frequent use of grading criteria, to show them what they need to do to reach the highest grades.

187. The health and social care course is very well led and managed. Teachers work well together as a team, making good use of each other's expertise, yet ensuring that the experience for students is fully integrated. The course is well structured, including four contrasting work placements that help to widen students' career aspirations. A number of helpful innovations, such as the 'students' survival guide', have been introduced.

188. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching has improved and weaknesses in students' analytical skills have been addressed. As a result, students' performance in examinations continues to improve.

History

Provision In history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very committed to equality of opportunity.
- Very good classroom relationships support learning well.
- Good teaching enables students to achieve well.
- Independence in learning is underdeveloped.
- Marking is sometimes insufficiently detailed to enable students to remedy some weaknesses.

Commentary

189. Results in the A-level examinations have been below average in recent years. In 2003, the latest year for which national figures are available, results in terms of average points were very low and no candidates achieved the higher A and B grades. Results improved significantly in 2004, when both the above indicators were in line with the previous year's averages. In the last two years females have significantly outperformed males, but the small numbers involved mean that it is inadvisable to draw firm conclusions from this.

190. In Year 13, standards are in line with expectations and students achieve well. Achievement is good because the subject adopts a very inclusive approach to entry requirements and students' attainment overall at the start of the course is at least below average. Students extract information from sources and interpret it well, to offer balanced views on questions such as whether the activities of the Women's Social and Political Union helped or hindered the cause of women's suffrage. There are some weaknesses in essay content and style; students do not develop their answers as fully as they should and their written English is not always as succinct and accurate as it might be. Higher attaining students are able to venture speculative answers in response to direct questions and in discussion, but computers are rarely used in lessons.

191. Students learn well as a result of their positive attitudes and very good classroom relationships, which encourage most of them to contribute readily to discussion. Lesson pace and planning are often very good and students benefit from very clear explanation and exemplification. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is deployed in detailed study notes that assist students' learning well. However, a disadvantage of this approach is that it can undermine students' initiative and independence in their work. Teachers mark regularly, although there are variations in the extent of comment indicating the scope for improvement, and insufficient monitoring and correction of errors in literacy.

192. The leadership and management of the subject have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Teachers co-operate very effectively and the subject is beginning to attract increasing numbers, but there are still some weaknesses in the areas of data analysis and the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. There has been satisfactory improvement overall.

Psychology

Provision in psychology was not a focus for the inspection. The college offers both AS and A Level courses. Results have been close to average over recent years. The teaching seen was good and students achieve well on the course.

Sociology

Provision In sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Very good classroom relationships enable students to learn well.
- Students make insufficient reference to sociological perspectives and case studies in their critical analyses.
- The college's arrangements for leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- Students are opting for the subject in increasing numbers in Year 12.

Commentary

193. All students have obtained A-level passes in recent years. In 2003, the latest year for which national data is available, results were above average, and in the previous year they were even higher. In 2004 all three candidates achieved the higher A and B grades.

194. In Year 13, standards of work seen are in line with expectations, which represents good achievement, as students' prior attainment is significantly below the norm for A-level courses. Students demonstrate well-developed observational and analytical skills in their individual coursework and often make good use of computers in undertaking preparatory investigations for this. They clearly explain the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of sociological research and the attendant moral and ethical considerations. Students' interest in, and enthusiasm for, the subject is evident in their positive responses to oral work. Written work is undertaken conscientiously and often to a good standard, but lower attaining students make some elementary errors in literacy and have difficulty in planning and structuring their essays. Students do not read as widely as they should and therefore find it difficult to support their arguments with appropriate case studies as extensively as they might. Additionally, many are reluctant to use one sociological perspective to criticise another.

195. In lessons seen, the quality of teaching was consistently good, although past examination results suggest it might often be better than that. Lessons are very well planned, although there is scope for greater precision in the framing of aims and objectives. Teachers use question and answer well to explore, challenge and consolidate students' understanding. They mark work regularly, although there is room for fuller correction of errors in literacy and more indication of the ways that students could improve their work. Students benefit from teachers' considerable experience and appreciate their ready accessibility.

196. The college's arrangements for leadership and management are satisfactory. There is no subject leader and, consequently, a lack of relevant documentation, such as a handbook and schemes of work, which would normally guide the work of the department. Fortunately, the two teachers work constructively together and students are very well supported. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and high standards have been maintained.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on theatre studies.

Theatre studies

Provision in theatre studies is **good**, because of the quality of the teaching, despite the **unsatisfactory** accommodation and resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Practical work is particularly strong.
- Students show independence in their work and high levels of motivation.
- Students lose marks in their coursework because of their low literacy skills.
- The accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory and has not improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

197. All students have access to drama up to the age of 14 and it is a popular subject at GCSE, with large numbers of boys, particularly, opting to study it to examination level. Their results are good and compare well with those of other subjects taken. The uptake for AS level and A2 level is small, reflecting the small-sized Sixth Form, and the numbers are too few to make secure comparisons with the national results. However, in common with the college generally, although most students enter the Sixth Form with below average attainment, they are well supported in lessons and achieve well. Students are awarded a wide range of grades, including the higher ones, and several students have gone on to pursue higher level academic and professional courses at 18. Standards seen in lessons and in portfolio work mirror the wide range of attainment. While practical work is strong, there are significant weaknesses in the writing skills of some students which have a negative effect on their success in the examinations at both AS and A2 level.

198. Students are secure in their knowledge of the main features of the syllabus and can discuss easily the nature of key theatre practitioners and the history of the development of drama as an art form. They have acquired a good range of performance and directorial skills, and some demonstrate very high ability as actors. This was notably seen in an outstanding performance of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' performed during the inspection week. As this was only in rehearsal for a very short period and performed in a very restricted space, with less than ideal resources, this represents very good achievement. Particularly impressive was the quality of the performance of students playing the principal roles and that of the ensemble work of those in minor roles. The direction by the staff was authoritative and imaginative and drew very sympathetic and moving performances from the students. Equally impressive was the high level of responsibility taken by the students in the physical mounting of the production, in which the elements of setting, costume, lighting, stage management and front of house were very efficiently undertaken.

199. The very high level of commitment demonstrated by students is largely the result of their high regard for the quality of the teaching they receive; both these factors have a positive effect on students' achievement. Teaching is good and rooted in very secure knowledge of the subject. It is delivered in a supportive and encouraging manner, which develops very good relationships. These ensure lessons are well received and the students learn well. They are industrious and collaborative and are willing to tackle difficult subjects enthusiastically and with good humour.

200. The department is led and managed well and is highly regarded and supported well within the college's faculty of creative arts. The contributions the staff make to the learning opportunities of the students are especially valuable in the light of the unsatisfactory nature of the accommodation and resources. These have not improved since the last inspection, while other subjects have

benefited considerably from improved facilities. Since the subject has a major effect on the overall social and artistic life of the college and because of its reputation in the wider community, this is an area for improvement that the college needs to address if the subject is to expand in the way it deserves. Improvement since the last report is good, despite this.

Art

201. Provision for art in the Sixth Form is **excellent**. The photography course is excellent, and the images produced are outstanding – vibrant, exciting and challenging. Art is clearly an important and successful aspect of college provision.

Music

202. Provision for music in the Sixth Form is **good**. The collegiate system of teaching with two neighbouring colleges works very well for music, ensuring satisfactory group sizes and the potential to learn collaboratively. Students from the different colleges work well together. The participation of Sixth Formers in the corporate musical life of the college is a valuable feature.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One **physical education** lesson was sampled in the Sixth Form, in which teaching and learning were good. This was not a focus subject.

Leisure and tourism

203. A Year 13 Leisure and Tourism lesson was sampled. In this lesson, students achieved very well as a result of very good teaching. Learning objectives were made clear because progress was measured by frequent reference to them. Students concentrated very well as a result of well structured, yet varied, presentation of content, in this case concerning features of the Exmoor National Park, which students had visited recently.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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